



# CALIFORNIA COMMUNITY COLLEGE STUDENT EQUITY PLAN REVIEW: A FOCUS ON RACIAL EQUITY

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## Executive Summary

The Student Equity Plan (SEP) has the potential to act as an “anti-racist policy,” a policy “that produces and sustains racial equity between groups (Kendi, 2019, p. 18).” In this project, the Center for Urban Education (CUE) and a team of reviewers examined 113 SEPs to better understand how well the plans were acting as tools of equity. We examined the plans with a focus on race and how the colleges were using the SEP to eradicate structural racism. Although the analysis was completed in the fall of 2019, the focus of the review very much aligns with the Chancellor’s most recent Call to Action, where he urges colleges to update their “equity plans with urgency” and to more directly address “equity and structural racism.”

This report is divided into five sections: a) purpose and goals, b) guiding framework and methodology, c) descriptive statistics and plan strengths, d) findings, and e) district and college level recommendations. Notably, CUE identified eight critical findings:

1. Only 1% of equity plan activities are dedicated to the creation or delivery of culturally relevant pedagogy
2. Only 3% of equity plan activities included capacity building or professional development focused on equity
3. 94% of the plans avoided deficit-minded language.
4. 87% of activity descriptions did not mention race or a specific racial group, meaning only 13% of activity descriptions were race-specific.
5. More than half (54%) of activities in the equity plans were focused on “all students” instead of specific disproportionately impacted populations.
6. Of all the equity plan activities, only 16% mention transfer in the description
7. Less than 1% of all equity plan activities focused on utilizing the Associate Degree for Transfer (ADT) in their equity strategy
8. Approximately 2/3 of the equity plan activities do not explicitly involve instructional faculty members

The findings highlighted here and those elaborated on in this report are timely. The brutal murder of Mr. George Floyd by a Minneapolis police officer has sparked great racial turbulence in the US generally and in higher education more specifically. There is now an urgency, as mentioned in the Call to Action to California Community Colleges, for strategies (activities) that address anti-blackness, institutionalized racism and white supremacy. An avenue by which to continue/initiate this work is to implement the recommendations put forth as a product of this project.



Table of Contents

**Executive Summary ..... 3**

**Introduction ..... 5**

**Purpose & Goals ..... 6**

*Why Focus on Racial Equity?* .....6

**Guiding Framework & Methodology..... 8**

    Guiding Framework .....8

    Methodology.....11

**Descriptive Statistics and Plan Strengths .....17**

    Descriptive Statistics .....17

    Strengths.....21

        Minimal Use of Deficit-Minded Language within Activities..... 21

        The Mention of Other Large Initiatives within the SEPs..... 24

        Actionable Activities..... 26

**Findings.....28**

    In what ways do the SEPs address racial equity?.....28

    How do community colleges utilize the Student Equity Plans as a tool to meet the Chancellor’s Office Vision for Success transfer goal, specifically for racially minoritized students? .....33

    In what ways do the colleges acknowledge a lack of capacity to address racial equity in the Student Equity Plans? .....35

    How are colleges engaging in self-assessment and inquiry as a method to create change for racially minoritized students? .....37

    Is the equity effort at the college a campus-wide effort or is it fragmented, or owned by specific departments, programs, or units? .....40

    Summation of Findings & Elements of an Exemplar Student Equity Plan.....42

        Critical Data Points ..... 42

        Elements of an Exemplar Student Equity Plan & Checklist ..... 42

**District/College Level Recommendations.....45**

**References.....47**



## Introduction

While community colleges have been successful in providing access to millions of students, for far too many students that access has not translated into certificates, degrees, and transfer to four-year colleges. California has been plagued for decades by the problem of how few of its community college students actually go on to earn a degree, with less than half of students now transferring to a four-year school or finishing a degree or certificate within *six* years. These students clearly go into college trying to better their standing in life by earning an education, yet thousands and thousands never realize their dream.

