



EQUITY AUDIT REPORT

FEB 2023

PREPARED BY: HOTEPCONSULTANTS LLC

SANTA
MONICA
COLLEGE

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The Hotep Consultants team would like to acknowledge and thank several key partners who greatly assisted us in carrying out the Equity Audit at Santa Monica College.

We would like to thank Dr. Maria Muñoz (Interim Dean of Equity, Pathways, and Inclusion), Eartha Johnson (Project Manager, Guided Pathways for Student Equity and Achievement), Paige Glaves (Administrative Assistant, Equity Pathways, and Inclusion), and Dr. Hannah Lawler (Dean of Institutional Research). Their insight and support provided the foundation for a holistic and intentional campus audit.

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Additionally, thank you to the SMC Leadership Team, President Dr. Kathryn Jeffery, and the SMC Board of Trustees for being open to discovering opportunities to create a more inclusive, welcoming, and supportive campus environment for a diverse constituency.

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This executive summary is a brief synopsis of the Santa Monica College Equity Audit recommendations. All recommendations are categorized within the S.E.T. Framework which provides the philosophical foundation that informs the way in which the Hotep Consultants Team approaches the development of human centered data collection, equity focused data analysis, and intentional and practical reporting of findings and recommendations. The full Equity Audit report that follows the Executive Summary provides more comprehensive details about the Equity Audit including the audit features, process, overall findings including highlights and areas of opportunity, and full set of recommendations.

Overarching Themes

Clarity and Connection

There is a lack of clarity around the institution's equity advancing priorities. There are several different groups all with different goals around how to advance equity efforts on campus. The Board of Trustees has one set of goals, the Student Equity Plan boasts another set of goals, which are all different from the goals in the 2017-2022 Strategic Planning document. What further muddies the clarity around SMC's equity advancing priorities and goals, is the fact that an overarching set of priorities – one to which all of the individual groups can build their individual goals off of – is missing. Without an overarching set of priorities, the institution lacks guidance on how to best prioritize and implement the goals that they do have.

Challenges to developing an Equity Ecosystem

As mentioned previously, there are several different equity focused groups that exist within SMC, each with their own set of goals and priorities. Because there is no clear connection between the various groups and goals, the equity efforts that exist are siloed and polarized which creates a barrier to developing a system of equity to provide collaborative opportunities to work towards a shared set of priorities. Additionally, the siloed groups have created an environment that has made it difficult, and unwelcoming, for those not in the "in group" to enter these communities if their backgrounds differ or if they have a different level of understanding of the issues, and subsequent recommendations, to advance equity efforts at SMC.

Competencies for Student Success

SMC's strong reputation, programs, and services attract diverse students into the SMC community. And yet, because there is no clear set of priorities to support these diverse groups of students nor an equity ecosystem to create collaborative and cohesive approaches to supporting equity initiatives within the college, the efforts that are currently taking place are limited in their impact to improve outcomes for disproportionately impacted students. Individual employees and departments are going above and beyond to support and retain students considering limited human and financial resources and support to address gaps in quality of teaching and service.

KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

Student Ready (Institutional)

A Student Ready organization creates system-wide impact by consistently examining processes and practices that are hindering learning for all students and actively working towards solutions. The recommendations below are intended to address system-wide approaches to best support a diverse constituency of students.

Administrative Capacity Building

- Confirm and solidify the college's overarching institutional goals via Educational Master Plan, Strategic Plan, or Board of Trustee Goals. These goals should serve as the leading goals for which all institutional activities, individual group goals, and governance bodies should be in alignment to support.
- Implement a Shared Equity Leadership (SEL) Framework to provide a collaborative and inclusive approach to structuring equity work.
- Shift from a risk management and compliance approach to a mindset of creating institutional transformation when examining policies, practices, and assessments. This includes an equity-minded approach to decision making within the context of the current institutional landscape.
- Assess the current status of recommendations and qualitative data provided by former consultants (i.e. USC's Race & Equity Center) and internal campus experts (i.e. Office of Institutional Research) about the student experience. Identify which recommendations have been implemented, which need additional support, and which may not be prioritized at the moment. Develop an action plan to support the recommendations that are to move forward.
- Develop a communication guide to explain the college prioritization process and include: vocabulary, the roles of key groups, guiding questions or key elements that should be focused on to help create transparency and clarity around how decisions are made.
- Recruit and onboard a permanent Dean for the Division of Equity, Pathways, and Inclusion.

Employee Relations & Support

- Develop an internal “how-to” guide (sharing the college’s current and updated processes and practices) for conducting an inclusive and equitable search process. Provide accessible and updated information on how to prepare, chair/lead, and participate on a committee with an equity-minded perspective.
- Update job descriptions and templates across job categories to be explicit about the expectations of potential employees to engage in equity advancing practices.
- Develop capacity for Human Resources to mandate accessible and effective DEI training for all employees, in order to participate on a recruitment committee.
- Ensure that all campus constituents, especially classified professionals and part-time faculty, are able to participate in professional learning experiences, especially those that are focused on equity. Identify ways in which Flex Day schedules can be more inclusive of stakeholder groups across campus, both in content shared and presenters of key information. Announce campus wide equity initiatives share create opportunities for sharing equity advancing practices for employees regularly.

Equity Advancing Initiatives

- Conduct an equity map to catalog all of the equity related efforts on campus. Additionally, establish a calendar for Diversity, Equity, Inclusion (DEI) that is organized to bring together all DEI related activities in one place where users can identify/filter to identify events/programs that are student facing, employee facing, and what experiences are open to the community.
- Continue to review and revise Course Outlines of Record, Student Learning Outcomes, Program Learning Outcomes as originally intended in the 2021-2022 Action Plans to Support the Institutional Strategic Initiatives and Objectives.

Equity Minded (Individual)

Equity Minded higher education professionals intentionally call attention to patterns of inequity in student experiences and outcomes. They also take personal and professional responsibility for the success of their students and critically reassess their own practices. The recommendations below are centered on the development of interpersonal understanding of equity and individual impact on equity advancement within the SMC community.

Administrative Capacity Building

- Access tools and resources that help support individuals in using their agency and locus of control to practice equity in their work.

Employee Relations & Support

- Conduct a review of employee review, onboarding, and evaluation forms to incentivize equity-minded practices, provide support needed for employee learning and growth, and to address behaviors not aligned with SMC's vision, mission, and goals.
- Embed equity action plans within all employee evaluations to encourage the engagement with equity advancing work on campus (and/or beyond) and highlight areas of opportunity for the campus to meet the professional development needs of faculty, staff, and administrators.

Professional Learning Experiences

- Develop Employee Learning Pathways to guide employees in accessing activities and programs best aligned with their interests and needs as it pertains to professional growth. This would include an inventory of all organized PD activities, when they take place during the year, expertise levels, modality, and resources.
- Expand Equitizing Gateway Courses opportunities to non-transfer related courses to support equitable approaches in CTE and degree applicable courses.
- Provide training and coaching for managers/administration with formal responsibilities over equity initiatives. Training topics and content include:
 - Develop a process for dialogue that addresses conflict in a constructive way.
 - Deepen knowledge base around key issues and trends affecting various student groups and communities.
 - Develop funding/resource strategies to sustain impact of equity initiatives across the college.
- Develop leadership training (modules/workshops) for students leaders & student employees. Incorporating these experiences at the beginning of a student's employment or leadership role will help develop their self-awareness and skills so they can help create a welcoming environment for a diverse student body.

Transformative (Service)

Transformative is the manifestation of practices that address the historical and sociopolitical causes of inequities found in education and engage in data-informed efforts to repair and restore the educational system. The recommendations listed below have been developed to better support the way in which individuals across the campus engage with students in an effort to support their success.

Administrative Capacity Building

- Engage in Cultural Humility and Healing Centered Leadership & Engagement trainings/practices to re-establish a clear culture of trust, understanding, and collegiality.
- Utilize time within Department/Division meetings to facilitate dialogue with staff, faculty, and administrators for sharing best practices and how to implement culturally sustaining practices within their work.

Employee Relations & Support

- Incorporate outreach practices that center relationship building internally through staff career development and advancement efforts and with external communities and organizations.
- Establish a staff ombudsperson (or office) dedicated to being a resource to the community of campus employees who have issues or concerns with fairness with college processes, policies, or procedures, and to communicate confidentially about their experiences. The ombudsperson can support individuals and provide systemic recommendations without disclosing confidential information.

Professional Learning Experiences

- Revise the Data Coaching program to include external facilitators - especially as it comes to supporting Classified Educators, Administrators, and Hesitant/Less Engaged Faculty.
- Develop a cohorted professional learning series that features external experts, focused on developing cultural and racial literacy for employees. For the first few years, offer the same series of topics to establish a shared foundational baseline experience. Senior staff and management should encourage participation and create capacity for employees to engage.

Transformative Service

- Establish a forms committee to review the effectiveness of required forms, update language, and evaluate the submission and review process on a regular basis (annually).

- Establish a process to review and revise the model syllabus template, course syllabi, and canvas pages on a regular basis. While syllabi can be viewed as contracts from the student to the instructor, they can, and should, also be viewed as a communication tool and resource between the instructor and the student.
- Implement equitable and inclusive instructional strategies from course design to assessment & grading:
 - Design an accessible course so all student receive the adequate supports and materials they need for the semester (i.e. open educational resources, basic needs resource guide) in a timely manner.
 - Use a framework for lesson planning that supports the progress of students with different backgrounds and levels of understanding (i.e. using questionnaires and accepting feedback from students to understand the diverse learning styles and needs of students , ensure lecture/presentation slides and learning activities are accessible for students using screen readers and have).
 - Facilitate engaging experiences that contextualize course concepts in a way that is relevant to students (i.e. incorporate ethnically and racially diverse experts/thinkers in your discipline, learn what students are interested in and what broader issues are relevant and use this info as an anchor to create curiosity and interest around the content.
 - Implement low stakes assignments and assessments where students are actively involved in their learning, conscious of their areas for improvement and progress, and can better demonstrate their knowledge.
- Departments create opportunities to address student equity issues that are discovered through feedback of students, staff, and faculty. Examples of key questions are:
 - To what extent can the department adjust its procedures and practices to be more equitable?
 - How is student feedback elicited by the department? If no feedback is collected, where are there opportunities to discuss improvement of current services and offerings?
- Promote usage of the Gateway to Persistence and Success (GPS) platform for faculty.

SANTA MONICA COLLEGE EQUITY AUDIT

FULL REPORT

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CCC System-wide Context

The California Community College system, comprising 116 colleges, serves 1.8 million students, annually. About 70% of students enrolled identify as racial/ethnic minorities. In the 1970's, as the demand for higher education expanded, community colleges were identified as key institutions for increasing access to opportunities. In 2017, the California Vision for Success created a plan for addressing long standing issues and barriers to student success and emphasized this belief that colleges should provide clear, simple, and accessible pathways with embedded supports to ensure that students are able to achieve their educational goals.

The 2017 Vision for Success: Strengthening the California Community Colleges to Meet California's Needs, mapped out goals to address long standing barriers, within the system, to retention and completion including decreasing the average number of units accumulated by students and reducing equity gaps for traditionally underrepresented student groups. This Vision served as a framework for colleges in shaping their goals for improving instruction and services to students. Many colleges have sourced professional expertise and guidance from external consultants about issues of race, identity and culture, with an interest in learning how to create environments that are more welcoming and supporting disproportionately impacted student communities, especially for Black, Latinx, and Native students.

In March 2020, community colleges throughout the system shifted the way in which they have traditionally offered instruction, support services, and resources in an effort to be responsive to the global Covid-19 pandemic. This major shift became an opportunity to transition all components and aspects of the "campus experience," from instruction, student services, and business services, to an online modality. This global health also revealed the importance of prioritizing basic needs' programs and services as well as the growing disparities amongst people of color. The murders of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, Ahmaud Arbery and a number of other Black people at the hands of police, ignited civil and social unrest locally, regionally, nationally, and globally.

In June 2020, the Chancellor of the California Community College, Eloy Oakley Ortiz, issued the Call to Action which challenged colleges to investigate current structures, curriculum, and practices, and identify ways to dismantle and repair structural racism embedded within the system of schooling. Conversations around issues of race are not new to the California Community Colleges. Almost three years into the "Post-George Floyd Era," institutions have plenty of work ahead of them to close long standing disparities for Black students and employees. Findings from a Pew Research Center survey reported that about 65% of Black Americans do not believe that the increased awareness around racial inequality after the murder of George Floyd, has led to improvements in their lives.

Findings from a *Pew Research Center survey* reported that about 65% of Black Americans do not believe that the increased awareness around racial inequality after the murder of George Floyd, has led to improvements in their lives. Efforts at dismantling racism and anti-Black racism within Higher Education have been largely focused on symbolic and reactionary gestures (i.e. statements, creating task forces, renaming buildings, and celebrating Juneteenth). While there is a place and space for these type of actions, it is critical for organizations to develop a systemic analysis of policies, practices, and assessments that impact outcomes for Black students and other historically minoritized students.

Santa Monica College Context

Established in 1929, Santa Monica College (SMC) is a single district college in Santa Monica, California that enrolls almost 30,000 credit students per semester. The College serves students and employees attending the College from the surrounding Los Angeles County region, out-of-state, and different parts of the world. Designated as a Hispanic Service Institution in 2005, over 36% of SMC students identify as Hispanic or Latinx/a/o. Some of the key initiatives and programs developed to support student access, equity, and success include Redesigning the Student Experience/Guided Pathways, mentoring programs for men of color and women of color (MOCAN, Sister to Sister), the Student Equity Center (Gender Equity, Racial Justice, Pride and Dream Resource Center), and the Basic Needs Ecosystem of Support.

SMC engaged in a process of inquiry and reflection to understand why, despite notable successes of the institution, most students are still not completing their self defined goals which reflected a broader shift at the college around how it understands the college experience. When SMC engaged in the Redesigning the Student Experience using Guided Pathways efforts, data showed that only 20% of SMC's first time college students who enroll in the fall earn a degree, a certificate, or transfer to a 4-year institution within three years.

Additionally, out of an estimated 4,400 first-time-in-college students in a given fall cohort, who have the goal of transfer, a degree, or a certificate, more than 45% stopped attending any institution of higher education after three years, without earning a degree or certificate on their transcript (*Redesigning the Student Experience Call to Action Case Statement*). Through adopting the language of the Guided Pathways Framework, SMC sought to develop structures and programs to address equity gaps in rates of college completion, transfer, and success in the workforce.

The *Redesigning the Student Experience Call to Action* statement reads, “These stopping/dropping out data reveal significant disparities based on students’ racial/ethnic identification. Disproportionately more Black students (59%) and Latina/o/x students (47%) exit higher education without a credential or transfer than White students (39%) and Asian students (39%).”

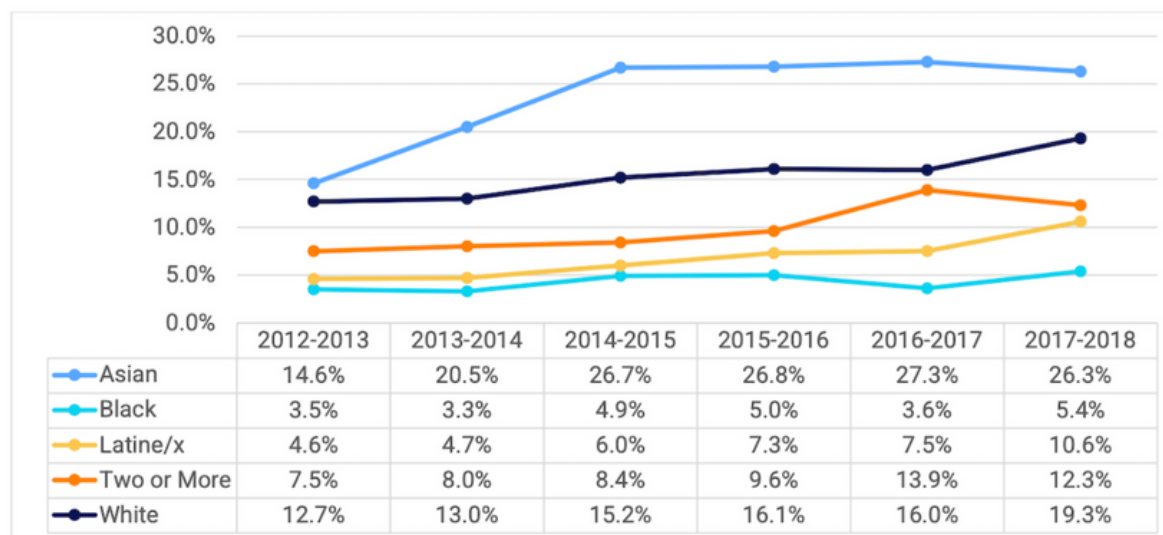
Since the 2017 California Community College Chancellor’s Office (CCCCO) Vision for Success was put into motion, Santa Monica College has made significant progress in examining traditional approaches, hearing students’ perspectives and voices, and creating institutional capacity to address systemic barriers to student success. Examples of the great work that has taken place are evidenced in:

- Development and implementation of the SMC Data Coaching Program, a robust and comprehensive professional learning experience for staff, faculty, and managers, and led by internal campus experts. This program was created to grow the college’s capacity to gather, interpret and apply data to influence college planning processes (*Institutional Research- Data Coaching Program*).
- Establishment of the Equitizing Gateway Courses program which is a multi-semester professional development experience that provides faculty with space and resources to explore ways in which they may incorporate equity-centered teaching and learning approaches within their individual practice to better support student success (*SMC Equitizing Gateway Courses Program*).
- The development of the Equity Plan Task Force and Student Equity Steering Committee, which have strived towards cultivating a campus identity that is more reflective of the students and the college’s commitment to support their success (*Student Equity Plan Executive Summary 2019-2022*).
- Innovations such as Gateway to Persistence and Success, a communications platform where students receive important information (related to events, appointments, and plans) for programs and courses they are committed to, as well as affirmation (through kudos) from faculty and staff on accomplishments.

While improvements have been made, there are still opportunity gaps predictable by race. Examples of this are evident in the *2022-2023 Institutional Effectiveness Report*:

- Although transfer rates improved for Black and Latine/x students, the equity gaps for both groups persisted from 2011-2017.
- Black students only represent 6.8% of the Associate Degrees awarded in 2020-2021, making up the smallest share of degree earners along with multi-racial students.

Table 1. Completed Vision Goal in Three Years

Disaggregated by Race/Ethnicity (1.9 Completed Vision Completion Goal in Three Years)

Additionally, while SMC is well known for high transfer rates to the University of California system, there are also discrepancies in the percentage of students who actually achieve the goal of “Transferring to a 4-year Institution” when disaggregated by race. Students who identify as Asian, Black, or Latine/x have experienced significantly lower transfer rates than White or Multi-Racial students.

Table 2. Transferred to a Four-Year Institution Within Three Years

		2011-2012	2012-2013	2013-2014	2014-2015	2015-2016	2016-2017
Asian	Cohort	157	183	168	177	178	165
	Outcome	816	393	897	942	942	884
	% Outcome	19.2%	46.6%	18.7%	18.8%	18.9%	18.7%
Black	Cohort	58	46	58	56	62	61
	Outcome	336	290	331	277	273	286
	% Outcome	17.3%	15.9%	17.5%	20.2%	22.7%	21.3%
Latine/x	Cohort	246	216	248	259	280	294
	Outcome	1,196	1,126	1,156	1,213	1,239	1,259
	% Outcome	20.6%	19.2%	21.5%	21.4%	22.6%	23.4%
Two or More	Cohort	49	54	51	37	46	73
	Outcome	142	150	131	98	137	164
	% Outcome	34.5%	36.0%	38.9%	37.8%	33.6%	44.5%
White	Cohort	486	437	455	460	512	475
	Outcome	1,262	921	1,142	1,163	1,216	1,121
	% Outcome	38.5%	47.4%	39.8%	39.6%	42.1%	42.4%
Total*	Cohort	1,004	964	1,001	1,007	1,100	1,098
	Outcome	4,323	4,161	4,168	4,091	4,231	4,110
	% Outcome	23.2%	23.2%	24.0%	24.6%	26.0%	26.7%

*Includes unreported/unknown and groups suppressed by the Chancellor's Office due to sample size

Source: SMC 2022-2023 Institutional Effectiveness Report

Santa Monica College serves a diverse student population and has developed supports for Black student success, such as the Black Collegians program, and yet fewer than 100 Black students transfer to a four-year institution within three years. Outcomes such as these provide an opportunity for SMC to evaluate current policies and practices that may be contributing to the disproportionate impact on campus.

Santa Monica College's mission is to provide a safe, inclusive, and dynamic learning environment that encourages personal and intellectual exploration – one that challenges and supports students in achieving their educational goals. Students learn to contribute to the local and global community as they develop an understanding of their relationship to diverse social, cultural, political, economic, technological, and natural environments.

The College recognizes that each individual makes a critical contribution to the achievement of this mission. In order to best understand the ways in which Santa Monica College's mission is operationalized, the Equity Audit has three main goals:

- Assess current practices at Santa Monica College - including existing equity-centered work
- Provide recommendations for continued improvements
- Ensure equity is embedded in all areas of campus: policy, practice, and praxis, including pedagogy and andragogy.

This Equity Audit will highlight both equity advancing practices taking place at Santa Monica College and areas of improvement. The recommendations included within the audit will, ideally, meet the needs of all constituent groups across the institution in order to have system wide impact. With the focus being on increasing student success, it is our hope that the information identified within this report will result in a more equitable, inclusive, and welcoming institution where all community members can thrive and succeed.



KEY DEFINITIONS

In an effort to support potential readers of this report, we feel as though it is important to provide definitions of key terminology that will be used throughout this document. Providing these definitions offers readers a baseline common understanding of phrases such as equity, anti-racism, and minoritized students. While we understand that many definitions of these phrases may exist, the definitions below reflect how we, as consultants and researchers, view, discuss, and understand these words and phrases.

Anti-Racism

Scholar and author of *How to Be An Antiracist*, Ibram X. Kendi defines anti-racism as the intentional focus on policies and practices that produce or sustain racial equity between racial groups. It requires constant assessment and reflection and is focused solely on the outcome of a policy or practice, rather than on the creator of such policy or practice.

Culture

In some contexts, culture is used to refer to the richness and diversity of experience and perspectives of individuals and groups from different social backgrounds. Culture also refers to a pervasive system of attitudes, values, symbols, and skills shared within an institution/organization.

Equity

Hotep Consultants defines equity as developing policies, practices, and assessments within an organization that take into consideration the unique challenges and barriers faced by disproportionately impacted groups.

Disproportionate Impact

Disproportionate impact is a condition where some students' access to key resources and supports and ultimately their academic success may be hampered by inequitable practices, policies and approaches to student support resulting in inequitable outcomes. This information is most often presented in terms of race but could include a multitude of identities including: gender, sexual orientation, socioeconomic status, disability, and English fluency.

Diversity

Diversity is the recognition of differences (e.g., race/ethnicity, class, gender, sexual orientation), which are a fact of life, without bias or judgment.

Inclusion

Inclusion is the incorporation of members of traditionally minoritized groups into planning, strategizing and decision making processes of an organization.

Leadership

In some contexts, leadership is used to refer to a group/audience at the institution who have a particular level of influence, formally. Fundamentally, leadership is how individuals and groups leverage their “locus of control” to pursue excellence and achieve a mission and vision. This is achieved through a collective and organized process of directing and bringing an agenda to fruition to achieve results.

Locus of Control

A person with an internal locus of control believes that he or she can influence events and their outcomes, while someone with an external locus of control blames outside forces for everything” - Julian Rotter

Locus of control is the degree to which individuals believe that they have control over the outcomes in their lives. Within an educational context, locus of control is connected to the amount of control or influence an educator believes that they have within the outcomes of students, as it relates to their role (ie. faculty within curriculum, staff within the services they provide).

Minoritized Students

“Minoritized” as a phrase is a concept that describes a certain group of people in their relationship to a dominant group within specific settings and moments of time. Utilizing language that acknowledges the minoritization of communities within the institution highlights the various identities and power dynamics that exist.

For example, it is widely understood that the California Community Colleges support a racially diverse population of students. Numerically, the number of students of color within the CCC system, and Santa Monica College specifically, are greater than that of White students. Yet, due to systemic racism students of color are often not granted the same level of power, authority, or access. As such, their existence within the CCC system is minimized, even though they are not the numerical minority.

Obligation Gap

According to the authors of *Minding the Obligation Gap in Community Colleges and Beyond*, the Obligation Gap can be defined as an accountability standard in which the institution is responsible for the academic achievement of minoritized students of color. Unlike opportunity gap or achievement gap, the responsibility of student success does not belong to the student. Instead, the obligation gap “puts the responsibility on educational institutions to be student-centered when designing academic experiences for the communities they serve”.

Traditional

The traditional framework is the mindset and approach toward education that has yielded us the inequities currently plaguing our system. The traditional framework lacks a systemic analysis of education and fails to take race, bias, and sociohistorical factors into consideration when engaging in the educational arena. It privileges course content without regard to student success.

In the Spring and Fall 2022 semesters, Hotep Consultants worked with a small group of Santa Monica College stakeholders to engage in thought partnership around SMC community engagement. Under the leadership of Dr. Maria Muñoz, this core group was assembled to provide feedback on technical details, insights on stakeholder engagement (including survey distribution and focus group participation), and serve as a sounding board to provide institutional context in alignment with the findings. While the core team was relatively small, the broader group of college leaders who supported the process, participants represented a variety of stakeholder groups including:

- Division of Equity, Pathways, and Inclusion
- SMC College Governance Groups
- CSEA Chapter 36
- Academic Senate
- Faculty Association
- Campus Administration
- Senior Staff
- Management Association
- Office of Institutional Research

Table 3. EPI Team

EPI Team	Role
Dr. Maria Muñoz	Interim Dean of Equity, Pathways, and Inclusion
Eartha Johnson	Project Manager, Guided Pathways for Student Equity and Achievement
Paige Glaves	Administrative Assistant, Equity Pathways, and Inclusion

Table 4. College Leaders that Supported the Equity Audit Process

College leader	Role
Thomas Bui	Interim Associate Dean of Student Life
Diane Pennington	Assistant to Vice President of Human Resources
Dr. Hannah Lawler	Dean of Institutional Research
Sherri Lee-Lewis	Vice President, Human Resources
Cindy Ordaz	Administrative Assistant, Art, Communication, and Media Studies and CSEA President.
Scott Silverman	Associate Dean, SMC Emeritus and Management Association Vice President.

EQUITY AUDIT PROCESS



EQUITY AUDIT PROCESS

The Santa Monica College Equity Audit was conducted in four key phases. The first phase included collecting and analyzing a series of documents which provided critical insights to language in historical institutional policies, practices, and assessment. The second phase was a campus-wide survey that was sent to all employees and students. The employee survey provided insight into the College's culture and climate including the extent to which employees feel supported and valued by the institution, the practices they engage in to support students, and some of the issues and challenges with shifting to a student-focused and student-ready approach.

The survey was sent to students that were enrolled at Santa Monica College during the Fall 2021, Spring 2022 and Fall 2022 terms. The student survey provided insights as to the student experience with employees, peers, and institutional processes. The third phase of the Equity Audit included a series of focus groups that provided insight around employees' level of understanding, engagement, and feedback around equity, diversity, and inclusion efforts at Santa Monica College.

Student focus groups provided deeper insights around challenges navigating college systems and policies, and as well as space to share ways in which the college has provided support, and aided in their sense of welcome and belonging. After completing all three phases of data collection, Hotep Consultants analyzed the data within the lens of the Student Ready, Equity Minded, and Transformative (S.E.T.) Framework, which will be discussed in the next section. This analysis resulted in the final set of recommendations for next steps to improve equity-advancing practices within Santa Monica College.

Table 5. Equity Audit Process

Phase 1: Conduct an analysis of key institutional documents focused on policy, practice, and assessment.		
September	September-October	November
Phase 2: Collected survey responses from an employee survey and a student survey.	Phase 3: Facilitated focus groups for students, instructional faculty, student support & services professionals, administrators, and employees within facilities and operations.	Phase 4: Analyze all data elements within the S.E.T Framework

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The Equity Audit was guided by five (5) primary research questions. These research questions were initially developed by [Hanover Research Brief: Conducting an Equity Audit](#) and adapted by Hotep Consultants to best support Equity Audits within the community college. The research questions are listed below:

1. To what extent is the environment at Santa Monica College diverse and inclusive?
2. To what extent do Santa Monica College's administrative policies and practices encourage a systemic and collaborative approach to diversity, equity, and inclusion?
3. To what extent do Santa Monica College's instructional policies and practices help cultivate a learning experience that is engaging and empowering for historically minoritized students?
4. In what ways can Santa Monica College support changes to current policies, practices, and procedures in order to improve the quality of instruction and services for students?
5. To what extent are Santa Monica College's budget and resource practices informed by a student-ready and equity minded lens?

The research questions above serve as specific questions to be answered as a result of analyzing the data provided. In order to answer the research questions, the Hotep Consultants team utilizes a specific framework as a lens through which to analyze the data. This framework is referred to as the S.E.T. Framework and is described more thoroughly in the next section.

S.E.T. FRAMEWORK

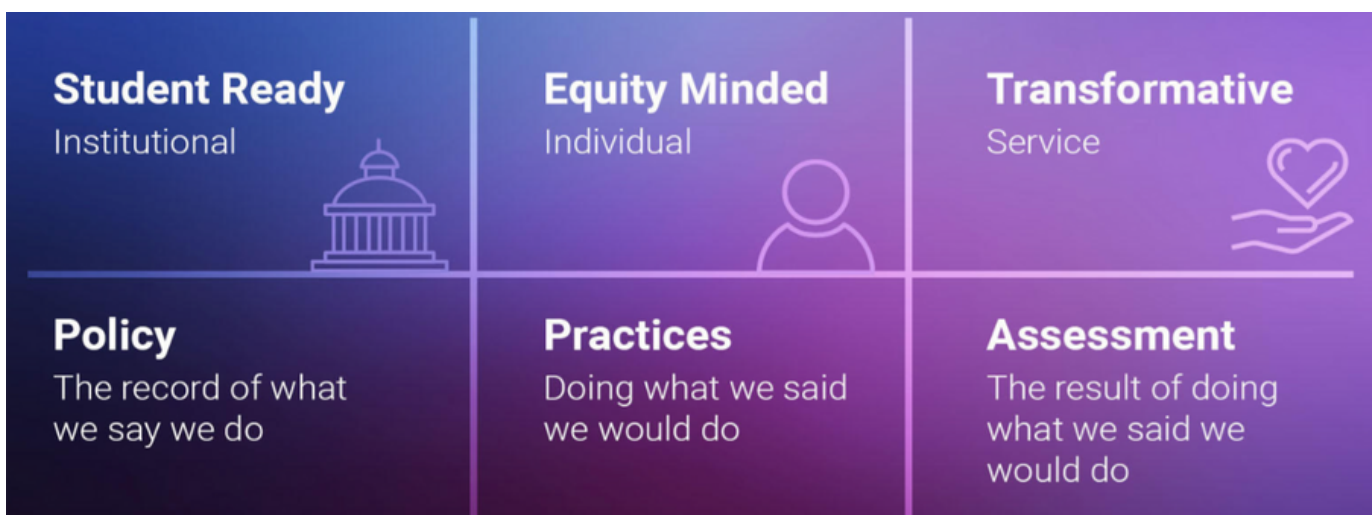
At Hotep Consultants, we embrace award-winning educator Dr. Lisa Delpit's declaration, "We do not really see through our eyes nor hear through our ears, but through our beliefs."

Historically, narratives, including narratives about different groups, justified creating systems of exclusion and marginalization. We see this play out in education during the "Right to Fail Era" where the dominant approach to teaching and learning is hyper focused on individualism and gatekeeping, in order to protect a particular notion of academic rigor and tradition.

This context has implications for 21st century educational leaders. As educational leaders, our beliefs and values are evident in our institution's policies, practices, and procedures. An in-depth analysis of these aspects of our institutions calls for leaders to utilize a practical framework to assess their approaches. The "S.E.T. Framework" stands for Student-Ready, Equity Minded, and Transformative. This framework offers individuals and organizations multiple lenses through which they can reflect on their policies, practices, and assessments to identify barriers to equitable student outcomes.

The S.E.T. Framework provides the philosophical foundation that informs the way in which the Hotep Consultants Team approaches the development of human centered data collection, equity focused data analysis, and intentional and practical reporting of findings and recommendations. The S.E.T. framework is composed of six (6) key components of which we assess the intersections of each.

Image 1. Equity Audit Framework



KEY DEFINITIONS

Student-Ready

Student-Ready is an analysis of how the entire organization functions with an intentional, collaborative and holistic approach to facilitate students' continuous advancement towards college completion and valuable outcomes after college. A student ready approach equally values the knowledge, expertise, and leadership that exists across instruction/academics, student services, and business services/operations as well as different constituency groups including students, classified professionals, faculty members, and management/administration , recognizing every employee as an educator within the institution.

A Student-Ready organization creates system-wide impact by consistently examining processes and practices that are hindering learning for all students and actively working towards solutions. Developing a student-ready culture is both a journey for individuals but also a broader process of organizational learning.

Equity-Minded

Equity-Minded is an analysis at the individual level and one's consciousness, values, and belief systems about students, oneself, and the process of teaching and learning. Equity-minded higher education professionals intentionally call attention to patterns of inequity in student experiences and outcomes. They also take personal and professional responsibility for the success of their students and critically reassess their own practices. It also requires that practitioners are race conscious and aware of the historical context of exclusionary practices in American Higher Education.

Transformative

Transformative is the manifestation of practices that address the historical and sociopolitical causes of inequities found in education and engage in data-informed efforts to repair and restore the educational system. A transformative educational framework interrogates the system, tools, and strategies of the traditional approach and produces innovative student-centered, anti-racist, and anti-sexists strategies for success.

Practice

Practice is most connected to the way in which policies are implemented and actualized within the day to day institutional experiences. There may be times in which practice aligns with policy and there may be times in which it does not. The times in which practice does not align with policy is most often based on individual engagement with said policy either intentionally or unintentionally, and could result in either transformative impact on students or the creation of barriers.

KEY DEFINITIONS

Policy

Policy refers to the written record of what the institution values and desires to accomplish. Policy is often led by governing agencies (i.e. Chancellor's Office, state legislature), institutional governance (i.e. Board of Trustees, governance committees), or campus leadership (i.e. President's Cabinet). Policies can inform college process and documentation (i.e. student forms), and have a significant impact on the student experience. It is important to note that many institutional policies were created during a time in which access and the right to fail were predominant areas of focus within higher education, resulting in student barriers and poor outcomes for students of color. Transformative institutions view policies not as compliance based opportunities to exclude, but rather as parameters from which transformative student engagement can blossom.

Assessment

Assessment refers to the outcome of both policy and practice. Assessments can be formal such as a campus survey or final research paper within a course. Formal assessments are typically tied to understanding campus or course outcomes, connected to program reviews, or impact resource allocations. Informal assessments may provide opportunity for intentional reflection and engagement within a course, program, or department that most impact students' sense of connection and belonging.

DATA REVIEWED

Campus-wide survey

Two campus-wide surveys were developed by Hotep Consultants utilizing the Survey Monkey online survey tool. One survey was developed for Santa Monica College employees and a separate survey was created for Santa Monica College students. In collaboration with Santa Monica College's Equity, Pathways, and Inclusion Division as well as the Office of Institutional Research, Hotep Consultants provided unique survey links and QR codes, for internal distribution and survey collection via email listserv and student email accounts.

The employee surveys were open between September 12 - September 24, 2022; student surveys were open between September 12 - September 26, 2022. In order to increase campus participation in the survey, there was intentional recruitment by classified educators, faculty leaders, and administrators to ensure broad campus wide engagement, particularly for groups that don't participate in these conversations.

357 total employees participated in the employee survey

Employees who work at Santa Monica College during Fall 2022 were invited to participate in the survey. The survey was sent to 1,898 employees with a response rate of 19%.

2023 students participated in the student survey

Students that were enrolled in classes at Santa Monica College during Fall 2021, Spring, Summer, and/or Fall 2022 were invited to participate in the survey, with the exception of students enrolled in Dual Enrollment as their experiences with Santa Monica College may differ from students taking classes "on" campus (including remote courses). The survey was sent to 9,998 students with a response rate of 20%.

The full list of survey participant demographics and redacted survey responses can be found in the appendix.

The survey primarily consisted of likert scale questions in which participants rated their agreeability or level of comfort across a variety of factors. Additionally, each section within the survey included an open ended question to which participants could provide clarity or context around their responses.

Survey - Six Key Section

Belief in Students

This is the authentic and unwavering belief that students (in particular, students of color, first generation, and/or low income students) have the capacity to learn and be successful. Educators who believe in students communicate this through expectations and support.

Campus Equity Eco-System

Creating change requires the organization to function as an equity-minded community meaning that all individuals, constituent groups, departments, and services understand what their role is in student success and leverage resources to advance equity and student success in alignment with student equity plan, strategic plan, and vision for becoming an anti-racist campus.

Being Action Oriented

Being action-oriented requires intentional steps and efforts towards dismantling inequitable practices and policies within the institution. Individuals and groups within the organization use their locus of control to make an impact for students consistently.

Sense of Welcoming and Belonging

Students feel welcomed and a sense of belonging when an institution values students' cultural/racial differences, connects them to opportunities and resources, and creates community for students. A campus that is welcoming and gives students a sense of belonging

Racial Literacy

Understanding what race is, its relationship to inequity, and how to respond to racial tension, discrimination, and inequitable outcomes with an anti-racist lens.

Critical Self Reflection

The practice of assessing an organization's culture, policies, and practices and identifying ways to change, adapt, and grow to improve outcomes for students. This practice requires thinking about how one's social location (race, gender, SES, etc) impacts beliefs about teaching and learning, the practices that are acted out, and impact on students.

Focus Group Discussions

After the employee survey closed, Hotep Consultants conducted a number of focus groups to gain additional insight around employees' level of understanding, engagement, and feedback around equity, diversity, and inclusion efforts at Santa Monica College. Student focus groups were conducted in parallel to the student survey, with the intention to learn more about the overall student experience at Santa Monica College including students' sense of welcome and belonging, racialized and/or gendered experiences, and awareness of impactful practices within the campus.

We hosted 32 focus group sessions over a period of 40 hours between August 16 - October 18, 2022. The focus groups were held virtually via Zoom. In order to ensure that participants were able to actively engage in the focus group, breakout rooms were used to provide small group conversations facilitated by a consultant from Hotep Consultants. As such, one focus group session could host up to 40 participants with four rooms of 10 participants each.

Each focus group session highlighted a specific stakeholder group to ensure that questions asked within the focus group were most relevant to the role of the participants. We hosted one (1) focus group for students, three (3) for employees within student services & support departments, two (2) for instructional faculty, and one (1) focus group was held during the meeting of the managers.

- 156 total participants engaged in the 32 focus group sessions

While we are grateful for the students that participated in the focus groups, due to the low overall attendance at the student focus groups, we will not be including the insights shared to protect the privacy and anonymity of student participants. The full list of focus group participant demographics, focus group schedule, and focus group protocol can be found in the appendix.

Document Analysis

In addition to the campus survey and focus group sessions, a document analysis was conducted to gain insights into structures, messages, and practices that could create barriers to anti-racist efforts within the institution. Documents remain a source of information and direction regardless of changes in personnel, mission, or initiative. It is imperative to review and update documentation, especially if any documentation can be directly linked to barriers to student success: academic and professional goal achievement. At the onset of the Equity Audit, the Hotep Consultants team provided the Santa Monica College Equity Audit Core Team with a list of key documents to gather for review.

The Equity Audit Core Team collected a number of documents from the key documents list and shared them with the Hotep Consultants team via google drive. We then uploaded the shared documents to the data visualization tool, Dedoose, where our team reviewed, analyzed, and coded over 146 documents. For documents that were not included within the initial google drive, Hotep Consultants worked directly with the Equity Audit Core Team to gather additional documentation, or searched the Santa Monica College website for additional materials.

Some items reviewed in the document analysis include:

- Job Descriptions/Postings
- Program/Service Information
- Student Equity Plan Executive Summary
- College Handbooks
- Academic Regulations
- Academic Senate Resolutions
- Employee Review Process
- Program Review Documentation
- Course Syllabi for High Enrolled courses, and High DFW courses
- Course Outline of Record for High Enrolled courses, and High DFW courses
- Advertisements and Applications for Student Support Programs
- Student Events Calendar

The full list of documents included in the document analysis can be found in the appendix.

LIMITATIONS

As with any research, the Equity Audit at Santa Monica College was not exempt from a series of limitations that might influence our findings and final recommendations. Such limitations are listed below.

Timing

Much of the data collection, both surveys and focus groups, took place throughout Fall semester. As a result, potential participants may not have had the opportunity to fully participate in either the survey or focus group due to competing schedules or priorities (i.e. trying to finalize courses during the first two weeks of the term). We realize the timing of the data collection may have limited the number and breadth of responses that we were able to receive within this process and therefore may not paint a complete picture of the campus climate and experience from all constituency groups.

Breadth and depth of voices

As mentioned above, the timing challenges with the data collection process limited the number and breadth of responses that we were able to include in the data collection process. For our faculty analysis, we were grateful to have heard from full-time faculty at Santa Monica College, however we know that the experiences of adjunct faculty are often vastly different than those of full-time faculty within most community colleges. Because of the timing of the focus groups, the faculty members that were most available to lend their voices to the conversation were full-time faculty which may not be representative of all faculty experiences.

Access to data

Again, we are extremely grateful for the voices that we heard from within the surveys and focus groups, and the amount of institutional documents that were shared with us as part of this audit. That said, we also acknowledge the reality that we can only review the information we have access to, therefore, there may be information or documentation that we were not privy to during this process.

Perhaps we did not ask for the right information. Or perhaps there wasn't an awareness of the existence of a specific item or topic that could be of interest and importance to this process amongst those that we engaged with. Again, of no fault to anyone in particular.

Additionally, there is such a thing as research bias which exists in spaces where individuals may not feel comfortable or safe in sharing their true thoughts or experiences with researchers out of a fear of stigma or retribution. In this instance, we, as researchers, are only privy to the information shared with us through the survey or focus group presentations based on the level of comfort a participant has in sharing their story. We acknowledge this fact and have taken this into consideration during our analysis of the data.