The state of California has made significant efforts targeting this problem. To date, California is the only state to have implemented a Student Equity Policy and to have a mandated plan to address equity. Additionally, the California Community College Chancellor's Office stands behind their "Vision for Success," another lever of change, which mandates racial equity as a goal and priority for the state's community colleges. Vision for Success points prominently to evidence that racially minoritized students suffer the greatest inequities in college success, and it put three very clear goals in place as a means to combat these inequities:

1. **Transfer Equity:** Increasing by 35 percent the number of California community college students transferring annually to a UC or CSU campus.
2. **Expanding Attainment:** Increasing by at least 20 percent the number of students annually who earn associate degrees, credentials, and certificates.
3. **Mitigating Equity Gaps:** Reducing outcome gaps by 40 percent within 5 years and fully closing those gaps for good within 10 years.

These goals provide a focal point that has been missing in the shaping of student equity plans across the state. Vision for Success is a beacon, set out to do the right thing for students—predominantly of color—in a rapid time frame. That means action, not rhetoric, and it means that this opportunity must not be wasted.

Even with Vision for Success and the Student Equity policy in place, community college strategic plans far too often default to ambiguous language as a way of both avoiding conflict and pleasing as many stakeholders as possible. To better understand how the California Community Colleges are addressing equity, the California Community College Chancellor's Office is collaborating with the Center for Urban Education (CUE). CUE is proud that California and the Chancellor's Office have a policy that has the purpose and funding behind it to radically change how higher education happens for racially minoritized students<sup>1</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> CUE acknowledges that California Education Code 78220 asks colleges to disaggregate data by several categories, including, but not limited to race/ethnicity. Neither the California Education Code or the Chancellor's Office requires the community colleges to focus on or address racial equity gaps within their plans. For explanation for CUE's focus on race, please see page 6.



## Purpose & Goals

CUE has been heavily invested in the Student Equity Planning work set by the state since 2014. CUE has provided four two-day Student Equity Planning institutes over the years, focused on supporting California community colleges to write and implement plans that are equity-minded, race-conscious, and actionable. Approximately half of all California community colleges have attended at least one institute, each event bringing together between 125-170 community college leaders, faculty, and staff. CUE continues its commitment to supporting community colleges as they seek to remove the barriers that disproportionately affect racially minoritized students.

Within a six-month timeframe, CUE collected all pertinent data from the Chancellor's Office, developed a research protocol, hosted a weekend review session, and analyzed the results. CUE's primary research agenda included the following goals:

1. Understanding how racial equity is situated and addressed within the plans.
2. Providing concrete recommendations to districts/colleges on writing race-conscious equity plans.
3. Providing concrete recommendations to the Chancellor's Office for future state equity planning<sup>2</sup>

### *Why Focus on Racial Equity?*

It has been asked, "Why focus on racial equity when the Student Equity Plans were not created to solely focus on racial equity?" First, CUE acknowledges that the research agenda that guides this study was developed by the Center for Urban Education and by no means represents what the community colleges were asked to include in their plans. The questions asked and the materials created embody how CUE approaches the work of racial equity.

### **What is CUE?**

Founded in 1999 by Estela Bensimon, the Center for Urban Education (CUE), now part of the Race and Equity Center at the University of Southern California's Rossier School of Education, helps individuals learn to use data, inquiry, and self-reflection to see institutional racism and dismantle it, one practice at a time. CUE has developed tools to empower faculty and staff to become equity-minded practitioners who have the critical consciousness, will, and ability to combat institutionalized racism.

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<sup>2</sup> Concrete recommendations to the state for future equity planning were provided to the Chancellor's Office in a separate document.



That said, CUE's equity efforts are focused specifically on race and ethnicity in light of historical and current oppression in American education. Our goal is to achieve equity in outcomes for

racially minoritized students—both in attainment and retention as well as in access to scarce opportunities like honors programs and high-value degrees such as in the STEM fields.

For this to happen, there must be a shared understanding that colleges and universities have and continue to perform poorly for minoritized students, and that racial inequities are an outcome of structures, policies, and practices that are presumed to be race-neutral.