Pandemic!

Finally, throughout the data collection and engagement process through the analysis and presentations of findings, we find ourselves still deep in the midst of the COVID-19 global health pandemic. The sudden and drastic requirement to shift the way in which most colleges have offered instruction and services to students has been taxing on both employees and students. We recognize that the Fall 2022 semester may have been the first term where many colleagues were returning to on-ground courses and programs. The request to fill out yet another survey, or attend another 90 minute zoom session for a focus group, may have exhausted those that are dealing with survey and screen fatigue.

Additionally, in light of the racial reckoning around anti-racist and anti-Black systemic policies and practices, there is also fatigue that communities of color face in having to reshare traumas and microaggressions that they encounter on a daily basis. Therefore it is understandable that some may have turned down the request to participate in yet another conversation about equity and racism within the institution. The mental health of community members, especially those of color, has been incredibly taxed over the past two years. That being said, we are grateful for those that had the energy and ability to share their stories with us and we are hopeful that we were able to capture both the individual and collective experiences of the communities that call Santa Monica College their place of study or place of work.

EQUITY AUDIT FINDINGS



The Equity Audit findings are a result of the deep and intentional analysis of institutional documents, campus survey, and focus group discussions. We invite you to embrace what these findings may illuminate about the student experience and the process of change, which requires time, patience, practice, learning from mistakes, and a willingness to do things differently. The findings are presented in two parts: first a set of overarching themes, followed by a summary of findings within the S.E.T. framework. Following the findings, a full list of recommendations will also be presented within the S.E.T. Framework.

Overarching Themes

Clarity and Connection

There is a lack of clarity around the institution's equity advancing priorities. There are several different groups all with different goals around how to advance equity efforts on campus. The Board of Trustees has one set of goals, the Student Equity Plan boasts another set of goals, which are all different from the goals in the 2017-2022 Strategic Planning document. What further muddies the clarity around SMC's equity advancing priorities and goals, is the fact that an overarching set of priorities – one to which all of the individual groups can build their individual goals off of – is missing.

Without an overarching set of priorities, the institution lacks guidance on how to best prioritize and implement the goals that they do have.

Challenges to Developing an Equity Ecosystem

As mentioned previously, there are several different equity focused groups that exist within SMC, each with their own set of goals and priorities. Because there is no clear connection between the various groups and goals, the equity efforts that exist are siloed and polarized which creates a barrier to developing a system of equity to provide collaborative opportunities to work towards a shared set of priorities.

Additionally, the siloed groups have created an environment that has made it difficult, and unwelcoming, for those not in the "in group" to enter these communities if their backgrounds differ or if they have a different level of understanding of the issues, and subsequent recommendations, to advance equity efforts at SMC.

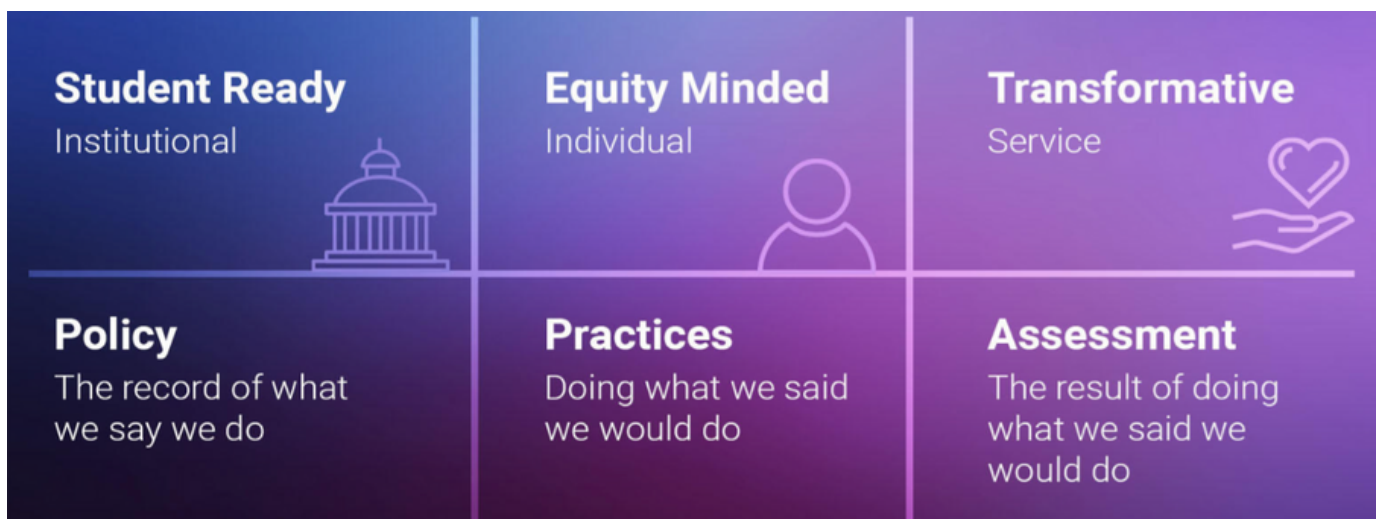
Disconnected Impact for Student Success

SMC's strong reputation, programs, and services attract diverse students into the SMC community. And yet, because there is no clear set of priorities to support these diverse groups of students nor an equity ecosystem to create collaborative and cohesive approaches to supporting equity initiatives within the college, the efforts that are currently taking place are limited in their impact to improve outcomes for disproportionately impacted students. Individual employees and departments are going above and beyond to support and retain students considering limited human and financial resources and support to address gaps in quality of teaching and service.

S.E.T. ANALYSIS

The findings within the next few pages are presented in alignment with the S.E.T. framework. The “SET Framework” stands for Student-Ready, Equity Minded, and Transformative. This framework offers individuals and organizations multiple lenses through which they can reflect on their policies, practices, and assessments to identify barriers to equitable student outcomes. We strive to uplift encouraging practices by including highlights and examples of equity advancing and promising work currently taking place at Santa Monica College. We will also include direct examples from the data collected, or questions for consideration to strengthen the areas of growth.

Image 1. Equity Audit Framework



Student-Ready is an analysis of how the entire organization functions with an intentional, collaborative and holistic approach to facilitate students' continuous advancement towards college completion and valuable outcomes after college.

Overview

Santa Monica College has invested time and resources to participate in equity advancing initiatives across the state of California. Such opportunities have provided the College with the space to investigate internal practices, and develop ways to reconcile such practices with institutional goals.

Highlights

Santa Monica College has engaged in practices across the institution to advance equity efforts and address opportunity gaps for disproportionately impacted students. Through intentional structural changes that seek to embed equity within and throughout the student journey, providing access to external expertise, and championing grassroots initiatives to support individual growth and reflection, the College has clearly named "equity" as an important priority.

Critical Reflection

The practice of assessing an organization's culture, policies, and practices and identifying ways to change, adapt, and grow to improve outcomes for students.

SMC has taken intentional steps to encourage a systemic and collaborative approach to addressing equity, diversity, and inclusion. The language used in key institutional documents, such as the 2019 SEP, demonstrates a clear and intentional focus on racial equity. Centering equity within a larger institutional framework that guides the Student Equity Plan, and therefore all of the institutional activities that have been developed as a result of that plan, is one way in which SMC articulates its commitment to equity.

Image 2. SMC Equity Audit Framework



The Development of the Equity, Pathways, and Inclusion division is an example of allocating resources and creating structures that are focused on intentionally embedding equity within the redesign of the student experience via Guided Pathways. While the EPI Division and the Guided Pathways frameworks are still relatively new, there is great promise in connecting the statewide Guided Pathways work with the institution's goals of achieving equity under this overall umbrella of Equity, Pathways, and Inclusion. It will be up to the EPI Division, and the leadership of its dean, to ensure that equity is at the forefront of the Guided Pathways initiative and advocate for larger systemic changes that are not inherently connected to the Guided Pathways movement.

In addition to the development of the EPI Division, SMC has also accessed the expertise of national thought leaders, such as USC's Center for Race & Equity, USC's Center for Urban Education, and CCEAL, to inform campus equity efforts. The various USC and CCEAL trainings have been focused on leadership approaches to advance equity, culturally relevant teaching and curriculum, and institutional redesign. These engagements have provided campus leaders the opportunity to examine policies and practices within an existing equity framework. While not all members of the campus community have participated in the external trainings, SMC has archived many of the trainings and webinars on the various professional development websites.

Utilizing a Campus Equity Ecosystem

Creating change requires the organization to function as an equity-minded community meaning that all individuals, constituent groups, departments, and services understand what their role is in student success and leverage resources to advance equity and student success in alignment with student equity plan, strategic plan, and vision for becoming an anti-racist campus.

Though SMC Areas of Interest have only recently launched, the College has taken great care to intentionally embed cross-institutional supports for students through the development of "Student Care Teams" which is currently underway to be fully implemented.

Image 3. Composition of AOI- Based Student Care Team

Composition of each Aoi-Based Student Care Team *

- Instructional Faculty Lead
- Counseling Faculty Lead
 - Counseling Cluster (specific and identifiable group of practitioners tailored to the Aoi)
- Career Counseling Representative
- Proactive "case management" by a Student Care Team Success Coach (Student Services Specialist)
- Financial Aid Representative
- Health and Wellbeing Representative
- Peer Navigators

Source: Santa Monica College: Areas of Interest-based Student Care Teams

Ensuring that all students have access to dedicated discipline specific instructional and counseling faculty and career support have been championed approaches to ensuring that students are confident about which Path they Enter. The case management approach to ensuring that students Stay on the Path and Achieve their Goals is supported with the addition of financial aid representatives – to ensure that students have the funding needed to continue their studies, a health and wellbeing representative – to ensure that students have consistent mental health supports available to them as they navigate life both as a student and as a community member, and peer navigators – to ensure that students are able to build community with their peers and develop a sense of belonging and connectedness to the SMC community. Creating a case management structure across Academic Affairs and Student Services provides an opportunity for colleagues to work in collaboration to support the success of students with intention.

Action Oriented

Being action-oriented requires intentional steps and efforts towards dismantling inequitable practices and policies within the institution.

Reviewing institutional policies on a regular basis is an incredibly important way to ensure that the College is not unintentionally engaging in harmful policies or perpetuating practices that explicitly result in disproportionate outcomes for students. Within the classroom, policies related to curriculum and assessment are incredibly impactful to student outcomes. These policies are captured in the Course Outlines of Record where Student/Program Learning Outcomes are referenced, assessments are approved, and curriculum is recommended. The 2021-2022 DPAC Action Plan 1 - Academic and Career Paths included specific focus on reviewing and revising Course Outlines of Record, Student Learning Outcomes, and Program Learning Outcomes in collaboration with the Curriculum Committee and Program Review Committee.

Image 4. 2020-2021 DPAC Action Plan 1 - Academic and Career Paths [snippet]

Coordinate the critical examination of existing programs and program learning outcomes, and, if necessary, generate tangible recommendations for revisions to program learning outcomes and/or curricular changes in the interest of student learning, student efficiency and student racial equity. This includes, but is not limited to the integration of culturally relevant pedagogy and learning, project-based learning, collaborative learning, and applied learning opportunities. (Fall 2020 & Spring 2021) Curriculum Committee and Program Review specifically, including the Academic Senate, as well as the Redesign work team on Equitizing Gateway Courses would all play a crucial role in this endeavor.

Source: Responses to 2020-2021 Annual Action Plan

Being Action Oriented and prioritizing regular review of Course Outlines of Record to encourage the use of culturally relevant teaching and learning practices, active and applied learning, and culturally sustaining curriculum will help a more diverse student body connect more deeply to the curriculum and encourage student success.

Also in the 2021-2022 DPAC Action Plan was Action Plan 2 - Equitizing Gateway and Critical Courses. In collaboration with Action Plan 1 whose focus was on implementing Guided Pathways and reviewing curriculum, Equitizing Gateway and Critical Courses takes it one step further in that it provides an opportunity for all faculty, full-time and adjunct, to engage in meaningful dialogue and thought partnership around how to strengthen their own courses within an equity lens.

Image 5. 2021-2022 DPAC Action Plans - Equitizing Gateway Courses [snippet]

Describe the anticipated outcomes that will result from the completion of the action plan, including how its completion might further the college's goal of eliminating equity gaps:

- **Reducing the racial equity gap in gateway and critical courses will significantly reduce the college racial equity gap. Both gateway and critical courses (in English and Math) set the stage for a student's future. Moreover, many gateway courses are also our most popular General Education courses for students pursuing a different Academic and Career Path, thus they make up some of the highest enrolled courses.**
- **We anticipate that the goal of Equitizing Gateway and Critical Courses will require this Action Plan to be ongoing over several years and will require significant investment in professional development, but we equally anticipate that this investment will be recouped based on much improved retention and completion numbers.**

The most significant aspect of the Equitizing Gateway and Critical Courses initiative is that it focuses on the courses that many students are required to take before they can enter their major, transfer, or career related coursework. These are the classes that historically minoritized students have found themselves "stuck" in and unable to move through in order to complete their educational goal. The intentional focus on starting with these courses provides an opportunity for faculty to create pathways to success within their classrooms rather than holding pens of failure. While this initiative first began with entry level and high enrolled courses, the Equitizing Gateway Courses program will soon expand across the institution supporting a variety of disciplines including CTE courses as well – all of which has an incredible opportunity to be impactful for students.

Areas of Opportunity

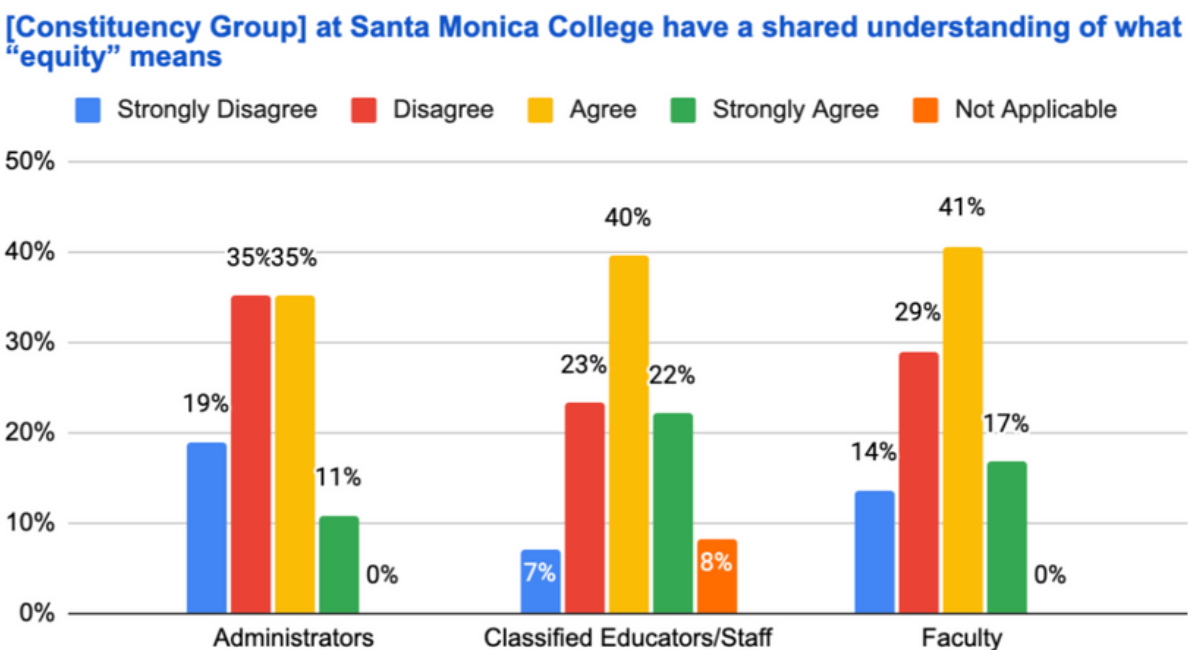
While Santa Monica College has expressed a clear desire to better support disproportionately impacted students, the College lacks clear goals and direction on how to do so. With at least four key documents, prepared by four distinctive institutional bodies, there is no overarching set of priorities for which individual groups may all align within an effort to ensure that these siloed goals are prioritized and valued by the College. This lack of clarity has resulted in many employees and governance groups unsure of the College's true focus and encourages siloed and disjointed approaches to advance equity efforts which may not be institutionalized later on.

Critical Reflection

The practice of assessing an organization's culture, policies, and practices and identifying ways to change, adapt, and grow to improve outcomes for students.

In the survey, Hotep Consultants asked SMC colleagues whether or not there was a shared understanding of "equity" within each constituency group. While the majority of respondents replied Agree to Strongly Agree, there were a notable amount of responses that responded "Disagree" between 25% and 35%, which can be considered a significant amount if up to a third of a particular constituency group does not believe that there is consensus about the the issue being addressed and the approach to resolve it.

Chart 1: Employee Survey Response - Colleges have a shared understanding of what "equity" means



In reviewing various institutional documents the Hotep Consultants team identified several different definitions of equity. It could be that the lack of clarity around understanding what equity means at SMC is a result of the presence of various definitions and lack of guidance around how any of those definitions might directly relate to different constituency groups.

Table 6. Equity Definitions across SMC

2019-2022 Student Equity Plan Executive Summary	Faculty Equity Resource Guided developed in 2018	EPI Glossary of Racial Equity Terminology and Language
<p><u>Equity:</u> Fair and just inclusion. An equitized society is one in which all can participate and prosper. The goal of equity must be to create conditions that allow ALL to reach their full potential.</p>	<p><u>Equity:</u> Fair outcomes, treatment, and opportunities for all students (California Dept. of Education). Equity means giving each student access to the resources they need to learn, thrive, and be successful.</p>	<p><u>Racial Equity:</u> Racial equity is the condition that would be achieved if one's racial identity no longer predicted, in a statistical sense, how one fares. When we use the term, we are thinking about racial equity as one part of racial justice, and thus we also include work to address root causes of inequities, not just their manifestation. This includes elimination of policies, practices, attitudes, and cultural messages that reinforce differential outcomes by race or that fail to eliminate them. "A mindset and method for solving problems that have endured for generations, seem intractable, harm people and communities of color most acutely, and ultimately affect people of all races. This will require seeing differently, thinking differently, and doing the work differently. Racial equity is about results that make a difference and last."</p>

It can be beneficial for individual governance or work groups to define equity as it relates to their locus of control, it would be most impactful if there was an overarching definition of equity that guides the institution as a whole. A definition that serves as a guide post to provide direction when new initiatives are launched, funding and resources are being requested, or structural shifts are being proposed all in the effort to “advance equity.” If there’s no institutional definition to clarify what SMC’s definition of equity is, it becomes more difficult to identify and focus efforts that are actually working towards the institution’s goals.

While there are several documents that mention the prioritization of achieving equitable outcomes for students, and there is a shared sense of importance around supporting the college in doing so, there lacks a clear overarching set of institutional goals to guide the various initiatives and practices currently taking place across the College. During the focus groups, the Hotep Consultants team asked employees to name the top three priorities for the College, and responses were vast – when the employees were able to answer the question at all.

Our team was directed to a variety of documents that employees referred to in order to identify the institutional goals and priorities including the “2022-2023 Board of Trustees Goals” and the “2019-2022 SEP Executive Summary”.

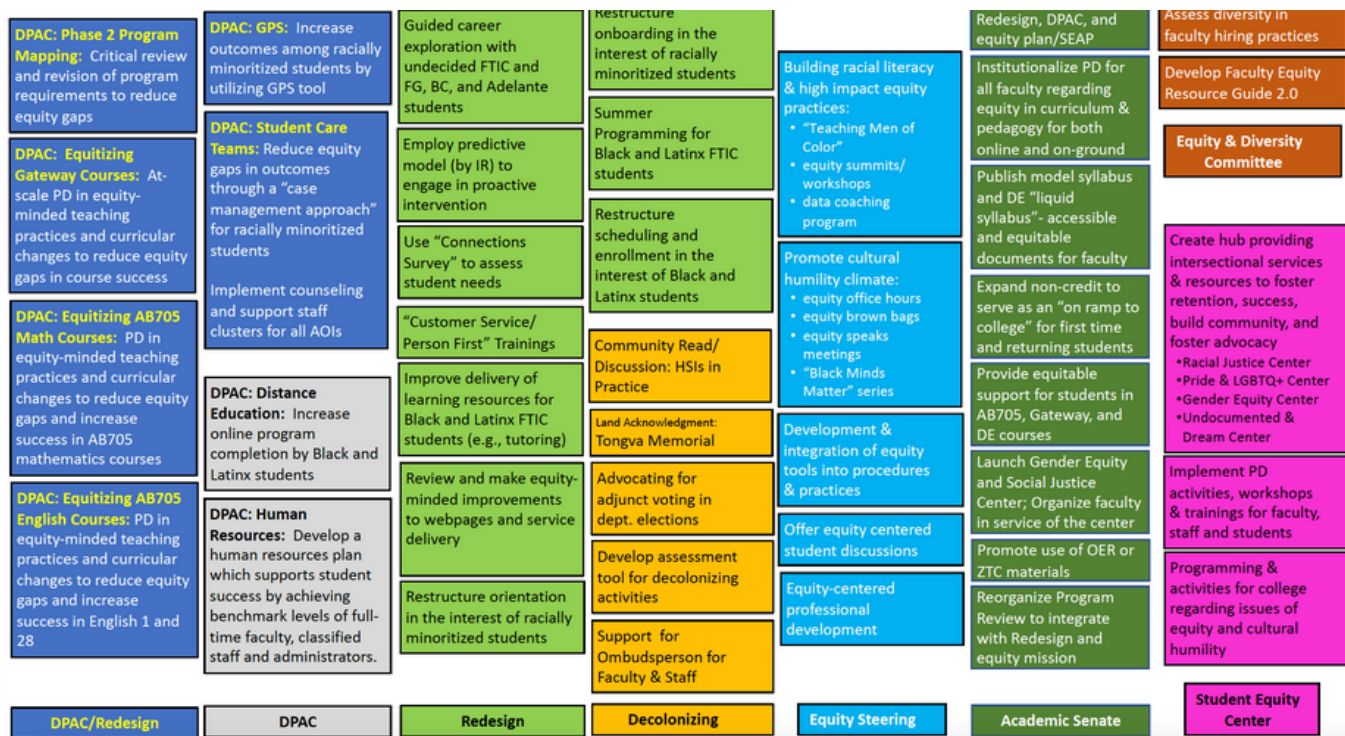
Very few individuals mentioned the “SMC Strategic Initiatives 2017-2022” or the “DPAC Action Plans” yet those were documents that our team reviewed as a part of this audit. Having such a broad array of documents and work groups that all seem to be working towards a separate set of goals can lead to confusion, missed opportunities for collaboration, and thinning out resources that may have been better directed if there were not such stark siloes on campus.

“... we have groups with words like ‘equity’ in them, we have a [Student Equity Plan], we have training around equity, but it hasn’t been meaningfully incorporated into our decision making structures. There’s no comprehensive critical analysis of how those structures came to be in place...” (Faculty, Focus Group)

“There are pockets of folx who address equity issues, racism, and discrimination, but it's not part of the organizational culture and is not embedded in our policies, procedures, practices” (Administrator, Survey)

The EPI created a “Crosswalk of Equity Activities” which serves as a visual representation of the various groups on campus all working on separate equity initiatives without any overarching institutional goals to help cohesively guide the work.

Image 6. Crosswalk of Equity Activities



Source: EPI PowerPoint Presentation 02.04.2021 - Crosswalk of Equity Activities

Having a multitude of different working groups all with their individual goals and priorities does not always have to result in a siloed or disjointed approach to achieving institutional goals, the challenge here is that there are not clear institutional goals to all of the individual group goals back to. The College of San Mateo’s 2028 Educational Master Plan, 5 year Action Steps (pg 105-109), provides a visual representation of ways in which individual divisions, governance groups, and work groups might all take different approaches to address the clearly defined institutional goals.

The lack of an Educational Master Plan to lead the institution and clearly articulate the goals for which all employees should be working to address could be one reason this gap exists. Alternatively, the SMC Strategic Initiatives could serve as a guiding document for which all work groups are connected back to, resource allocations are tied to, and future institutional plans are derived from. Whichever leading document the College decides to develop should be referred to early and often when discussing the institution's goals and priorities during any given term.

Utilizing a Campus Equity Ecosystem

Creating change requires the organization to function as an equity-minded community meaning that all individuals, constituent groups, departments, and services understand what their role is in student success and leverage resources to advance equity and student success in alignment with student equity plan, strategic plan, and vision for becoming an anti-racist campus.

During the focus groups with managers the Hotep Consultants team asked “who is responsible for advancing equity at SMC,” and the resounding response was “all of us”. However, when we asked non-managers what their role was in advancing equity at SMC, the answers varied depending on the job classification of the individuals that we spoke with. Specifically, individuals that were classified as Classified Educators or Classified Professionals did not express clarity in understanding what their role was in advancing equity at SMC – especially if they were not in roles that directly work with students.

If it is the expectation that all members of the SMC workforce are responsible for ensuring the advancement of equitable practices and dismantling of inequitable policies in order to best support students, then there need to be stronger expectations of such during the hiring process and opportunities for all members of the SMC community to engage in Professional Learning Experiences focused on addressing equity within their respective unit of service.

Job Descriptions

There are inconsistencies in SMC job descriptions around expectations for engaging in equity-minded practices, across all job classifications. Even the layout of the job postings varies by employee type - specifically the mention of equity, inclusion, or diversity and where it appears within the job posting.

Table 7: Equity Expectations in Job Descriptions

Employee Type	DEI Mention in Posting
<p>Administrator Positions Reviewed:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dean, First Year Programs • Associate Dean, Student Life • Vice President, Academic Affairs 	<p>Diversity Statement and Equity Statement is found towards the end of the job posting.</p> <p>Only, VP Academic Affairs had a mention of expectations to engage in equity related work within "Job Duties" "Vice President leads instructional efforts to reduce racial equity gaps and foster a diverse, equitable and inclusive learning and work environment"</p>
<p>Classified Educator/Professional Positions Reviewed:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • DSPS Specialist 2023 • DSPS Student Services Assistant • Community College Police Sergeant • Community College Police Dispatcher 2022-10 	<p>Equity Statement is found in the second half of the job posting after Benefits, Salary Placement, Selection Process.</p> <p>No mention of expectations to engage in equity related work within "Job Duties."</p>
<p>Faculty - Full-Time/Tenure Track Positions Reviewed:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Earth Science • History (Ethnic Studies) • Mathematics • Counseling - Career Services • Respiratory Care 	<p>Institutional Commitment to Equity and Diversity listed at the top of the job posting.</p> <p>Diversity Statement and Equity Statement is found towards the end of the job posting, after Pay Philosophy.</p> <p>No mention of expectations to engage in equity related work within "Job Duties."</p>
<p>Faculty - Part-Time Positions Reviewed:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communication Studies (Pool) • English (Pool) • Ethnic Studies (Pool) • Mathematics (Pool) • Philosophy & Social Sciences - Women's Studies (Pool) 	<p>Equity Statement is found in the second half of the job posting after Benefits, Salary Placement, Selection Process.</p> <p>No mention of expectations to engage in equity related work within "Job Duties."</p>

There was only one faculty job description that the Hotep Consultants Team reviewed that explicitly stated the expectation of the candidate to utilize culturally relevant teaching practices and equity minded course materials: English Composition Tenure Track.

Image 7: Equity Expectations in Job Description: English Composition Tenure Track

Other duties may include collaboration with fellow faculty to design, evaluate, and implement culturally-responsive pedagogy within equity-minded course materials and classroom assessment strategies that enhance student success and persistence toward academic/career goals and help close equity gaps; incorporation of antiracist, intersectional pedagogy and curriculum; participation in interdisciplinary collaboration to develop programs of study that contextualize and integrate reading and writing instruction relevant to students' career and academic goals; data inquiry and self-assessment to develop strategies for student success, persistence, and equity; assistance in growing student interest in English composition and literature courses; active engagement in campus redesign and global citizenship initiatives; participation in the continuing development of instructional support strategies, including tutoring, early alert, and supplemental instruction; leadership and participation in faculty professional development efforts, as well as college, departmental, and faculty-organization activities.

Source: Full-Time/Tenure Track Instructor, English Composition - "Job Duties"

The lack of consistency in highlighting the expectation that all employees would engage in the equity advancing work taking place on campus further perpetuates the idea that only some employees – mostly faculty teaching within the Golden 4 – are expected to focus on equity. If the expectation is that all members of the SMC workforce should be addressing equity within their areas of service, the job descriptions should be updated across all classifications to clearly state such.

Professional Development

Similar to the lack of consistency about expectations of engaging in equity-minded practices across all job classifications, there is a lack of consistency around the professional development opportunities provided to various employee groups to engage in such meaningful work. Much of the professional development workshops, webinars, and trainings that the College hosts or participates in that focus on equity is often explicitly marketed towards instructional faculty. While there are non-instructional faculty that may be invited to such professional development opportunities, the primary focus for the trainings are perceived to only create space for instructional faculty and discuss ways in which to advance equitable practices in the classroom. The quotes on the following page are shared from colleagues regarding the equity focused professional development opportunities at SMC.

- “I’m forwarding a perfect example of how SMC equity offerings alienate the classified staff. Its primary header says Affirming Students’ Racial Identities in Curriculum. What is classifieds role in this? You have already lost our attention!!” (*Classified Educator post focus group email regarding the USC Race & Equity Center e-Convening email*)
- “Not everyone is invited to the “equity conversation” and even when/if they show up, they’re not welcomed because they aren’t speaking the same ‘equity language’” (*Administrator, Focus Group*)
- “All depts work in silos and although there are a few who would like to dismantle that culture, there is no support. The work “FLEX” in itself is not inclusive. This specifically describes faculty PD. There is none for classified professionals.” (*Classified Educator/Staff, Survey*)

In order to cultivate a community of colleagues who advance equity across the College it will be vital to ensure that there are professional development opportunities for all constituency groups to participate, learn, and engage. Equally as important as providing the opportunities for all constituency groups to participate in equity related professional development, the College has to create the space for individuals who may not have participated before to be welcomed into these spaces of exploration, dialog, and learning.

Culture of Mistrust

The lack of clarity around the equity advancing initiatives and institutional priorities at SMC has resulted in individuals and small groups developing siloed activities focused on meeting a variety of needs and goals. Though the outcomes of these small groups have been impactful and resulted in meaningful work, such as the Equitizing Gateway Courses program (as an example of a program that was initiated by a small group of colleagues in direct service to students), the siloing of these activities have limited widespread participation.

While it is wonderful that there are individuals at the College that are passionate about advancing equity efforts, unfortunately that intense passion has ostracized others who may not express the same level of passion or purport to be advanced within their equity journey. Focus group participants shared reservations in attending many of the equity related events because they didn’t feel as though they were welcomed or their questions were valued in open forums. Below is a quote from a colleague sharing their experience in equity focused spaces on campus:

- “I have not felt that these opportunities are ‘safe spaces’ and I’ve been significantly more ‘quiet’ at these spaces than I ever have been in my career.” (*Faculty, Survey*)

- “DEI is losing its true meaning and now, some faculty are afraid of speaking for fear of retaliation or being deemed racist or not a team player.” (*Classified Educator/Staff, Survey*)
- My department discusses equity during meetings and has an equity workgroup. Pushback from one or two people within our department has halted any progress and created toxic fear. Our leadership, both at the department level and the administrative level, has no skills or abilities to address this. I have spoken with the last three[_____] about this atmosphere, which is rich with white supremacy and misogyny. They have done nothing because it is not “bad enough.” I no longer speak during department meetings because of the trolling I have experienced.” (*Faculty, Survey*)

Such siloing of equity advancing professional development, workshops, or discussions on campus, results in the same individuals participating in each of the activities on campus without welcoming or inviting others to the conversation. This prevents the opportunity for diverse thoughts and ideas to be shared and instead keeps the conversations and learning insular, wherein the choir consistently preaches to the choir.

When the climate at an institution is one in which there’s a lack of clarity around the institution’s overall goals, employees are not clear in their role of advancing equity, employees are not being consulted across the institution on policies and procedures that could impact student outcomes (explicitly or implicitly), colleagues don’t feel welcomed to even explore the ways in which they can advance the equity related work on campus, the students are the direct recipients of the harmful outcomes.

- “It never dawned on me that our students feel the same thing. We bring them to us, we bring them to an inherently not welcome place...The turning point for me and my equity journey was understanding that piece of what our students go through. We not only recruit them, but they choose us.” (*Administrator, Focus Group*)

Moving forward, it will be incredibly important for SMC to establish clear and consistent goals, clear expectations of individual roles to advance the work, create space for all employees to grow within their own equity journey, and institutionalize opportunities to collaborate and strengthen equity advancing work both on the individual and department/division level across the institution and all constituency groups.

EQUITY MINDED

Equity-Minded is an analysis at the individual level and one's consciousness, values, and belief systems about students, oneself, and the process of teaching and learning. Equity-minded higher education professionals intentionally call attention to patterns of inequity in student experiences and outcomes.

Highlights

Santa Monica College offers opportunities that students believe will help them succeed in their academic goals. Students believe that SMC staff and faculty care about their success and some go above and beyond to support students. These positive employee-student relationships and interactions are meaningful because they help students feel like they are welcomed at the college, regardless of what challenge or struggle they might be experiencing.

Demonstrating Belief in Students

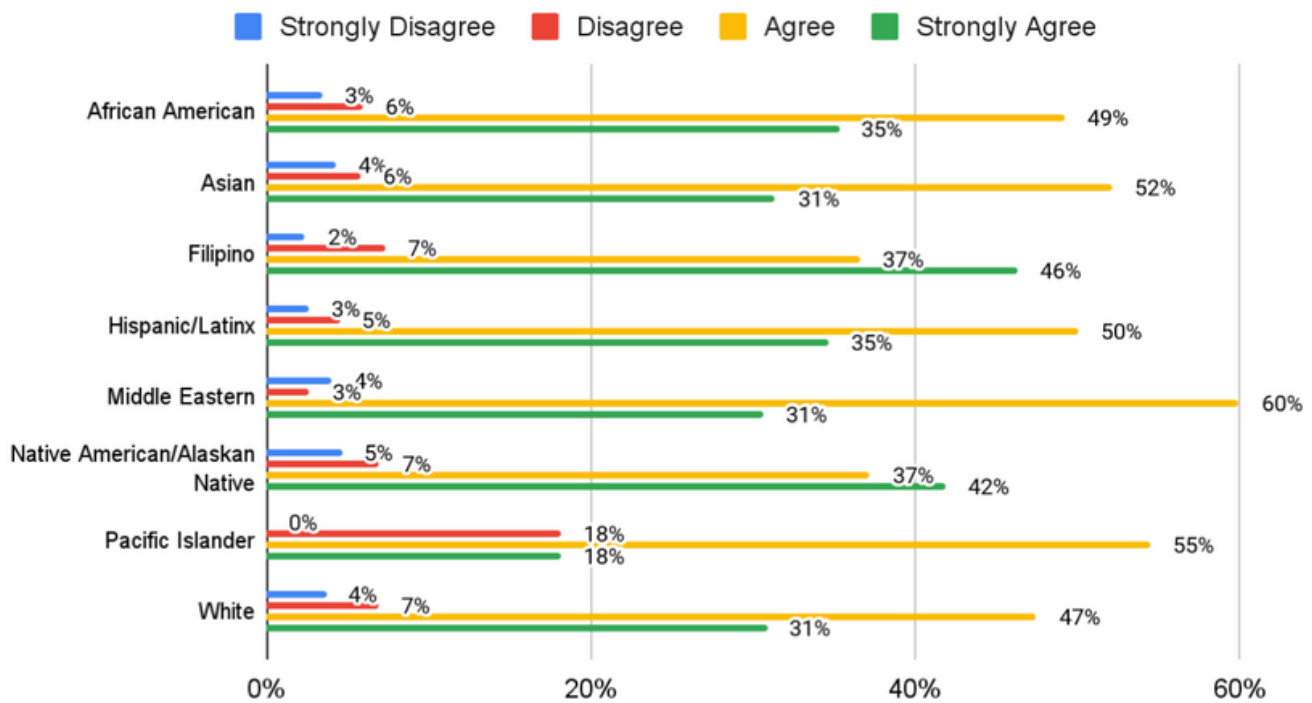
This is the authentic and unwavering belief that students (in particular, students of color, first generation, and/or low income) have the capacity to learn and be successful.

Santa Monica College is well known for its reputation for having stellar academic programs, a variety of support programs, and an incredible number of students that transfer to the University of California system each year. While all of those aspects are impressive on their own, what is even more impressive are the individuals who support all of those areas of institutional pride. The dedicated employees of SMC that develop meaningful and impactful relationships with students and encourage their success.

The overwhelming majority of SMC students surveyed, reported that they Agree or Strongly Agree to the statement "I think SMC employees are genuinely concerned about my well being and success" with no clear difference when disaggregated by race or gender.

Chart 2. Student Survey Response - I think SMC employees are genuinely concerned about my well being and success

I think SMC employees are genuinely concerned about my well being and success



Students participants of the survey and the focus groups reported feeling supported by a variety of individuals across the College. Several attributed key programs, support services, and individuals to their success; programs and resources such as: Black Collegians, Adelante, Counseling, Center for Students with Disabilities, International Student Program, just to name a few. The support that students in these programs, and others, reported receiving, aligns with the responses from SMC employees around demonstrating a strong belief in students. SMC employees reported that they believe they and their colleagues have high expectations of all students regardless of background.

- 75% of employees (n=277) reported that colleagues have high expectations of students regardless of race, gender or cultural identity.

Additionally, employees reported an awareness of the biases they may have.

- 86% of employees (n= 278) reported that they are aware of how their beliefs can create bias towards specific groups of people.

Having an awareness of individual biases and the impact of such biases for such a large percentage of the SMC workforce is work that takes intention and time. Trainings have been offered college wide on important topics such as microaggressions and Implicit Bias in order to allow individuals the opportunity to reflect on their current beliefs and ways of being, and assess the ways in which those beliefs may impact the students they serve. Though in the previous section we commented on the lack of college wide equity based trainings, trainings on Microaggressions and Implicit Bias are available to Classified Educators, many of whom would participate if their schedule allowed.

Santa Monica College employees across all classifications and departmental units express great joy in working for the College. There is a strong sense of pride in working for an institution that helps students and community members in achieving their goals. The College has invested opportunities to support the incredibly diverse workforce to better serve the incredibly diverse student population that SMC attracts. Two such opportunities include: The Equitizing Gateway Courses Program and the Data Coaching Program.

Both Equitizing Gateway Courses and Data Coaching Programs are internally based programs created by a couple of SMC faculty members and the Office of Institutional Research. Both programs provide space for learning, intentional reflection, and application to practice. Equitizing Gateway Courses and Data Coaching create an environment where theory meets practice using data, research, and thought partnership.

Image 8. Equitizing Gateway Courses Overview

Multi-Phase Model

EXPAND | COLLAPSE

- + Phase 1 – Faculty Experience (Critical Reflection)**

- + Phase 2 – Student Experience (Data-Informed Practices)**

- + Phase 3 – Teaching & Learning Experience (Pedagogy)**

- + Phase 4 – Student Engagement & Belonging Experience (Retention)**

Source: SMC Website - Equitizing Gateway Courses

In addition to offering instructional faculty the opportunity to intentionally review their course level data, the Data Coaching Program has expanded to supporting Department Chairs in the review of departmental level data and coaching to support faculty as they seek to improve their course outcomes.

Image 9. Data Coaching Program Overview

<p>Spring 2021 + 2021-2022 (Department Chairs Cohort)</p> <p>Funding Source: Student Equity & Achievement</p> <p>Sponsored by: Institutional Research</p>	<p>Racial Equity & Community Building</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Calculating Racial Equity Gaps • Integrating Equity into Program Review • Conducting Inquiry (Qualitative) • Facilitating Equity Data Conversations • Community Building
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Source: SMC Website - Data Coaching Program

Comprehensive Professional Development opportunities for embedding equity-minded practices into one's work are one of many ways SMC supports employees in cultivating a culture that believes in students' ability to be successful, and provide them with the tools to do so.

Areas of Opportunity

Though there have been a number of professional development opportunities to provide the space for SMC employees to critically reflect upon their individual practices in an effort to make appropriate adjustments to better advance equity, not all employee groups have been invited to participate in such critical conversations.

As such, there is a disconnect between the institutional leadership believing that all employees are responsible for advancing equity, and the reality that not all employees see equity as being an actual component to their day to day responsibilities. Therefore, many employee groups – specifically those whose primary function is outside of the classroom – have not been invited to, nor received encouragement or permission to, call attention to patterns of inequity in student experiences and outcomes.

Critical Reflection

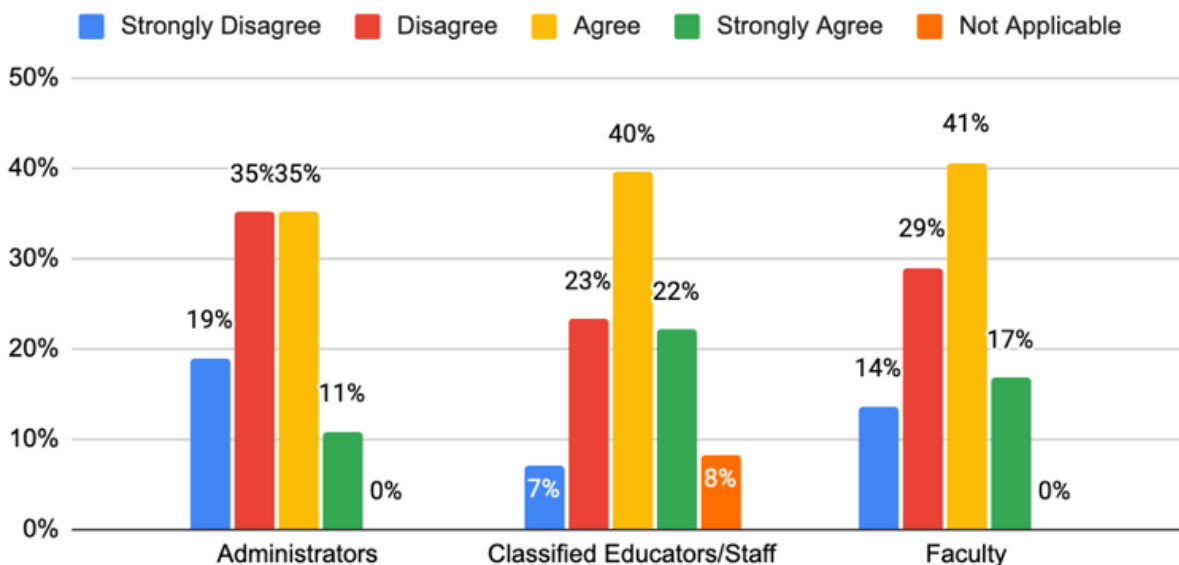
The practice of assessing an organization's culture, policies, and practices and identifying ways to change, adapt, and grow to improve outcomes for students.