This is the root of equity-mindedness, a term CUE coined to refer to the mode of thinking exhibited by practitioners who are willing to acknowledge that their policies and practices have not been designed to produce racial equity and that they need to be rethought and remediated in order to do so (Bensimon, 2007).

The sections that follow provide the guiding framework for the project, the methods for how the analysis was conducted, followed by findings and recommendations.



## Guiding Framework & Methodology

### Guiding Framework

The Student Equity Plan (SEP) represents a policy mechanism that has the potential to be used as a tool of racial equity and a road map for strategic organizational change for the state's community colleges. To frame this project, CUE utilized both a critical policy perspective and CUE's theory of change. A critical policy framework takes the perspective that policy development and policy implementation are inherently social acts, meaning that they are created, written, and implemented by social actors that come to the table with a myriad of beliefs, values, and competing priorities (Dumas & Anyon, 2006). This perspective holds that policies aimed at eradicating racial inequities can instead serve to perpetuate the status quo if not carefully implemented in a manner that specifically takes into account racially minoritized students. In the context of the SEP, the writing and submission of the plan represents a policy product or first step in the implementation process. From this perspective, the SEP can act as a tool of racial equity *only if* written in a manner that can enhance opportunities for racially minoritized students.

Additionally, the SEP represents a vehicle by which community colleges create a strategic plan for closing equity gaps on their campuses. As a result, CUE's theory of how change happens provided an additional frame by which to analyze the SEPs. CUE's theory of change holds that the process of achieving racial equity relies on the power of practitioner inquiry, reflective practice, as well as institutional responsibility as drivers of change (Bensimon, 2012). While a full explanation of the theory of change is beyond the scope of this report, listed below are the major concepts that guided this work.





**A Focus on Race**—The first concept is that race matters. For over twenty years, CUE has engaged institutions of higher education all over the country. We have had the privilege of interacting with dedicated change agents—faculty, staff, academic deans, college presidents and chancellors, and other system leaders. One question we’ve been asked many times is “Why focus on race?” This question is posed by some who feel uncomfortable talking about issues of race and equity in higher education and by others who point to issues of equity among income groups as the main issue for concern. It is also posed by many who feel that colleges and universities have

not done enough to address racial discrimination in higher education and struggle to express their point of view without eliciting a defensive response (Ching, 2013). We argue that for an equity plan to truly be a tool of racial equity, racially minoritized students need to be the focal point. Listed in the sidebar above are the reasons that CUE focuses on race, rather than other marginalized groups (i.e., low-income students, veterans, LGBTQ students). For a more expansive discussion of each of these points, please see [https://cue.usc.edu/files/2016/01/CUE\\_WhyRace\\_2013.pdf](https://cue.usc.edu/files/2016/01/CUE_WhyRace_2013.pdf) – an article titled *Understanding the Importance of Foregrounding Race and Ethnicity in Achieving Equity on College Campuses.*”

*Why Race Must be the Focus of Equity Efforts*

- Race is visible.
- Racially minoritized students have been legally prohibited from attending colleges and universities—low income students have not.
- Financial aid policies exist to remove barriers to admissions for low-income students; no similar policy specifically targets racially minoritized students.
- Class – or – socioeconomic status based affirmative action favors low-income White students.
- Race impacts the development of social capital crucial for educational opportunity.
- Not focusing on race makes it more difficult to fully understand the impact of race on educational opportunity.

**Participatory Process**—The second concept is that all members of an academic community must be involved as full partners in the development and execution of a strategy to eliminate racial inequities. The involvement of faculty members and professional staff is critical in any strategic equity effort that aims to change education outcomes in retention, graduation, completion, and participation. Outcomes of racially minoritized students are constructed through the quality, frequency, and types of interactions between students and practitioners—including instructors, teaching assistants, advisors, counselors, and others. The plethora of research on the importance of faculty and student interaction, specifically racially minoritized students, underscores the importance of having all actors across the community college ecosystem involved in the equity effort (Harris & Wood, 2013; Hurtado & Carter, 1997). We would argue that for an equity plan to truly be a tool of racial equity, all community college practitioners, specifically instructional faculty members, be engaged in the equity effort.