Critical Reflection in Practice

There is a disconnect between believing that all SMC employees are responsible for advancing equity efforts at SMC, and the reality of how doing so fits into various roles on campus. Classified Educators were the only respondents that responded "Not Applicable" when asked if they were aware of SMC's equity related goals and whether their colleagues had a shared understanding of equity at SMC.

Chart 3. Employee Survey Response - Colleges have a shared understanding of what "equity" means

[Constituency Group] at Santa Monica College have a shared understanding of what "equity" means



- "As a classified educator, I believe SMC needs equity and bias training that relates to our roles, and not just faculty roles."

(Classified Educator/Staff, Survey)

The Classified Educator/Staff employee classification is widespread throughout the institution and includes employees who provide direct service to students and those that do not. As such, the Classified Educators/Staff were the largest group within the survey and focus groups that reported a disconnect between equity focused initiatives because they did not work directly with students.

This could indicate an opportunity for more intentional equity advancing professional learning experiences focused specifically on supporting Classified Educators/Staff on the ways in which they play a role in advancing equity at SMC - especially for those who do not directly support students (i.e., business administration, auxiliary services, operations and maintenance).

Critical Reflection in Policy

As previously mentioned, the expectation that all employees have a responsibility in advancing equity at SMC is disjointed and unclear. Such expectations are not provided in a consistent way, if at all, in the documentation that most directly impacts and influences the employee experience: recruitment, onboarding, and evaluation.

The Faculty Handbook is a thick manual that covers a lot of information but makes no mention of “equity” outside of the EEO, Equity, and Equivalency statements. Even with that information being present, there is no explicit connection to the role of faculty and their responsibility and support for equity efforts. Additionally, none of the current employee evaluation forms contain any space to evaluate one's engagement with equity advancing work on campus, or contributing to improving equitable outcomes within their department/unit.

Table 8 : Equity Mentions in Employee Review Documentation

Employee Type	Employee Review Documentation
Administrator	No mention of Equity, Diversity, or Inclusion within Review Documents
Classified Educator/Staff	#17. Relates to diverse student, faculty and/or public populations Important, though vague and does not connect to the expectation of advancing equity/equitable outcomes within department/unit
Faculty - Full-Time/Tenure Track	Professionalism Form: #11. Maintains currency in professional knowledge through professional literature, professional memberships, workshops, conferences, or other activities Important, though vague and does not connect to the expectation of advancing equity/equitable outcomes within department/unit. Could be more explicit as it relates to employing culturally relevant teaching practices, promoting diverse learning materials, regularly evaluating data to identify trends in outcomes, etc.
Faculty - Part-Time	No mention of Equity, Diversity, or Inclusion within Review Documents

Without a systemic approach to evaluating the ways in which the College workforce is engaging in equity advancing work, and simultaneously encourage those who have not been participating in the opportunities available to them, there will continue to be an imbalance between those who are committed to reimagining College structures that have resulted in disproportionate outcomes, and those who uphold the existing structures.

- *“We have a department on this campus that prides themselves in a horrible pass rate on this campus, with their students. And I have a colleague that is in that program, and their past, and her current pass rate in her class is 83%, where the [pass rate] campus wide for this program is less than 50%.” (Faculty, Focus Group)*

Including an expectation of equitable practices within the employee review process also creates a system of accountability for the employee to engage in the work, as well as for the College to provide the resources and tools for the employee to do so.

Demonstrating Belief in Students

This is the authentic and unwavering belief that students (in particular, students of color, first generation, and/or low income) have the capacity to learn and be successful.

The previous section highlighted the ways in which SMC employees demonstrated a belief in students’ ability to learn and be successful. While there are many examples of employees who embody such a belief, there are also those who continue to uphold the traditional outlook of higher education. One that aligns with the Right to Fail model wherein students are solely responsible for their successes or failures within higher education; one that perpetuates the notion that students are either ready for college or they aren’t, but either way it isn’t the institution’s responsibility to see that they are successful. When unchallenged, such beliefs create barriers to innovative and equity-minded approaches.

- *“There is a growing movement within my department and within my college to lower standards. This is presented in the guise of supporting our black and latino students. To me, while motivated by the desire to help students, it is in fact harmful and patronizing. Certainly black and brown students can succeed when given the necessary resources and support. To suggest otherwise is racism. Grading policies that assign A’s to students who meet only the basic student learning outcomes does not acknowledge [sic] or prepare students for excellent academic performance. The Equity movement on campus appears to be dedicated to lowering standards, equating them with forms of oppression.” (Faculty, Survey)*

- *"When you ask if Santa Monica College have [sic] a shared understanding of what "equity" means, I think some professors think equity means to water down the course to let students pass without actually knowing the material. They cover less content, reduce or eliminate testing, etc. Consequently, these students are underprepared when moving on to the next course or when they enter the workforce." (Instructional Faculty, Survey)*

The two quotes highlighted above are examples of the ways in which some faculty members view equity focused work as a way to lessen rigor and expectations for student success, instead ways to increase student success by creating the opportunity to be more intentional around making connections with students to increase their likelihood of success. Success in the previous quotes is one in which the sole responsibility is on the student. Employees who uphold these exclusionary practices tend to create environments where students do not feel welcomed or valued – and the students are direct recipients of the lack of compassion and humanity within their educational spaces.

Several students with disabilities and older students shared instances where they had difficulty working with an instructor in order to meet an accommodation or provide grace during an emergency.

- *"I'm in science classes; instructors aren't known to be flexible in emergencies. I feel like I cannot get assurance with basic stuff sometimes because I'm disabled. College employees refused to help with getting accessible forms or even just reading them off, etc." (Native American/Alaskan Native Student, Survey)*
- *"As an adult re-entry student, I find it very difficult to determine which course (and instructors) actually adhere to the flexible learning designation. I also find it painstaking to explain that, if my kid is sick or I had to pick up some extra work, I may need more time to complete an assignment, and which instructors will even be receptive to it." (White Student, Survey)*

Research has proven that when curriculum is grounded in the practical application of knowledge, can connect with students and uplift their cultural capital, and the instructor creates a space where the student feels as though they belong, students - especially Black and Latinx/a/e students - have better educational outcomes.

Adapting curriculum to incorporate examples that can resonate with students, tapping into the knowledge that they bring into the classroom, and cultivating a space of inquiry that values students' humanity does not result in "watering down" academia - in fact, one could argue that it makes the space richer.

TRANSFORMATIVE

Transformative is the manifestation of practices that address the historical and sociopolitical causes of inequities found in education and engage in data-informed efforts to repair and restore the educational system.

Overview

Santa Monica College's beautiful college campus, comprehensive program offers, and reputation for higher transfer rates have attracted students internationally, regionally, and from local communities. There have been ongoing efforts to implement culturally affirming learning experiences to students and offer resources and services to aid in their success at the college.

Highlights

Students at Santa Monica College provided insight and perspective about their experience with college services and instruction. The quality of support and care from college employees and key programs and resources play a critical role in a student's success at SMC.

Sense of Welcome & Belonging

Students feel welcomed and a sense of belonging when an institution values students' cultural/racial differences, connects them to opportunities and resources, and creates community for students. In the survey, 832 students provided an open-ended response to the question, "What helped you feel a sense of belonging and connection to the Santa Monica College community." 83% of those responses were positive comments that highlighted how a student was treated by faculty and peers, college communications, or a specific activity, program or community the student was involved with.

- *"The Black Collegians club and the smc events help me feel connected in my first year of smc." (African American Student, Survey)*
- *"SMC seems better organized and up to date in comparison to other colleges. SMC has a world view, not perfect, but much better than other cities and colleges in Los Angeles. I would love to work at SMC someday!" (Hispanic/Latinx Student, Survey)*

- *"When everything went virtual during the pandemic , it was as if everyone cared more about one another. Professors were more understanding and lenient. They offered more office hours, SMC wanted to help its students more. Counselors and other departments were more available and understanding." (Hispanic/Latinx Student, Survey)*
- *"I would say probably the interactions with students and faculty at SMC has helped me to feel a sense of belonging and connection to the SMC community within the past year. (Black/African American Student, Survey)*

Instructors shared examples of practices from creating welcoming messages within syllabi, grading that allows students to demonstrate how they are learning the material, and establishing mutual trust and respect

- *"At the beginning of each semester, students collectively create expectations and community agreements (norms). This allows students to have agency in the classroom, and it is a document that we can reference throughout the term." (Faculty, Survey)*
- *"I provide an equity-minded liquid syllabus using student friendly, strengths-based language, I practice contract grading and students final grades are based on effort and growth, I provide flexible submission deadline, accept all late work, and students are encouraged to revise work as needed, I am available to preview student work and offer feedback prior to submission, I reach out to students who have missed assignment submission or not participated at the same level on a weekly basis (by email and phone)." (Faculty, Survey)*

Programs such as the Extended Opportunity Programs and Services (EOPS), Adelante, and Black Collegians were mentioned in focus group discussions when students were asked to describe any programs, resources, and/or services at this institution that have supported their academic success. The quote below is shared from a student who earned her Associates Degree this past June (after 25 years) and is currently working towards earning a certificate.

- *"...EOPS was my number one help during this time (pandemic) that really supported me when I was sad, when I was discouraged, when I couldn't make it. I had 14 units, I was just crying. They (staff) were always there for me...they were all friendly and supportive and encouraged me. I needed it because I was going down, and especially that I'm older and my memory and I thought I cannot make it..." (Middle Eastern Student, Focus Group)*

The experience being described by the student underscores the significance of exercising emotional intelligence in one's work with students and the commitment classified staff and faculty have to equity and student success. There is a safe space of community cultivated so students feel comfortable to share challenges they are experiencing, feel validated, and top quality service and recommendations. Increasing institutional capacity and support is important to continue this core network of support and resources for the success of Black, Latinx, and first generation students. The image below, from the Frequently Asked Questions page on the Black Collegians website, shares program statistics that demonstrate higher levels of success for those who participated in the program.

Image 10. Black Collegians Insight

Here are some stats about the program based on our most recent program review (Spring 2014 Program Review with statistics provided by the SMC Office of Institutional Research):

- On average, black students who participated in the Black Collegians Program had statistically significantly higher GPAs than black students who did not.
- A larger portion of Black Collegians students who were enrolled in a Black Collegians course persisted to the next fall term than program students who were not enrolled in a Black Collegians course.
- Students who were in the Black Collegians Program AND enrolled in a Black Collegians class tend to complete their classes and units at higher rates than students who did not participate in the Black Collegians Program or classes.
- Black Collegians Program students successfully complete more courses attempted than black students who are not in the

Source . Black Collegians Program Umoja Community

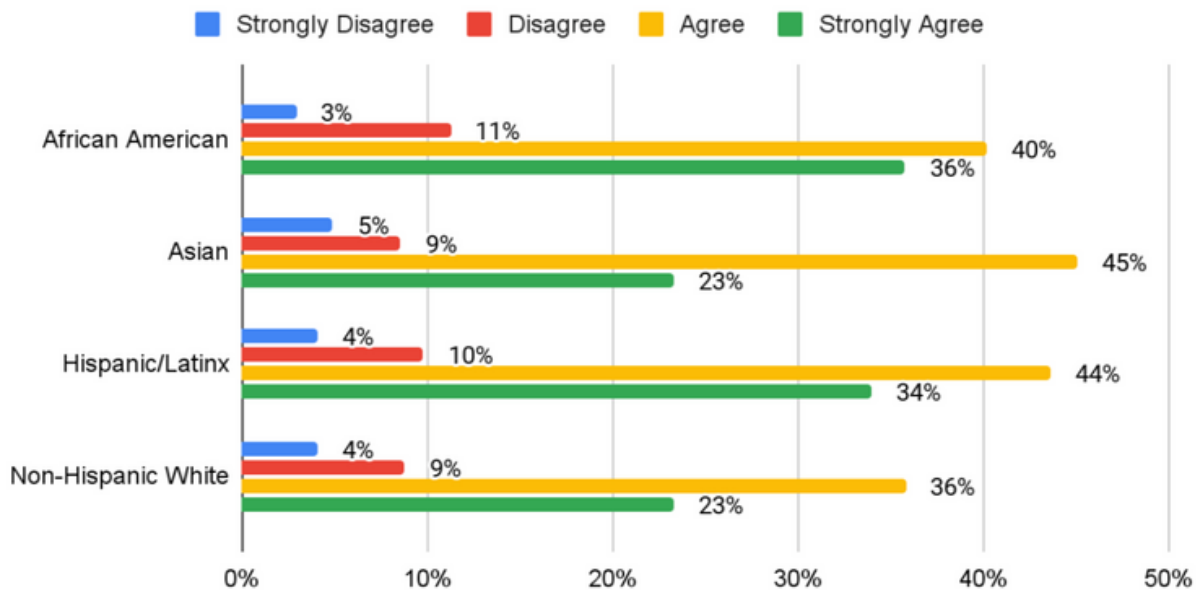
Utilizing a Campus Equity Ecosystem

Within the survey, overall, students recognized the genuine care and level support available to them at SMC from the relationships and camaraderie and the opportunities, and resources available to them. A majority of student respondents demonstrated awareness about Basic Needs resources available at SMC.

Overall, 70% agreed with the statement, "If I am experiencing challenges with getting my basic needs met (e.g. food, housing, transportation), I am aware of what support is available to me on campus (in person or virtually)." The table below illustrates the responses when disaggregated by race and ethnicity, demonstrating that this sentiment was similar across racial groups.

Chart 4: Student Survey Responses - Basic Needs Support Awareness

If I am experiencing challenges with getting my basic needs met (i.e. food, housing, transportation), I am aware of what support is available to



Within interactions between college personnel and students, there is an opportunity to create awareness about resources on campus. Services such as the Bodega, Transportation Services, and access to professional clothing, were mentioned by faculty and staff as examples of what equity looks like at the college. Faculty use syllabi, lecture, and office hours to inform students about these resources as well.

85% of student respondents agreed that with the statement, "Instructors provide information about important campus resources (i.e. Disability Support Services, the Learning Center) on course syllabi."

Chart 5: Student Survey Responses - Campus Resources on Syllabi

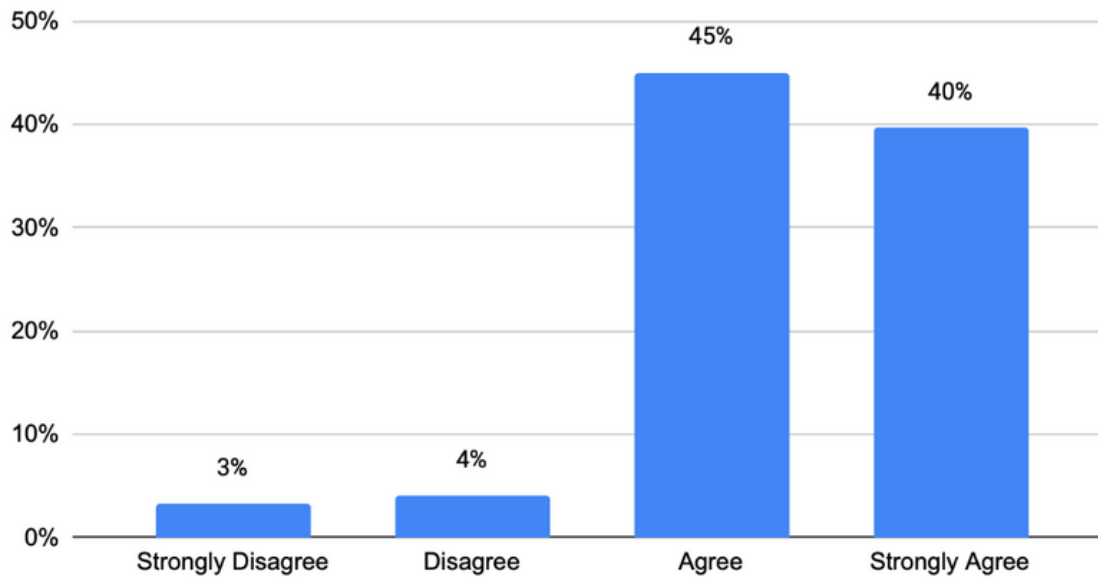
Instructors provide information about important campus resources (i.e. Disability Support Services, the Learning Center) on course syllabi

Chart 6. Student Survey Responses - Campus Resources Provided During Lecture or in Office Hours

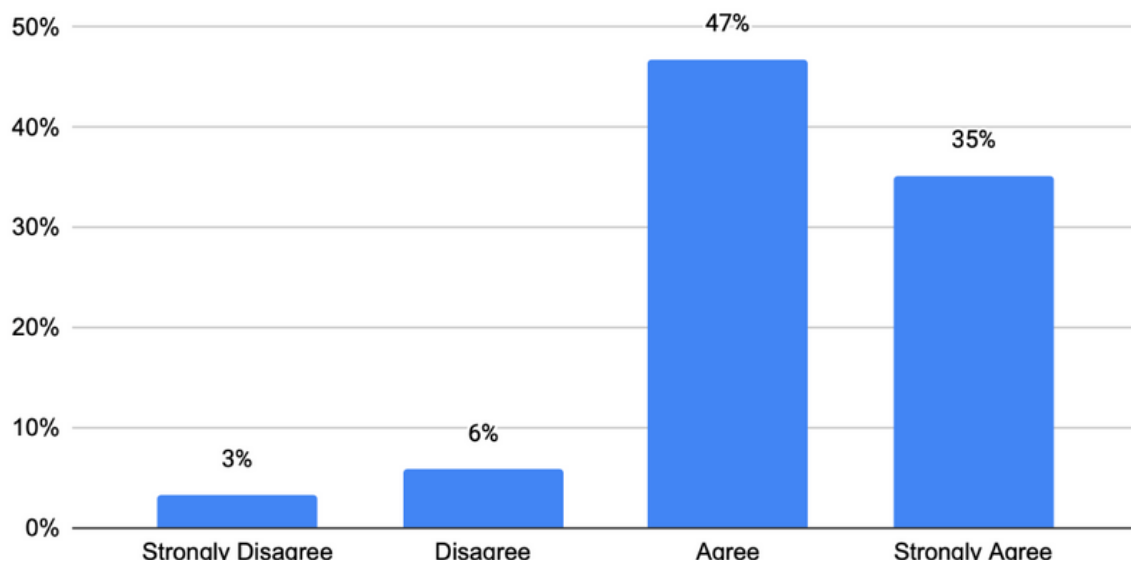
Instructors provide information about important campus resources (i.e. Disability Support Services, the Learning Center) during lecture or in office hours

Image 11. Snippet from *Ways to Connect Students to Basic Needs- Employee Resource Guide*

WHY IT'S CRITICAL

Students impacted by food insecurity are less likely to persist, transfer, or graduate from a four-year university, failing to reach their academic goals.

Image 12. #RealCollege Survey Findings

HUNGER

- In 2019, a #RealCollege Survey prepared for SMC by The Hope Center for College, Community and Justice indicate that of the students surveyed, 54% of students were food insecure within the previous 30 days.
- In 2020, The Hope Center released its fifth #RealCollege survey of 171 community colleges and 56 four-year institutions, and found that 42% of students at community colleges experienced food insecurity in the last 30 days.
- Trellis Company conducted their most recent Student Financial Wellness Survey in fall 2019, which measured various financial barriers students are facing, such as debt aversion and financial knowledge, along with scales concerning food and housing insecurity. The results indicated that of the 54 community colleges who participated in the study, 23% of students reported low food security and 28% reported very low food security within the last 30 days.
- In 2016-17, Cal State University (CSU) Chancellor's Office assessed student food insecurity among 23 CSU campuses. Researchers found 42% of CSU students reported food insecurity within the last 30 days.

Source: *Ways to Connect Students to Basic Needs- Employee Resource Guide*

The College's commitment to Basic Needs is evident in its grounded data-informed approach using research from the Hope Center's findings of the 2019 CCC #RealCollege Survey, the development of a basic needs ecosystem, and the development of basic needs guides designed to inform and connect students with greatest needs to these services, are transformative practices. It's important that the College continue to commit human and fiscal resources to scale the impact of these resources.