**Remediating Practices**—The third concept guiding this project is the presupposition that equity in educational outcomes has eluded the community colleges because interventions have focused on correcting the academic deficiencies of students and neglected institutional factors. Inequity in educational outcomes has persisted almost undisturbed because programs to increase



diversity, access and success continue to be the modal solution. Racial equity may be more achievable if community colleges focus on remediating institutional cultures and practices. We would argue that for an equity plan to truly be a tool of racial equity, community colleges should focus their equity efforts on remediating their own practices.

**Inquiry as a Strategy of Change**—The fourth concept holds that change strategies have to be responsive to the unique characteristics of the specific academic culture at the college. This intervention strategy is informed by the Deweyan idea that when problems in learning are encountered, it is best to treat them as indeterminate. In other words, assume that the reasons for the learning problem are not known; therefore, solutions should not be prescribed without first inquiring into the problem. Racial equity gaps are unlikely to be closed by using solutions that are not informed by practitioner inquiry. We would argue that for an equity plan to truly be a tool of racial equity, faculty, staff, and administrators would need to engage in a routinized process of inquiry to understand how their own practices are contributing to racial inequities. For more information on inquiry tools please see <https://www.cue-tools.usc.edu/>

**Racial inequity as a Problem of Practice**—The fifth concept underscores the notion that improving outcomes for racially minoritized students is likely to happen if the change strategy is focused on things within the immediate control of the leaders and practitioners. CUE’s work discourages participants from blaming racial inequity on history, poorly funded schools, segregation, poverty, values, or the students themselves. We recognize that racial inequity is a complex problem and that casting it as a problem of practice risks the appearance of naïve reductionism. However, framing inequity as a problem of practice makes it possible for practitioners to envision themselves as the instrument of change. In order for practitioners to change the outcomes for racially minoritized students, they must first learn how to change themselves. We would argue that for an equity plan to truly be a tool of racial equity, practitioners should view racial inequity as a problem of practice, placing the onus of responsibility for student success with the institution, not the student. For an expansive description of CUE’s Theory of Change, see Bensimon (2012).

*The approach discussed above provided a framework for the project. More specifically, CUE set out to examine the SEPs guided by the following questions;*

1. In what ways do the SEPs address racial equity?
2. How do community colleges utilize the SEPs as a tool to meet the Chancellor’s Office Vision for Success transfer goal, specifically for racially minoritized students?
3. In what ways do colleges acknowledge their lack of capacity to address racial equity in the SEPs?
4. How are colleges engaging in self-assessment and inquiry as a method to create change for racially minoritized students?
5. Is the equity effort at the college a campus-wide effort or is it fragmented; owned by specific departments, programs, or units?



## Methodology

Guided by a critical policy lens and CUE’s theory of change, this project employed qualitative document analysis as the primary means of data collection. Documents such as campus plans, memos, announcements, and the like are rich sources of information. What is stated (and not stated) in these documents can reveal a lot about what a college values, how it imagines its role as an educational institution, what it hopes to achieve, and for whom are its efforts directed. Imagine a person reading an educational master plan that repeatedly uses the phrase “student success” and that discusses the importance of student success for the overall direction of the college’s work. That person could very well walk away from the plan with the sense that this college is serious about the success of its students and will do what is possible to ensure its achievement.

**This is what CUE’s analysis was designed to do:** uncover and highlight what the SEP communicates about a college’s values, identity, goals, and approach with respect to equity. Our analysis considers, for example, whether racial equity is a stated or unstated value for the college; how equity is defined and articulated; and whom equity is for. In answering these questions, we established a baseline understanding of how racial equity, as an idea and a practice, is manifested within the SEPs.

The methods of the project are described in the three following sections: 1) protocol development, 2) the review weekend, and 3) quality check and analysis. This is followed by a brief section on the limitations of the project.