Image 13. SMC Basic Needs Advertising



**ALL SMC EMPLOYEES ARE
HERE FOR YOU!**

**GROUNDS PERSONNEL
FACILITIES PERSONNEL
COACHES
PROFESSORS
COUNSELORS
FRONT DESK CLERKS
STUDENT WORKERS
ADMINISTRATORS
LIBRARIANS
& MORE!**

bodega bites **bodega bites** **bodega bites**

Grab and go healthy snacks including granola bars, cereal bars, crackers, apple sauce and other light "bites" available for students

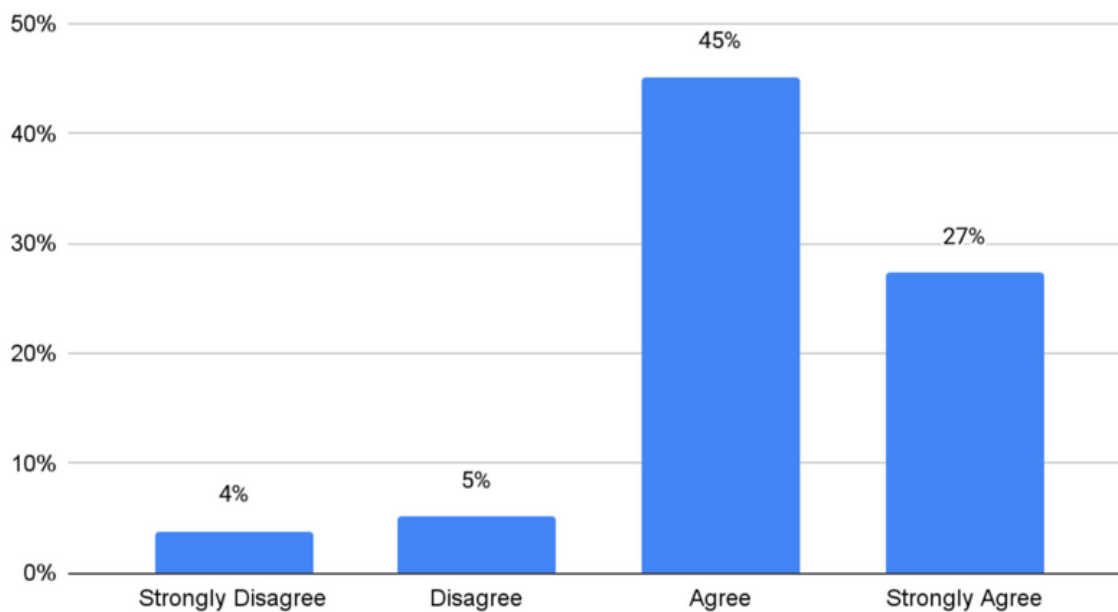
Source: Basic Needs Ecosystem - For Students

The images advertising the services are examples of clear and appealing communication to students which is meaningful because of the cultural stigmas associated with seeking help, sharing about one's personal and financial circumstances, and receiving free resources.

The survey shared some insight about student's interactions and perception about college personnel and the quality of guidance and assistance they receive as they try to navigate the college on a daily basis. 72% of student respondents agreed with the statement, "Employees involved in registration for classes are helpful."

Chart 7. Student Survey Responses - Registration Support

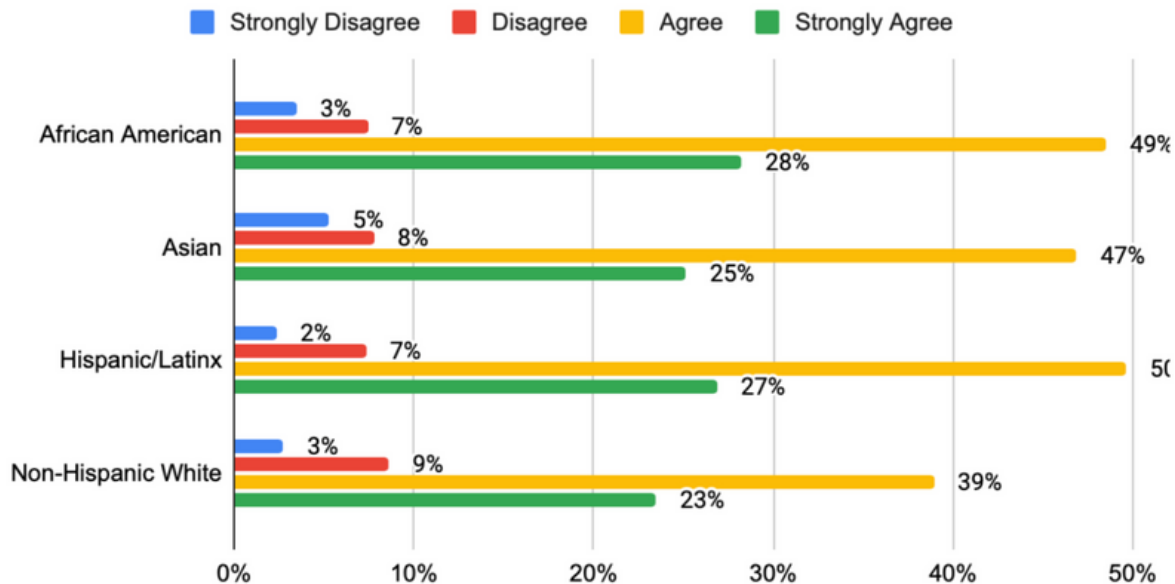
Employees involved in registration for classes are helpful



70% of student respondents agreed with the statement, "If I am struggling to find a department on campus (in person or virtually), I can easily get help from a college employee."

Chart 8. Student Survey Responses - Assistance in Finding Support

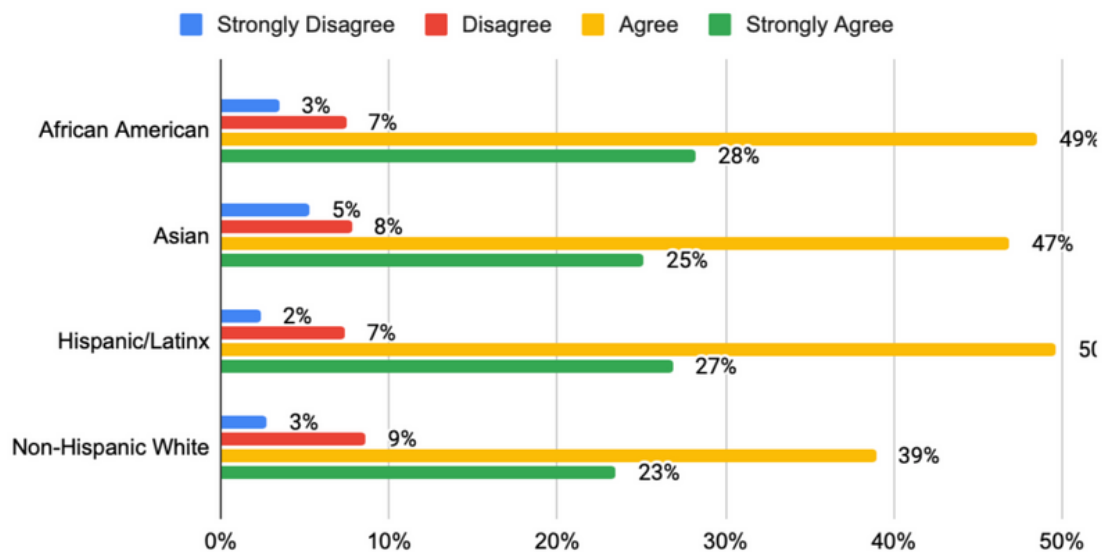
If I am struggling to find a department on campus (in person or virtually), I can easily get help from a college employee



71% of students agreed with the statement, "If I am confused about how to complete a task, I can easily get help from a college employee (e.g., completing a form)."

Chart 9. Student Survey Responses - Assistance in Completing Tasks

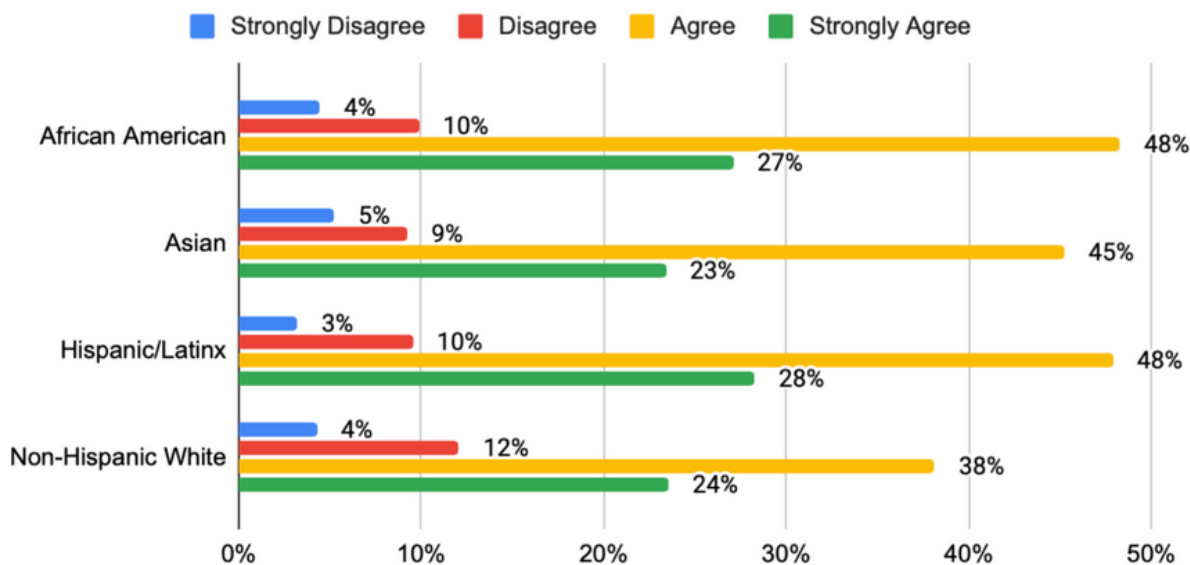
If I am struggling to find a department on campus (in person or virtually), I can easily get help from a college employee



69% of student respondents agreed with the statement, “If I am faced with an unexpected circumstance (e.g., family needs, medical emergency) that puts me behind in class, my instructors are willing to provide flexibility so I can learn the material.”

Chart 10. Student Survey Responses - Flexibility During Unexpected Emergencies

If I am faced with an unexpected circumstance (e.g., family needs, medical emergency) that puts me behind in class, my instructors are willing to provide flexibility so I can learn the material



These data reveal that a majority of student respondents were satisfied with the nature of their interactions with employees who support students in the enrollment/onboarding phase, during times of distress and emergencies, and when trying to access information as they navigate their college experience.

Opportunities for Growth

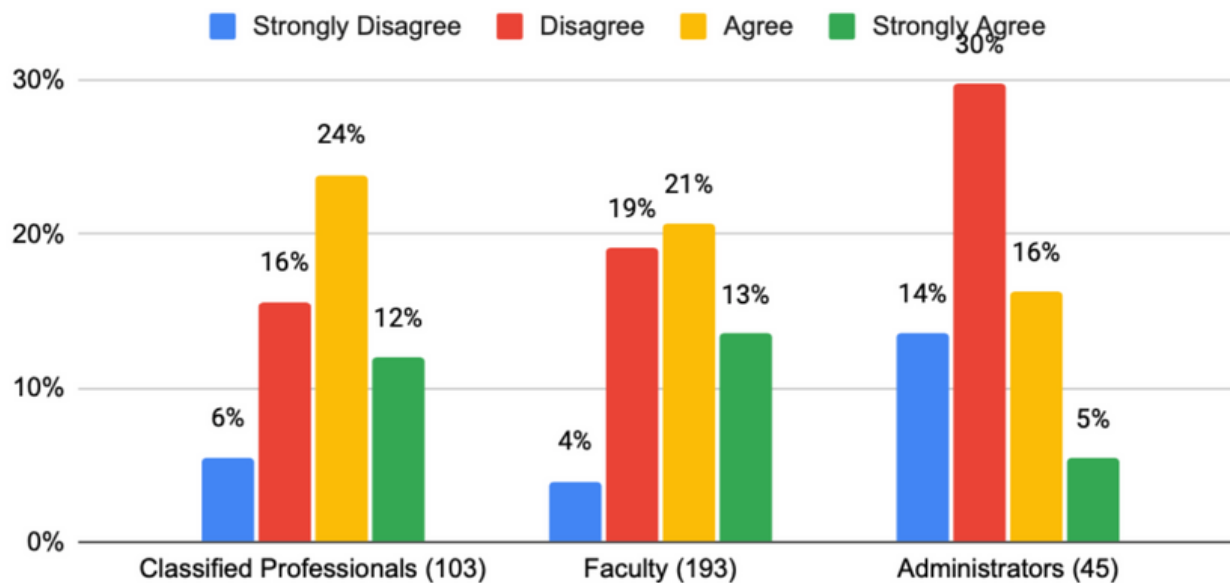
Recognizing that great work that is already taking place at the College and benefiting students, there is a long road ahead to meet the College’s vision goals. There is opportunity for the college to leverage current resources to change policies, practices, and procedures that create barriers to a racial equity agenda.

Sense of Welcome & Belonging

Employees asked questions to learn the extent to which the materials at the college are inclusive, accessible, and clear to students. There was feedback regarding the College’s communications including website pages and navigation.

Chart 11. Employee Survey Responses - Recruitment Materials in Different Languages

Outreach and recruitment materials are available in different languages for Multilingual students and English Language Learners

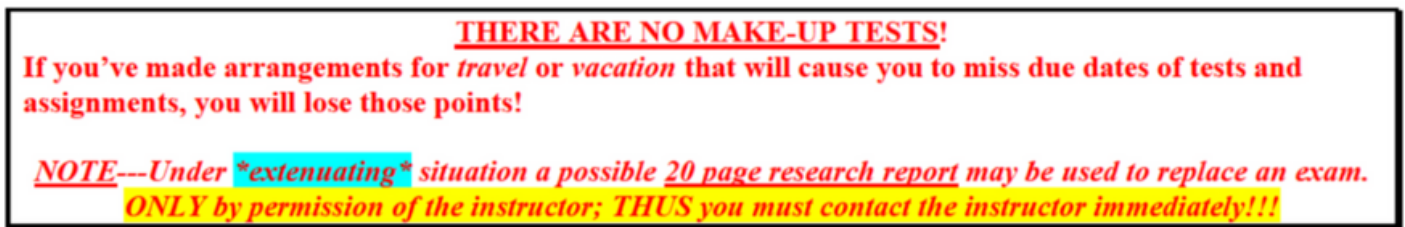


- "I suggested having forms and materials in different languages directly to [redacted] in an open Zoom meeting and other than it was a good idea, I never heard back and no forms were made..." (Classified Educator, Survey)
- "General outreach material is not translated, I have not received assistance in translating our departmental webpages, but our printed material is translated into different languages. Images of students often depict traditional aged students, rarely show age diversity." (Administrator, Survey)
- "Management has stated students don't want to utilize the website. They are encouraging students to book appointments. However, not all students have the means to go to an appointment. Therefore, they need to have the same resources available online as what would be given in person." (Classified Educator, Survey)

In most course syllabi we reviewed, we found the tone and language to be disciplinary and treated like a contract. There is a large volume of information within the syllabi that a student needs to digest with most of the content covering classroom policies, expectations, procedures, and students' responsibilities in the course.

The image below shows an instructor's policy that states no make-up tests offered in the course meaning students will need to ensure they do not schedule anything that conflicts with the test date. In the case an exception is made, a 20-page research report can be used to replace an exam.

Image 14. Syllabus Wording Example - Tests



IT IS YOUR RESPONSIBIITY TO REVIEW ALL ROUND TABLES & ALL OTHER HANDOUT COPIES.

The second image is an instructor's attendance policy stating that because attendance is conducted at the start of the class and quizzes are timed administered via Canvas at the start of class meaning if a student is late to log in or if they miss the quiz, they get a zero regardless of the reason.

Image 15. Syllabus Wording Example - Attendance

Attendance will be taken at the beginning and end of each class meeting. Students are expected to be on time to class and to stay until the class is dismissed by the instructor. Since quizzes will be administered at the start of class—it is on a timer in Canvas so if you are late to log in or miss a quiz, you will lose valuable time or get a zero on the quiz!! This includes ANY/ALL other issues including internet issues or waking up in time or driving time to a hotspot or anything that precludes you from attending the start of class. **NO EXCEPTIONS!**

By registering for this course, you have made a commitment to attend the course on time, and every time the class is scheduled to meet. Do not schedule work hours, vacations, other classes, extracurricular activities, or appointments (medical or otherwise), or anything that will conflict with the scheduled course meeting time.

Rigid classroom policies and rules provide structure for academic experiences and help manage disruptions to learning but in many cases have become the central focus of syllabi. We believe the approach to all syllabi should be to use them as learning tools that spark excitement and curiosity about the course, set clear expectations for the semester, and show the rigorous classroom and college supports that will be there to prepare them for a rigorous academic curriculum.

Examining documents such as syllabi can reveal the extent to which the “hidden curriculum,” a normalized and unspoken set of academic, cultural and social messages and expectations within an academic setting, are embedded within institutional culture and practice. In the case of the examples provided, a syllabus that values strict policies regarding scheduling and time might signify to a student parent, a student who is a caregiver for a family member, a student who works full time, or a student dealing with housing insecurity issues, that they will not be successful in the course. The very fact that their life’s responsibilities interfere with academic responsibilities can send a message to students that they simply do not belong in college.

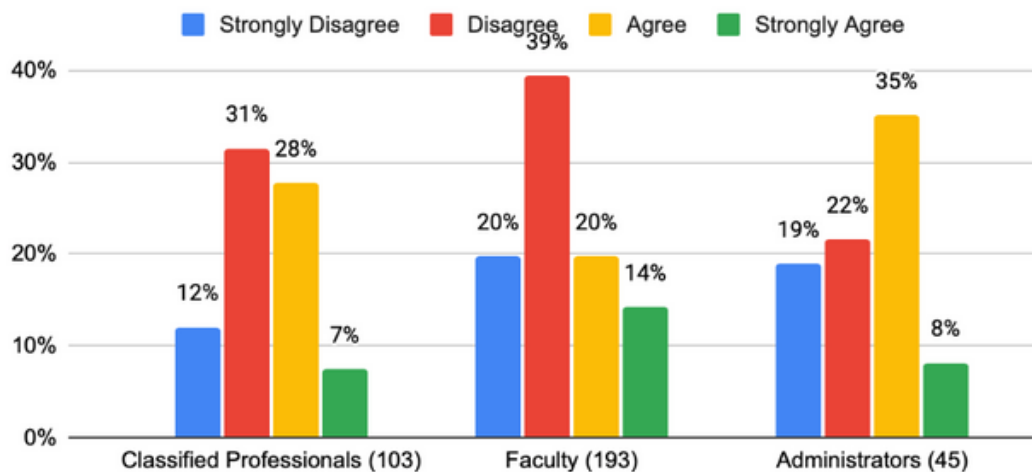
Students shared challenges they experienced with standard processes and procedures. Examples of issues mentioned by students included receiving misinformation, not hearing back or getting a follow up from a department or key contact, and feeling frustrated over not being able to get a clear answer or information. The quote below is from a first year student explaining frustration with the process for enrolling in courses and the issues experienced with Financial Aid, primarily around communication.

“I would say, my experience enrolling in classes was pretty terrible. Not gonna lie. I don't like being the bearer of bad news. But I feel like it's just better to be honest. And, you know, I felt like when I officially, you know, got in contact with them, and the admissions and the counseling that I felt really supported, and they were very on top of things. They were very communicative, very helpful and happy. And then, as soon as I was enrolled, it's like, all of that kind of dropped off. It was very difficult reaching them on the phone. I still haven't gotten replies from my counselor, and I've been trying for over a month. Enrolling in classes was very difficult, because I'm dyslexic, and I have ADHD. So I qualified for the disability office on campus, and they're more than helpful. 100%. But like, yeah, they've been amazing. Like, I get replies within a 24 hour period, which is fantastic. I mean, that's, I know, they're very busy and everything. But when it came to enrolling in classes, I was told, just refer to the website, just refer to the website, and I'm like, okay, but if I'm trying to go for web development, there's no clear indication of what classes I need to sign up for. And so I just listened to them. And I selected the classes that I thought were part of it. And then it turns out, none of them were what I needed. And there was no real way for me to figure it out. I wasn't getting calls back. I wasn't getting emails back. And I eventually just got frustrated to the point where I just went to campus even though they were closed.”
(White/European Student, Focus Group Quote)

Students also raised issues about discriminatory behavior and interactions with some college personnel. Employees need to develop the critical competencies of racial literacy and cultural fluency in order to effectively teach students of different backgrounds.

Chart 11. Employee Survey Response - Students' Negative Treatment On Campus by Race

I've heard students share concern that they have been treated negatively by colleagues (employees within my constituency group) on campus based on their race



Students shared about issues they experienced when it came to interacting with faculty members, particularly around rigid policies and decisions and lacking empathy and sensitivity to a student's needs and experiences. Employees also addressed problematic attitudes and behaviors of colleagues:

- "Although some of my colleagues are excellent and have high expectations of students, others hold racist, misogynistic, and ableist ideas toward students that make me feel like they are not properly prepared to address student needs. There is also a great deal of slacking off when it comes to improving our performance as tutors as well as during direct services to students. I don't feel that the department is adequately addressing student needs without addressing these employee issues." Faculty, Survey)

“During the Spring semester 2022, my car broke down in the parking garage basement. It was a very terrifying experience. I had to sleep in my car in the parking garage basement and due to those circumstances I had limited access to wifi and electricity. This enabled me from being timely to turn in my assignments on time or even being able to turn in my assignments at all. I was taking a ____ class and an internship class. Despite explaining my situation to both professors they refused to accommodate me. I am also a student with a disability. I was unaware about my rights in regards to disability until I attended orientation at Cal State of LA., which I had been accepted to but because Professor _____ refused to accommodate me or even show compassion to my situation, I failed his class. I was unable to move forward to Cal State of LA. So here I am at SMC taking his class for the third time. I live across the street from Cal State of LA and my car broke down. So now I have to walk past Cal State of LA everyday to catch the bus for nearly 2 hours just to get back track to SMC.”
(African American Student Quote, Document Review)

Students with disabilities shared about difficulties they had with the quality of service and support they received.