**Protocol Development.** In the summer of 2019, CUE researchers developed an initial protocol to examine the SEP plans. The protocol was created and designed to allow CUE to better understand how race is positioned in the plans and the types of activities the colleges planned to employ. The initial draft was developed using CUE’s expertise in racial equity and equity-mindedness and the knowledge CUE has accumulated over time doing document analyses from an equity perspective (Ching et al., 2018; Felix & Fernandez Castro, 2018). Similar analyses include previous college equity plans, strategic plans at both the state and institutional level, and other policy documents, to name a few. The protocol underwent eight iterations, where two CUE researchers tested the protocol using select SEP plans, making edits after each round. Additionally, CUE researchers elicited feedback from CUE staff and invited two community college leaders to a “feedback session” in October, 2019. During this session, CUE researchers took notes and made adjustments to the protocol once again.

The final protocol is composed of two primary analysis sections. The first section is focused on examining the activities that were submitted by each college as well as categorizing each activity as a specific equity asset. These activities were submitted via NOVA. In the final version of the protocol, reviewers answered 15 set response questions and five open-ended response questions for each activity submitted. Aligning with the guiding framework of the project, the protocol asked questions such as, “Is the activity description race-neutral or race specific?” “Does the activity description specifically engage and involve instructional faculty members?” “Does the



activity description include inquiry in the activity?” and “Is the activity explicitly related to transfer or transfer equity?” to name a few.

**NOVA Activities**

**Worksheet Instructions**  
The activities/metrics in the tables below were populated directly from the Student Equity & Achievement plan submitted by the college. Please read each activity title, description, and metrics for each activity and answer the corresponding questions. Please note that each question has a dropdown menu to choose from and select questions ask for addition information to be typed into a text field. If needed, please refer to the "glossary of terms" or the "response definitions" sheets for clarification.

Number of Activities: \_\_\_\_\_

#	Activity Title	Activity Description	Responses
1			
	<b>Questions</b>		<b>Responses</b>
	1. Please list the total number of groups focused on in the activity.		
	2. Which groups/metrics are the focus of the activity (as shown in the Nova list of corresponding metrics?)		
	3. Are the metrics listed in #2 race-neutral or race-specific?		
	4. Is the activity description race-neutral or race-specific?		
	5. Are the groups that are identified in #2 explicitly written into the activity description?		If your answer was inferred, No, or select groups please explain which student groups are missing?
	6. What is the equity goal type?		
	7. Does the activity description focus on providing student support services or is the activity classroom-focused?		
	8. Does the activity description explicitly engage and involve instructional faculty members?		
	9. Based on how the activity description is written, who is the focus of change?		
	10. Does the description include inquiry in the activity?		If yes, please list the types of inquiry planned as part of the activity.
	11. Does the activity include external consultants?		
	12. Is there evidence of deficit-minded language in the activity description?		If yes, please list the words or phrases.

Figure 1. Snapshot of excel protocol used by reviewers to examine the SEPs.

The second section of the protocol was focused on the plan holistically, taking into account the activities (submitted via NOVA) but also what was written into the executive summary<sup>3</sup>. The executive summaries were submitted as a separate document. In some cases, the executive summary provides more context to the activities the college plans to implement and on other cases the executive summaries were identical to the activities submitted. In the final version of the protocol, reviewers answered 19 set response questions and 19 open-ended response questions for each college plan<sup>4</sup>. A sample of questions on this section of the protocol include, “Does the executive summary position the participation and success of students from racial, ethnic, and indigenous communities historically underserved by higher education as an institutional responsibility?” “Based on the analysis, whom or which group is the focus of change centered? And “is the equity effort presented as a cohesive/collaborative college-wide effort or is it fragmented and owned by select offices or departments?”








<sup>3</sup> Seven of the 113 plans reviewed did not have an executive summary. Either the executive summary was not provided to CUE, the executive summary was simply a list of metrics or indicators, or the link to the executive summary was an old version of a submitted equity plan. For these seven colleges, reviewers were advised not to answer questions 1-9 of the second protocol section, as these questions were specifically focused on the content of the executive summary.