- “...Some professors either have no idea how to use an interpreter and/or think the interpreter is more worth talking to than me. (They do not talk to me but to the interpreter. I’m the student! Not the interpreter. That’s rude.) My main issue is that many instructors do not adequately plan their materials even when notified, or try to use unsuitable replacements for accessibility. Captions CANNOT be replaced by transcripts for movies for Deaf. It’s not fair to make us try to speechread and match up to the transcript. Speechreading is much easier for hearing than Deaf as only 30% of words are on the mouth. I cannot speechread and read the transcript at the same time, and if I speechread only I miss or misunderstand words, but if I only read the transcript I miss visual information that’s important. I’m also visually impaired and MOST professors fail to use alt text and use tiny images with poor resolution. These cannot be blown up and are inaccessible to me. It’s not fair when classwork or assignments depend on being able to see tiny images that cannot be enlarged, don’t have alt text, and don’t have captions or any other sort of description that can be easily referenced. I’ve been negatively affected academically by these things and forced to drop or withdrawal from classes. (Multi-Racial Student, Survey)

The quote below is from a student who came to SMC after struggling academically at a former institution due to Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, who recounts an experience of being dropped from a class due to being late.

“So I was well I was 12 minutes late or something really ridiculous like under 15 minutes I think I had like a rule and he had this rule like he didn't want you to be late... I told him I'm driving from Calabasas. I work really early in the morning. There's no other way for me to get here way before that. I need to sleep to be in this class...he was like no, somebody else got your spot... I pleaded with him. And he goes, No, you're late. You can't even be in the class, like, leave the class right now...when I turned around, and I just pleaded with them. I was like, please, I drove this far, you have no idea what my life is like, I didn't even tell him about my living situation. I wanted to scream all these things. But I was just like, please, I really wanted this class. I drove all the way over here. I can't like I can't just drive back in traffic. And he was like, No, you're late. There's other people that showed up on time. You should have come earlier. Like he didn't care. So I left the school just part of politics, heartbroken.” (African American Student, Survey)

Utilizing a Campus Equity Ecosystem

Creating change requires the organization to function as an equity-minded community meaning that all individuals, constituent groups, departments, and services understand what their role is in student success and leverage resources to advance equity and student success in alignment with student equity plan, strategic plan, and vision for becoming an anti-racist campus.

Many employees have identified specific approaches and practices that need to be eliminated or updated to better serve students. Some employees have even communicated suggestions and recommendations to appropriate channels, but did not receive the requisite support to address an issue or concern. From those who have been actively engaged in the College's equity efforts, the sentiment of feeling gaslighted by administration came up in focus groups when describing the frustration of equity efforts not being institutionalized.

- “SMC administrators/managers and many faculty resist shared or collaborative services as well as documenting departmental processes. Establishing legitimate jurisdictional limits, building staff expertise, and setting appropriate service channels for students are all difficult as many administrators/managers want everything unique for their personal preferences, even if it duplicates the same basic service already offered elsewhere. If the accreditors did not demand that institutional policies and regulations be in writing, there wouldn't be any written policy or regulation at SMC...” (Faculty, Survey)

- “My department discusses equity during meetings and has an equity workgroup. Pushback from one or two people within our department has halted any progress and created toxic fear. Our leadership, both at the department level and the administrative level, has no skills or abilities to address this. I have spoken with the last three VPs of Academic Affairs about this atmosphere, which is rich with white supremacy and misogyny. They have done nothing because it is not “bad enough.” I no longer speak during department meetings because of the trolling I have experienced.” (*Faculty, Survey*)
- “Feels like there are a range of ideas and opinions when it comes to issues of equity. There is also a disparity because the work often is done by women and people of color.” (*Faculty, Survey*)
- “Equity is largely aspirational for a specific group. Often that work is led by Black and Latinx, queer folks, that is often you’re the only people who step up and that comes at a cost. That work is often faced with a number of barriers and comes at an emotional cost and reputational cost. While there’s often forward facing support for equity, it doesn’t always materialize with ease in terms of the work advancing and the campus wide support for that work.” (*Instructional Faculty, Focus Group*)

Across employee constituent groups, there is a sense of feeling undervalued by the organization. Almost a quarter of employee respondents disagreed with the statements, “I feel as though my contributions are valued by my direct supervisor” and “I feel as though my contributions are valued by my department.”

Chart 12. Employee Survey Response - Contributions Are Valued by Direct Supervisor

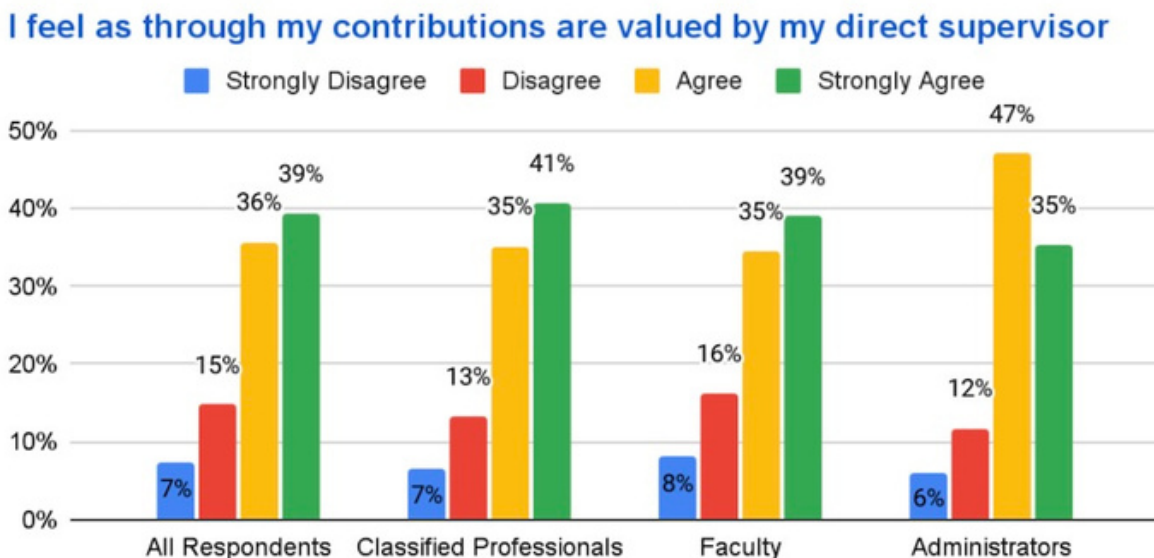
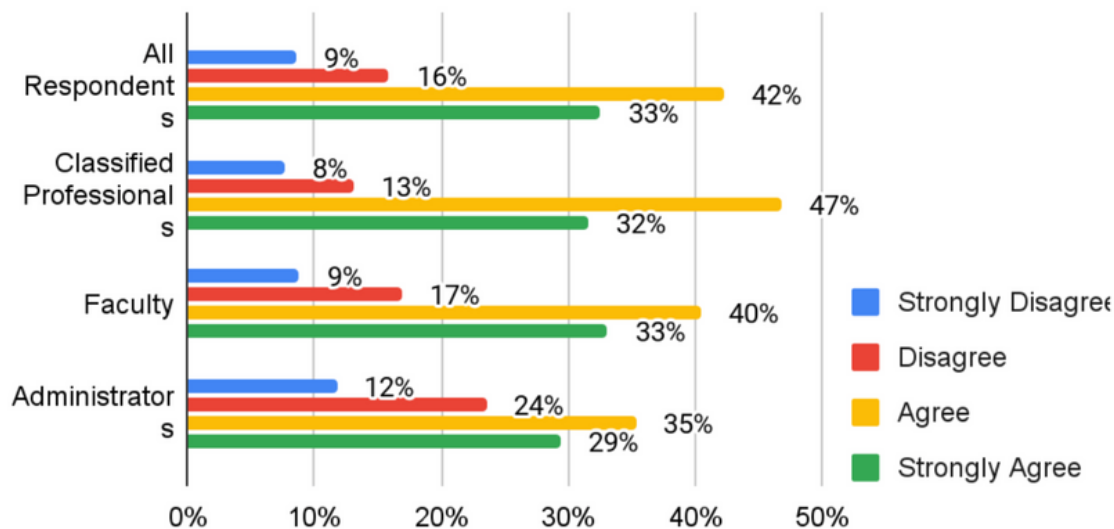


Chart 13. Employee Survey Response - Contributions Are Valued by My Department

I feel as through my contributions are valued by my department



The employee-manager relationship and the relationship between an employee and colleagues within their immediate department are important because of the level of interactions and collaboration that these relationships require on a regular basis.

When it comes to receiving commendation or recognition for one's efforts. The table below indicates that over 35% of employees believe they do not receive the due credit for their ideas or work and almost half of respondents (42%) agreed with the statement, "I feel I have to work harder than my colleagues to be perceived as a competent employee"

Chart 14. Employee Survey Response - Received Credit for My Work/Ideas

I have felt I did not receive the due credit for my ideas or work

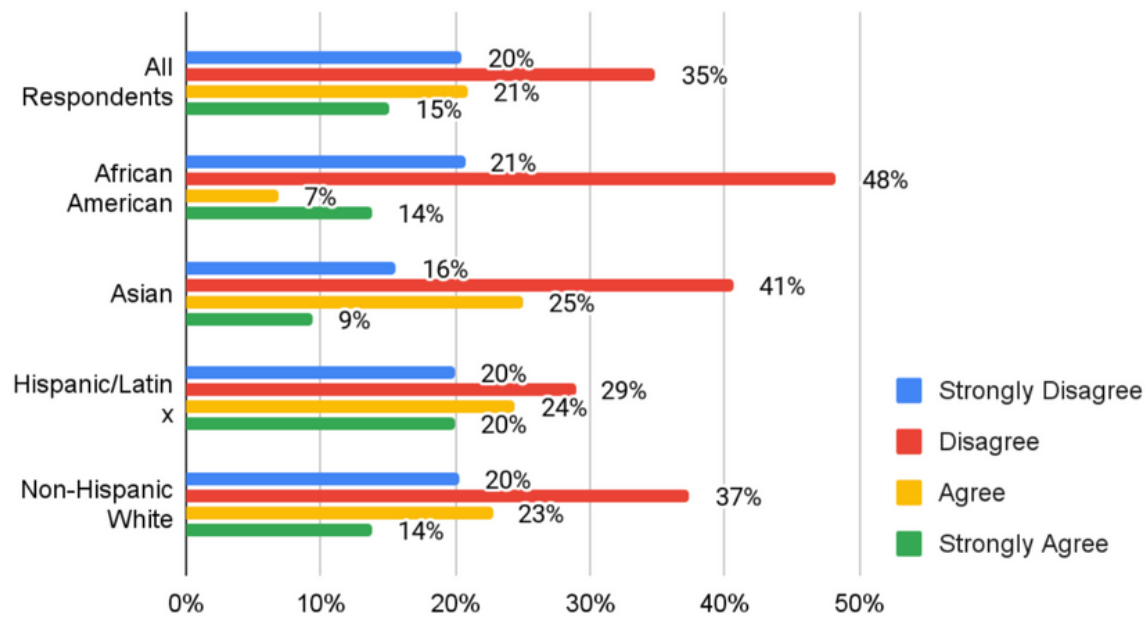


Chart 15. Employee Survey Response - Feel As Though I Must Work Harder Than Colleagues

I feel I have to work harder than my colleagues to be perceived as a competent employee

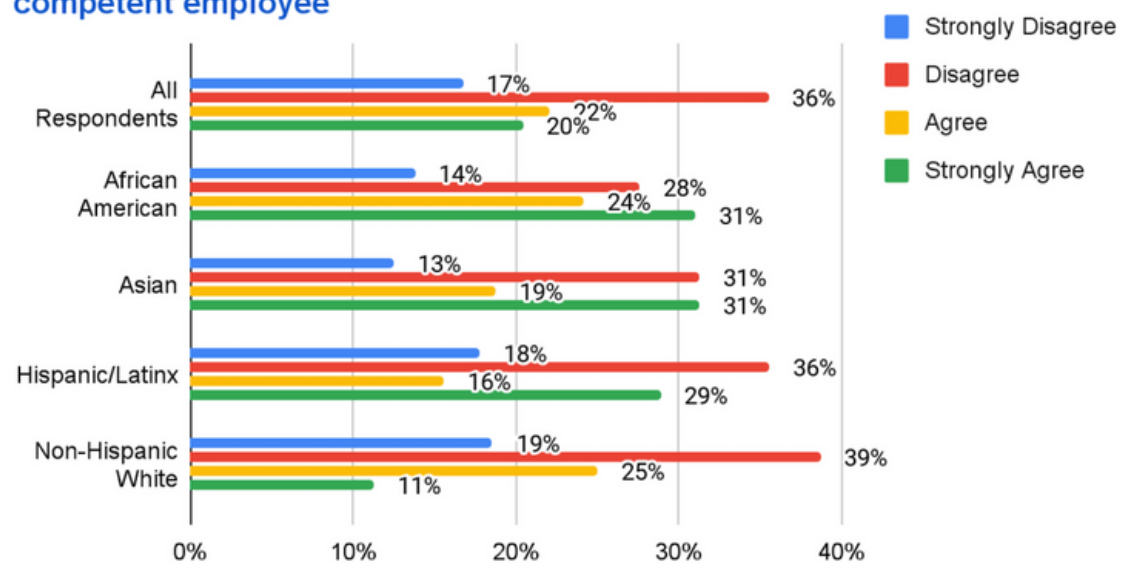
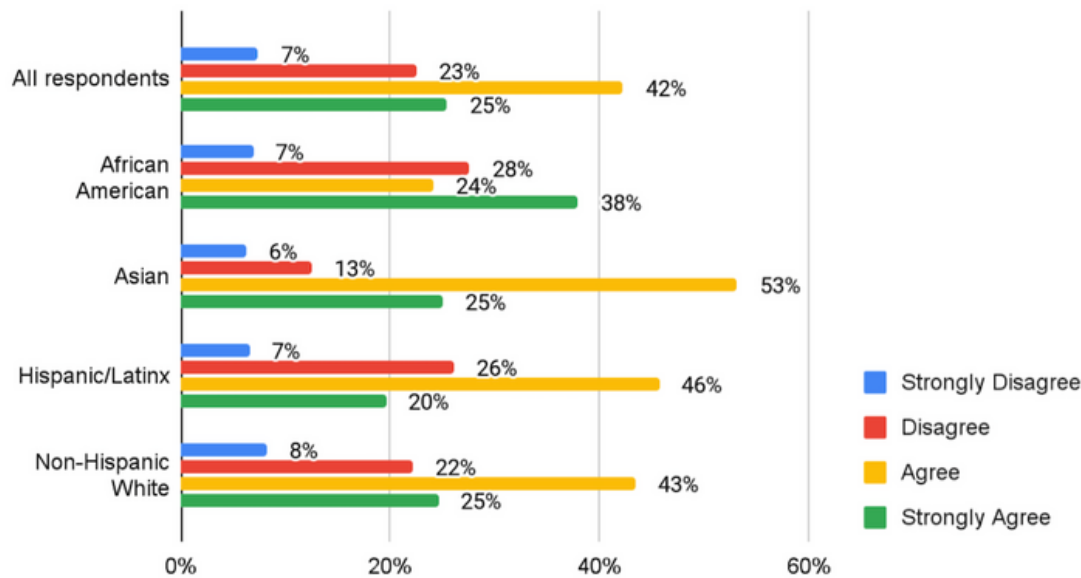


Chart 16. Employee Survey Response - Feel A Sense of Belonging On Campus

I feel a sense of belonging to this campus



These data are concerning because of what they indicate about employee morale at Santa Monica College. Various factors that influence the extent to which an employee feels valued by the organization include: workload and expectations, level of autonomy and support in a role and communication (written, verbal, and visual), the ability to balance one's professional with one's personal life, among other factors.

- *"We need to have a mentoring program for college employees and faculty. We need to have more flexibility for Classified employees to go into Faculty careers. HR needs to do a better job creating opportunities for current employees to become faculty members" (Administrator, Survey)*
- *"As part timer faculty, I often feel my ideas are dismissed and not valued by my department, especially if I question anything. I feel like I have less power even though I have been here for decades." (Faculty, Survey)*
- *"...This college actively gives staff the message that we are expendable, that we are whiny, ungrateful staff and that SMC should be our priority in all things...I still have a set of tasks and responsibilities that have only grown over the years as people have retired or absences have occurred in which I have absorbed added tasks. When my peak times occur, I am absolutely overloaded with work and chair needs with ABSOLUTELY NO BACKUP from administration--just empty promises that I will receive support. So I frantically work during these times, often skipping my breaks or bending my time at the beginning and ending of the day to tie up loose ends and sacrificing my own physical health to do so (I've had a workplace injury from excessive computer work). When I've reached out to point out the issues behind my workload and even offered solutions, they have been denied or argued against as not able to be done." (Classified Educator/Staff, Survey)*

- *“I feel there are microaggressions in my own department. There is a lack of safety and collegiality. When we get into groups during department meetings, faculty often discount what others say or even attack them when they have an opinion they do not agree with. I am hesitant to contribute on the department level because of this. In my department, we have been discouraged from having open discussions about racism and microaggressions. There is no way to actually have a conversation about these issues in our department. So the problem just feel like an elephant in the room.”
Faculty, Survey)*

These quotes shared from the survey address issues that influence employees' sense of belonging to the institution. High employee morale is one of the building blocks to creating a healthy and thriving community for learning and support. Campus climate issues including trauma, mistrust of leadership, and resistance to an equity agenda, have to be regularly addressed in a constructive manner to make decisions and take actions that benefit students.

In addition to owning and naming the issues in front of us, actively building a culture of continuous improvement and mutual respect and trust, creates the conditions for equity efforts to have the intended impact. To work towards this, there needs to be a reckoning in various parts of the institution, with the fact that dominant attitudes and approaches to education in the Right to Fail Era need to be innovated and transformed in order to serve the richly diverse student communities at Santa Monica College.

This signifies a shift from placing sole responsibility on individual students for their success but onus on institutions to use their fiscal, human, and intellectual resources to create an academic environment where students of all backgrounds and cultures can thrive, where outcomes are no longer predictable by race.

RECOMMENDATIONS



RECOMMENDATIONS

After considering both the highlights and areas of growth identified in the Equity Audit findings, Hotep Consultants offers the following recommendations to promote equity advancing policies, practices, and procedures at Santa Monica College. The recommendations are presented in alignment with the S.E.T. Framework in order to provide support for the institution as a whole (Student Ready), interpersonal growth (Equity Minded), and individual service (Transformative). In addition to the recommendations, links to external examples and resources are provided as well as preliminary identification of goals within the 2017-2022 Strategic Plan, may directly align. One of the key recommendations that Hotep Consultants is uplifting is the need for SMC to identify what the institution's overarching goals are. As such, there may be a reality in which the Strategic Plan goals are not the overarching goals for which members of the SMC community seeks to connect to in order to move forward the recommendations listed below.

We encourage SMC leaders and implementers within the institution to determine which set of goals are best suited to lead the College over the next five years.

A Student-Ready organization creates system-wide impact by consistently examining processes and practices that are hindering learning for all students and actively working towards solutions.

*Hotep Consultants Team numbered the Strategic Goals found within the 2017-2022 Strategic Plan document for ease of translation within the following recommendation tables.

P, P, A = Policy, Practice, or Assessment - refers to the three areas of which Hotep Consultants reviewed and analyzed data received from SMC

Administrative Capacity Building			
Recommendation	Resource/Example	SP Goal*	P, P, A
Confirm and solidify the College's overarching institutional goals via Educational Master Plan, Strategic Plan, or Board of Trustee Goals. These Goals should serve as the leading goals for which all institutional activities, individual group goals, and governance bodies should be in alignment to support.	Example: College of San Mateo - Education Master Plan - CSM Forward 2028, Institutional Priorities, Integrated Plans & Action Steps (pg. 105-109)	1-6	Practice
Implement a Shared Equity Leadership (SEL) Framework, to provide a collaborative and inclusive approach to structuring equity work. This philosophy differs from a traditional understanding of leadership that views power as hierarchical but instead, recognizes the inherent value that all stakeholders have in the efforts to transform the campus community.	Resource: Shared Equity Leadership Toolkit - American Council on Education and USC Rossier's Pullias Center for Higher Ed Resource: Webinar on Rethinking Accountability in Shared Equity Leadership - American Council on Education and USC Rossier's Pullias Center for Higher Ed	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6	
There needs to be a paradigm shift from a box-checking-compliance orientation to institutional transformation, in the examination of policies, practices, and assessments. This includes an equity-minded approach to decision making within the context of the current institutional landscape.		1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6	Practice
Assess the current status of recommendations and qualitative data provided by former consultants and internal campus experts about the student experience. Identify which recommendations have been implemented, which need additional support, and which may not be prioritized at the moment. Develop an action plan to support the recommendations that are to move forward.	Resource: Inclusive Program Review: A Justice and Equity Framework - Salt Lake City Community College	1, 3, 5, 6	Practice, Assessment

STUDENT READY - (CONTINUED)

Recommendation	Resource/Example	SP Goal	P, P, A
Develop a communication guide to explain the college prioritization process and resource allocation process. Include: vocabulary, the roles of key groups, guiding questions or key elements that should be focused on to help create transparency and clarity around how decisions are made.	Resource: Initiative Prioritization Handout - Riverside City College Resource: Resource Allocation Guide - Cosumnes River College	3E, 6A, 6B	Practice
Employee Relations & Support			
Recommendation	Resource/Example	SP Goal	P,P,A
Recruit and onboard a permanent Dean for the Division of Equity, Pathways, and Inclusion.		1A, 1B	Practice
Develop capacity for Human Resources to mandate accessible and effective DEI training for all employees, in order to participate on a recruitment committee.	Example: Diversity Search & Hiring - University of Colorado at Boulder	1,2, 3, 4, 5, 6D	Practice, Policy
Develop an internal "how-to" guide (sharing the college's current and updated processes and practices) for conducting an inclusive and equitable search process. Provide accessible and updated information on how to prepare, chair/lead, and participate on a committee, with an equity-minded perspective.	Resource: Candidate Evaluation Form Tips & Guidelines, DEI Commitment Statement, & Staff Diversity Hiring Toolkit - University of Washington Resource: Equity-minded Hiring Principles & Practices - ASCC Example: Ensuring Equity & Inclusivity in Faculty Hiring - Cal Poly Pomona Resource: Inclusive Hiring Resources Guide - Harvard Human Resources	1,2, 3, 4, 5, 6D	Practice

STUDENT READY - (CONTINUED)

Equity Advancing Initiatives			
Recommendation	Resource/Example	SP Goal	P,P,A
Conduct an equity map to catalog all of the equity related efforts on campus. Additionally, establish a calendar for Diversity, Equity, Inclusion (DEI) that is organized to bring together all DEI related activities in one place where users can identify/filter to identify events/programs that are student facing, employee facing, and what experiences are open to the community.	Example: Diversity and Inclusion Calendar - UC Davis' Example: Diversity Mapping Project - CSU San Marcos	1D	Assessment
Continue to review and revise Course Outlines of Record, Student Learning Outcomes, Program Learning Outcomes as originally intended in the 2021-2022 Action Plans to Support the Institutional Strategic Initiatives and Objectives.	Example: Equity Minded Practices in the SLO Cycle - Emerson College Example: Creating Inclusive Assignments & Assessments - Univ of Michigan	1, 3D	Practice, Policy

Guiding Questions and Considerations

- How do we think about issues of identity, race, and culture, within the context of our decision making, relationship building, daily practices and operations?
- What would it look like for ALL college operations and activities to be conducted in a manner that follows the same set of priorities in terms of improving outcomes for disproportionately impacted students?
- How can we develop a culture where ALL constituent parts of the college see themselves use their spheres of influence to remove barriers for students?
- How can the college develop the infrastructure to engage ALL employees in professional learning opportunities on a regular basis, recognizing that all employees, departments, etc. play a key role in creating an environment that is welcoming, supportive and empowering.
- How can the college intentionally develop a culture of collaboration (information sharing, seeking feedback, sharing resources, etc.) to solve structural issues?
- Which of the highlights and areas of opportunity are most connected to shared governance bodies? Specifically, which might be under the guidance or purview of the Academic Senate? Which would be easy to address, and which might be more difficult? Why?

EQUITY MINDED (INDIVIDUAL)

Equity-minded higher education professionals intentionally call attention to patterns of inequity in student experiences and outcomes. They also take personal and professional responsibility for the success of their students and critically reassess their own practices. The recommendations below are centered on the development of interpersonal understanding of equity and individual impact on equity advancement within the Santa Monica College community.

*Hotep Consultants Team numbered the Strategic Goals found within the 2017-2022 Strategic Plan document for ease of translation within the following recommendation tables. P, P, A = Policy, Practice, or Assessment - refers to the three areas of which Hotep Consultants reviewed and analyzed data received from SMC

Administrative Capacity Building			
Recommendation	Resource/Example	SP Goal	P,P,A
Access tools and resources that help support individuals in using their agency and locus of control to practice equity in their work.	Example: Understanding Equity and Inequity Module - Equity Literacy Institute Example: Becoming Agents of Change in STEM : Tools for Increasing Latino and Latina STEM Baccalaureates- Center for Urban Education	1, 2	Practice
Employee Relations & Support			
Recommendation	Resource/Example	SP Goal	P,P,A
Conduct a review of employee review, onboarding, and evaluation forms to incentivize equity-minded practices, provide support needed for employee learning and growth, and to address behaviors not aligned with SMC's vision, mission, and goals.	Example: CSEA Employee Evaluation Form - College of Marin Example: ACE Translating Equity-Minded Principles into Faculty Evaluation Report	1,3,4	Assessment, Policy
Embed equity action plans within all employee evaluations to encourage the engagement with equity advancing work on campus (and/or beyond) and highlight areas of opportunity for the campus to meet the professional development needs of faculty, staff, and administrators.	Example: Employee Engagement and Talent Management Plan - Moraine Park Technical College	1,3,4	Assessment, Policy

EQUITY MINDED (CONTINUED)

Professional Learning Experiences			
Recommendation	Resource/Example	SP Goal	P,P,A
Develop Employee Learning Pathways to guide employees in accessing activities and programs best aligned with their interests and needs as it pertains to professional growth. This would include an inventory of all organized PD activities, when they take place during the year, expertise levels, modality, and resources.	Example: Teachers' Creating High-impact Opportunities for Innovation, Collaboration and Equity (Choice) Program - Miami-Dade County Public Schools Example: Employee Learning and Development - East Tennessee State University	1, 3	Practice, Assessment
Expand Equitizing Gateway Courses opportunities to non-transfer related courses to support equitable approaches in CTE and degree applicable courses.		1F, 1G, 1H	Practice
Provide training and coaching for managers/administration with formal responsibilities over equity initiatives. This level of support is intended to produce the following: Develop a process for dialogue that addresses conflict in a constructive way. Deepen knowledge base around key issues and trends affecting various student groups and communities. Develop funding/resource strategies to sustain impact of equity initiatives across the college.	Resource: Coaching and Consultation on Equity-Minded management from Bryant Smith Consulting and Networking Resource: Institutional healing and capacity building towards a more collaborative work environment from Flourish Agenda	1A, 3D, 3E, 5B	Practice
Develop leadership training (modules/workshops) for students leaders & student employees. Incorporating these experiences at the beginning of a student's employment or leadership role will help develop their self-awareness and skills so they can help create a welcoming environment for a diverse student body.	Example: Colorado State University- Students Empowering & Engaging in Dialogue.	1, 2	Practice

EQUITY MINDED (CONTINUED)

Guiding Questions and Considerations:

- Considering the diversity of perspectives that exist at the college, how can conversations be facilitated critically AND productively?
- Considering the diversity of perspectives that exist at the college, how can we navigate the resistance for updating key processes and practices, including the tenure process and employee evaluations?
- How are individual employees invited to participate in key campus activities and initiatives focused on equity and student success? Do employees typically feel comfortable asking clarifying questions, offering suggestions, and/or offering perspective to the topic being addressed?
- How can individuals who are interested in developing cultural fluency and racial literacy skills, engage in independent learning, if they do not have access to key campus events or learning activities?
- During employee onboarding, how are new employees introduced to the community at SMC engaged in equity work? Are there resources and recommendations they are provided with?
- Who on your campus is most likely to resist equity-centered conversations and discussions? Why do you believe these colleagues are resistant? What steps can you take to bring them into the conversation?

Transformative is the manifestation of practices that address the historical and sociopolitical causes of inequities found in education and engage in data-informed efforts to repair and restore the educational system. The recommendations listed below have been developed to better support the way in which individuals across the campus engage with students in an effort to support their success.

*Hotep Consultants Team numbered the Strategic Goals found within the 2017-2022 Strategic Plan document for ease of translation within the following recommendation tables.

P, P, A = Policy, Practice, or Assessment - refers to the three areas of which Hotep Consultants reviewed and analyzed data received from SMC

Administrative Capacity Building			
Recommendation	Resource/Example	SP Goal	P, P, A
Engage in Cultural Humility and Healing Centered Leadership & Engagement training/practices to re-establish a clear culture of trust, understanding, and collegiality.	Resource: Flourish Agenda Healing Centered Engagement, Smith Consulting and Networking	1-6	Practice
Utilize time within Department/Division meetings to facilitate dialogue with staff, faculty, and administrators for sharing best practices and how to implement culturally sustaining practices within their work.	Example: Creating a schedule of presentations for each dept./unit/office to share updates, goals & how they connect with institution's goals, high-impact practices, and opportunities for collaboration.	1-6	Practice
Employee Relations & Support			
Incorporate outreach practices that center relationship building internally through staff career development and advancement efforts and with external communities and organizations.	Example: HR develops a list of affinity based professional and career organizations where job postings will be shared. Example: UC Berkeley Career Opportunities and Resources for Equity		Practice

TRANSFORMATIVE (CONTINUED)

*Hotep Consultants Team numbered the Strategic Goals found within the 2017-2022 Strategic Plan document for ease of translation within the following recommendation tables.

P, P, A = Policy, Practice, or Assessment - refers to the three areas of which Hotep Consultants reviewed and analyzed data received from SMC

Recommendation	Resource/Example	SP Goal	P, P, A
Establish a staff ombudsperson (or office) dedicated to being a resource to the community of campus employees who have issues or concerns with fairness with college processes, policies, or procedures, and to communicate confidentially about their experiences. The ombudsperson can support individuals and provide systemic recommendations without disclosing confidential information.	Florida State University Human Resources - The Faculty/Staff Ombuds Program	1A, 4B	Policy
Professional Learning Experiences			
Revise the Data Coaching program to include external facilitators - especially as it comes to supporting Classified Educators, Administrators, and Hesitant/Less Engaged Faculty.	Example: Skyline Equity Training Series	1D-1J	Practice
Develop a cohorted professional learning series that features external experts, focused on developing cultural and racial literacy for employees. For the first few years, offer the same series of topics to establish a shared foundational baseline experience. Senior staff and management create capacity to allow employees to participate in the program.	Example: Diablo Valley College - Equity Speaker Series	1D-1J	Practice
Transformative Service			
Recommendation	Resource/Example	SP Goal	P, P, A?
Establish a forms committee to review the effectiveness of required forms, update language, and evaluate the submission and review process on a regular basis (annually).	Resource: Web Scan - USC's Center for Urban Education Resource: Conscious Style Guide by Karen Ying	1,3	Assessment

*Hotep Consultants Team numbered the Strategic Goals found within the 2017-2022 Strategic Plan document for ease of translation within the following recommendation tables.

P, P, A = Policy, Practice, or Assessment - refers to the three areas of which Hotep Consultants reviewed and analyzed data received from SMC

Recommendation	Resource/Example	SP Goal	P, P, A?
<p>Implement equitable and inclusive instructional strategies from preparing the syllabus to assessment & grading: Create a welcoming and accessible environment so students can communicate their needs. Use a framework for lesson planning that incorporates & builds on students' different levels of understanding. Facilitating interactive learning activities that connect the Utilizing assessment practices</p>	<p>Example: University at Buffalo's Curriculum, Assessment and Teaching Transformation - Equitable and Inclusive Instruction and Content</p>	<p>1D-1J</p>	<p>Practice, Assessment</p>
<p>Establish a process to review and revise the model syllabus template, course syllabi, and canvas pages on a regular basis. While syllabi can be viewed as contracts from the student to the instructor, they can, and should, also be viewed as a communication tool and resource between the instructor and the student.</p>	<p>Example: IUPUI Center for Teaching & Learning - Learning Centered and Equity-Minded Syllabus Resource: USC's Document Review - Equity Minded Inquiry Series</p>	<p>1D-1J</p>	<p>Assessment, Practice</p>
<p>Departments create opportunities to address student equity issues that are discovered through feedback of students, staff, and faculty. Examples of key questions are: To what extent can the department adjust its procedures and practices to be more equitable? How is student feedback elicited by the department? If no feedback is collected, where are there opportunities to discuss improvement of current services and offerings?</p>	<p>Resource: Critical Friends Conversation Protocol</p>	<p>1H, 1I, 5B, 6D</p>	<p>Assessment, Practice</p>
<p>Promote usage of the Gateway to Persistence and Success (GPS) platform for faculty.</p>	<p>Example: Promote usage at the department level and include within onboarding communications and in the faculty handbook.</p>	<p>1D-1J</p>	<p>Assessment, Practice</p>

TRANSFORMATIVE (CONTINUED)

Guiding Questions and Considerations:

- How can we approach designing curriculum and special programs to address social issues and promote social justice through learning engagement with the campus community?
- How can you encourage, empower, and equip students to utilize their education to improve their lives while positively contributing to a more just society?
- How do we help students to develop agency in student services? Specifically, how do we meet the students where they are and support their navigation of institutional practices and policies? And if barriers are discovered within this navigation, how are they dismantled in order to better support students' navigational capital in the future?
- How do college communications (i.e. emails, website, flyers, applications etc.) express the benefits of participation in support programs without utilizing institutional language, legalese, or focus on deficits?

NEXT STEPS



NEXT STEPS

Quote:

“You can’t be equity advancing and risk averse.” - Lasana O. Hotep

The recommendations presented in this report are not exhaustive and there is no end to equity advancement or critical reflection. In order to be an institution that centers equity and strives to eradicate structural racism, it will be imperative to make time and space for continual inquiry, reflection, and redirection. Each finding and recommendation is intended to impact change at Santa Monica College from several different lenses and aspects of the student experience. It will be important for the campus to identify which recommendations might be implemented in the short-term or within individual practice, and which may require additional time and collaboration.

The recommendations presented in this report are intentionally reported in alignment with the campus 2017-2022 Strategic Plan to identify the institutional goals addressed by each recommendation and the governance bodies that might be most connected to the implementation of the recommendations. It will be important to embed any recommendations gleaned from this report into the forthcoming Educational Master Plan or future strategic plans and program review processes in order to ensure that equity is embedded within the policies, practices, and procedures of SMC moving forward. This report should be shared widely with members of the SMC community, including those that set policy, determine prioritization of resources, approve professional learning experiences, guide the student equity plan, and impact hiring decisions. The Equity, Pathways, and Inclusion Team; District Planning and Advisory Council (DPAC); Academic Senate; CSEA; Management Association; and others should work collaboratively to develop a timeline of implementation and identify milestones to ensure consistent forward movement.

It’s important that the campus feels empowered and supported in taking practical and actionable steps to keep the work moving forward and avoid the common issue of having yet another set of research recommendations “sitting on the shelf,” without acting on the findings. A tool such as the “RACI Matrix” can offer helpful considerations regarding how the campus should think about, discuss, and coordinate the implementation of short term and long term recommendations within this report. Answering the questions below can help identify how the work can move forward, ensuring that key campus constituents are included within conversations.

R- RESPONSIBLE: Who is responsible for carrying out the deliverables of the Equity Audit?

A- ACCOUNTABLE: Who owns, corrects, and ensures that resources are available so that tasks may be completed thoroughly and accurately.

C-CONSULTED: Who has expertise and perspective on the best way to approach this thing

I- NFORMED- Who needs to be kept updated about the progress of deliverables?

We acknowledge that there are other project management tools that we encourage SMC to explore or current tools being used, in addition to the RACI Matrix, that can help move the work forward. The recommendations have been provided in a manner that connects each respective recommendation to the 2017-2022 Strategic Planning goals and space for SMC to identify which strategic bodies are to be included considering what is within their purview and expertise. Through the inquiry and thought partnership with the Equity Audit core group and what our team has learned through Equity Audit presentations with various consistent groups, there was a clear desire for forward movement and implementation of the recommendations. There were, however, also questions in terms of what the College can do to put these recommendations in place. In engagement with stakeholders, it was clear that implementation needed to happen in phases, priorities need to be created, and teams and people who can work towards implementation be identified. Additionally, the question of accountability came up as important to ensure that there is no momentum loss with these efforts.

With all of that in mind, we also recognize that change doesn't take place overnight. Change to right size systems that have produced outcomes predictable by race, ability, and other factors, will undoubtedly take a bit longer. Some of the findings and recommendations included in this report may be difficult to elicit immediate campus-wide buy-in. Anytime we, as humans, are asked to reflect on our practices or are asked to adjust our practices, there exists a hesitancy because much of why we work in education is connected to our sense of purpose and identity. For many of us in education, the realization that we have possibly been perpetrators of inequities within the educational system solely because of the way in which we were trained within that same system, is a difficult one to reconcile. However, as the quote at the start of this section states, one cannot be equity advancing *and* risk averse. We are asking for all members of the campus community to reflect on their current practices and the ways in which they engage with students, directly or indirectly, and the connection of those engagements on student outcomes. We are no longer operating within the "right to fail" model which expects students to enter our institutions with elevated awareness and knowledge of college systems and processes.

Instead, we are shifting into a “student ready” model which places the responsibility on higher education institutions to meet students where they are and support their growth and development as they navigate these college landscapes. It is our hope that the recommendations listed above provide the opportunity to truly become a student ready institution by reflecting upon and revising institutional policies and practices, providing professional learning experiences for the interpersonal assessment of practices, and space for individual recommitment to transformative service. Institutions of higher education were not originally developed to serve racially, socioeconomically, or gender diverse students. However, it is an honor to serve diverse communities of learners and impact the communities from which they come. If SMC strives to *“provide a safe, inclusive, and dynamic learning environment that encourages personal and intellectual exploration,”* intentional changes will need to be made in order to center and value the student experience within all policies, practices, and procedures. There is already amazing, equity-advancing work underway at Santa Monica College. We are excited for the next chapter in SMC’s efforts to remove barriers, close opportunity gaps, and manifest outcomes that reflect the College’s core mission of promoting a commitment of supporting the lifelong learning of students and the surrounding community.

REFERENCES

Framework

Protocol for Assessing Equity-Mindedness in State Policy-CUE

CUE Policy Review prompt- Six indicators that represent key aspects of an equity minded approach (guiding paradigm of philosophy, equity in language, data collection and reporting, disproportionate impact, policy consistency and ubiquity, equity framing why are we doing this?)

We Been Knowin: Toward an Antiracist Language and Literacy Education- Baker-Bell

Taken from the ten framing ideas of Anti Racist Black Language Pedagogy- #1: Critically interrogates white linguistic hegemony and anti-black racism, #5 rejects the myth that the same language (white mainstream English) and language education have been used to oppress black students can empower them.

Five Principles for Enacting Equity by Design

The five principles: (1) Clarity in language, goals and measures, (2) "Equity-Mindedness" as a guiding paradigm, (3) equitable practices and policies are designed to accommodate differences in the contexts of students' learning—not to treat all students the same, (4) Enacting equity requires a continual process of learning, disaggregating data, and questioning assumptions about relevance and effectiveness, (5) Equity much be enacted as a pervasive institution and system-wide principle.

Accountability, Equity and Practitioner Learning and Change- Bensimon, Rueda, Dowd, and Harris

"Equity for all" is a data-based model focused on the idea that challenges institutions have faced are due to the lack of specialized knowledge and expertise and lack of understanding the root causes of inequity. Standardized data practices for accountability often do not lead to institutional change or learning for practitioners because it's far removed for the direct experiences of teaching, learning and school environments (I.e. a remedial mathematics instructor may find it interesting that the six-year graduation rate for a particular group of students at his college is 48 percent, compared to 50 percent at a peer college. However, it is highly unlikely that this information will have an impact because in itself it will not make him wonder how his teaching practices might improve the graduation rate if, for example, he found a way of increasing student success in remedial mathematics. Graduation rates are so far removed from the mathematics instructor's classroom that they cannot serve as a guide for action (Argyris and Schon 1996). Practitioner learning/development of institutional actors is key to implementing change.

APPENDIX

Below are institutional resources that were utilized to conduct the Equity Audit. Feel free to click on any title to view the item in your web browser.

Methodology - Data Collection Items

- [Employee Survey Instrument](#)
- [Student Survey Instrument](#)
- [Focus Group Protocol](#)
- [Focus Group Questions](#)
- [Focus Group Participant Demographics](#)
- [Institutional Documents](#)

Survey Responses

- [Employee Survey Responses \(redacted\)](#)
- [Student Survey Responses \(redacted\)](#)

Informational Materials

- [EA List of Tables, Charts, and Images](#)
- [List of Recommendations](#)
- [12/1/22- Campus Listening Session Presentation Slides](#)
- Raci Matrix Template - pg. 91

RACI MATRIX TEMPLATE

This template may be used as a project management tool to ensure the forward progress on project implementation. By identifying key project aspects such as: who might be responsible for overseeing the work, who should be consulted based on their expertise, and who will be accountable to ensure that resources are available to actually see the project to fruition, transparency around the implementation process and expectations can be gained.

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C-CONSULTED: Who has expertise and perspective on the best way to approach this thing

I- NFORMED- Who needs to be kept updated about the progress of deliverables?

The template below is blank in order for the SMC community to utilize the template as needed. This template can also be utilized in project management tools such as Asana or Smartsheet in order to create a digital record of initiatives underway.

Recommendation	Institutional Goal	Responsible	Accountable	Consulted	Informed	Timeline