<sup>4</sup> A full version of the protocol is in Appendix A, along with other supporting documentation in Appendix B.



**The Review Weekend.** To facilitate the review, CUE researchers sought the experiential expertise of community college administrators, faculty, and staff. In the fall of 2019, a small group of 28 CUE researchers and practitioners convened for three days in Los Angeles to examine 113<sup>5</sup> SEP plans from an equity-minded perspective. The reviewers were selected based on their role within their college and their knowledge of their SEP. For example, the majority of community college practitioners invited to the review had a role in writing their SEPs. Approximately half of the practitioners represented various roles within the California community colleges, such as Deans and Directors. Additionally, the review team also included a Program Officer from the ECMC Foundation, a representative from The Campaign for College Opportunity, and three representatives from the California Community College Chancellor’s Office (see Table 1 for more details on attendees). The varied roles represented allowed for rich conversation that spanned expertise from the state-level, researchers, and those within the community colleges.

Table 1. Reviewers and Other Attendees

Role Type	Number of Participants
CUE Researchers	
USC PhD Student Researchers	
CCC Directors/ Coordinators	
CCC Deans / Associate Deans	
CCC Vice Presidents	
Educational Specialists <sup>6</sup>	
CCC Chancellor’s Office Representatives	

CUE hosted the event on the University of Southern California campus. The purpose of the event was twofold. First, the primary purpose was the analysis of the plans using the protocol. Second, and aligning with the CUE theory of change, reviewers took part in a collaborative community of practice, where they learned about critical forms of inquiry and how to identify equity-minded language within institutional documents. This secondary purpose was a unique

<sup>5</sup> The total number of plans examined was 113. One college SEP plan was not provided.

<sup>6</sup> “Educational Specialists” refer to representatives from the ECMC Foundation and the Campaign for College Opportunity.



feature of the project as it brought researchers and practitioners together, both using their different forms of expertise to review the SEPs. Reviewers validated this secondary purpose by providing positive feedback on their experience. For example, one reviewer said “I know that the colleges will directly benefit from the reviews, but I also learned tremendously about what it means to be race-conscious. I will never write a student equity plan the same again.” Another reviewer commented on the value of the group work, “working in groups was so helpful. I was able to ask my colleagues questions, unpack some ideas. I learned a great deal

by just sitting and listening to my colleagues talk about how race was included and missing from the plans.”

During the first day of the event, the reviewers were trained on how CUE defines racial equity, equity-mindedness, and how to use the protocol. Part of the training included a norming session, with the goal of practicing how to answer each question on the protocol as a CUE researchers would. Reviewers were provided the opportunity to practice using the key terms in the context of the SEP (see Figure 2).

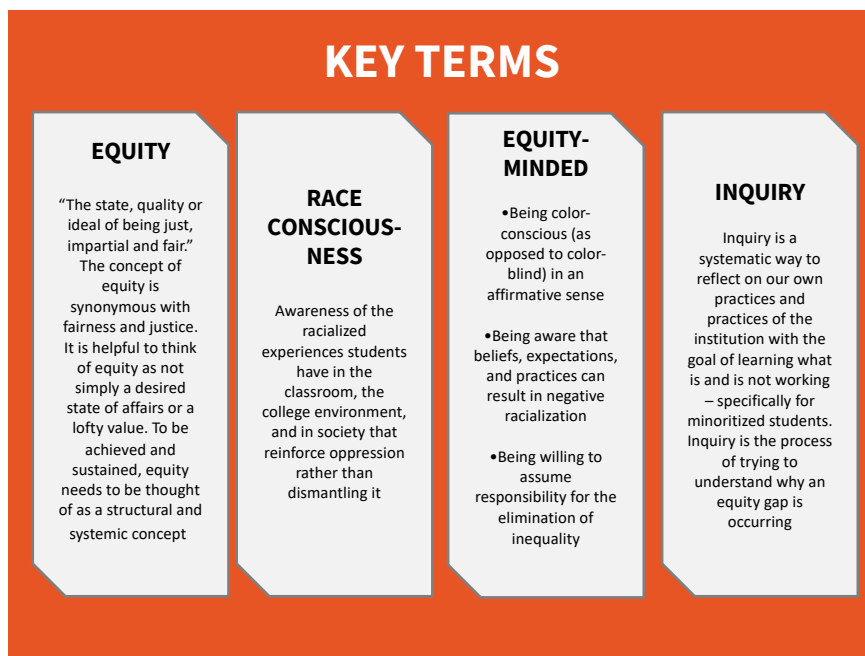


Figure 2. Key terms that guided the reviewer training and analysis.



As an example, reviewers were asked to identify how these terms were present and manifested in each plan. For example, “how is racial equity included in the plan?” “Is the plan race-conscious and how do you know?” “What aspects of equity-mindedness are present?” and “Does the college include inquiry or reflective practice as part of their strategy to achieve racial equity. The purpose of the norming session was to provide the reviewers an opportunity to discuss their responses with others and achieve a higher level of consensus. To conclude the norming session, the entire group of CUE researchers and expert reviewers examined the same SEP plan

while periodically coming together as a group to discuss how and why they responded in a specific way. While the goal of the norming activity was to come to a general consensus on how the questions could be answered, the aim was not to produce identical responses. Operating from an interpretivist perspective, the analysis allowed for “culturally derived and historically situated interpretations” (Crotty, 2003, p. 67). In essence, it gave merit to subjective interpretations.

The following two days of the review were focused on completing the analyses. Each reviewer was assigned three to five SEP plans to review. Each review took between two to five hours to complete and, once finished, the completed protocol file was uploaded to a secure online folder. Over the course of three days, the reviewers examined 113 SEPs.

**Quality Review & Analysis.** After the review weekend, CUE researchers conducted a quality review of the analyses from November through December 2019. Using a random numbering system, college analyses were selected for an in-depth quality review by CUE researchers. These analyses were reviewed and, if questions were raised, the original reviewer was contacted for discussion. During the winter of 2020, CUE researchers developed an analysis tool that pooled all the protocol data from the 113 SEP reviews. The quantitative data (fixed response) was analyzed with charts created to provide a visual representation of the data. The qualitative data (open-ended response) was synthesized into common themes by two researchers.

**Limitations.** CUE acknowledges that document analysis has its limits and there is only so much that documents can reveal about what is actually going on at a college with respect to racial equity. That is, even an extensive document analysis could not uncover *why* a particular definition of equity is adopted over another, just that the definition has been adopted. Despite this limitation, document analysis can nonetheless offer key insights about equity planning.



*Figure 3. Community college reviewers discuss their findings as a group, during the Student Equity Plan Review Weekend, Los Angeles, November, 2019*



Additionally, CUE acknowledges that writing a plan is the first step in the implementation process and does not represent the full scope of the implementation of an equity plan. For example, it is possible for a college to write a race-conscious equity plan that is not enacted. A high-quality race conscious SEP is the first step to closing racial equity gaps, not the final step.





## Descriptive Statistics and Plan Strengths

This section provides descriptive statistics and observations and identifies strengths of the plans holistically. The general statistics are included to provide context to the rest of the findings.

As part of the SEPs, colleges were asked to submit “activities” or strategies that, when implemented, will close equity gaps that correspond to specific metrics. In this section, and the rest of the report, the term “activity” or “activities” refer to those specific strategies that were submitted by each college. In addition to the activities submitted by each college as part of the SEP, colleges were also asked to submit an executive summary which was, in many cases, a narrative to accompany the SEP. In this section, and the rest of the report, “executive summary” or “executive summaries” is referring to this narrative.

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### Descriptive Statistics

A total of 1,853 activity descriptions were examined. The number of submitted activities ranged from one college plan proposing two activities and another college proposing 100 activities. The average number of activities for all of the plans was 16 activities. The frequency distribution of number of activities per college plan shows the largest group of plans (31) proposed between 11-15 activities followed by 26 plans at 1-5 activities and then 17 plans at 26-30 activities (see Figure 4).

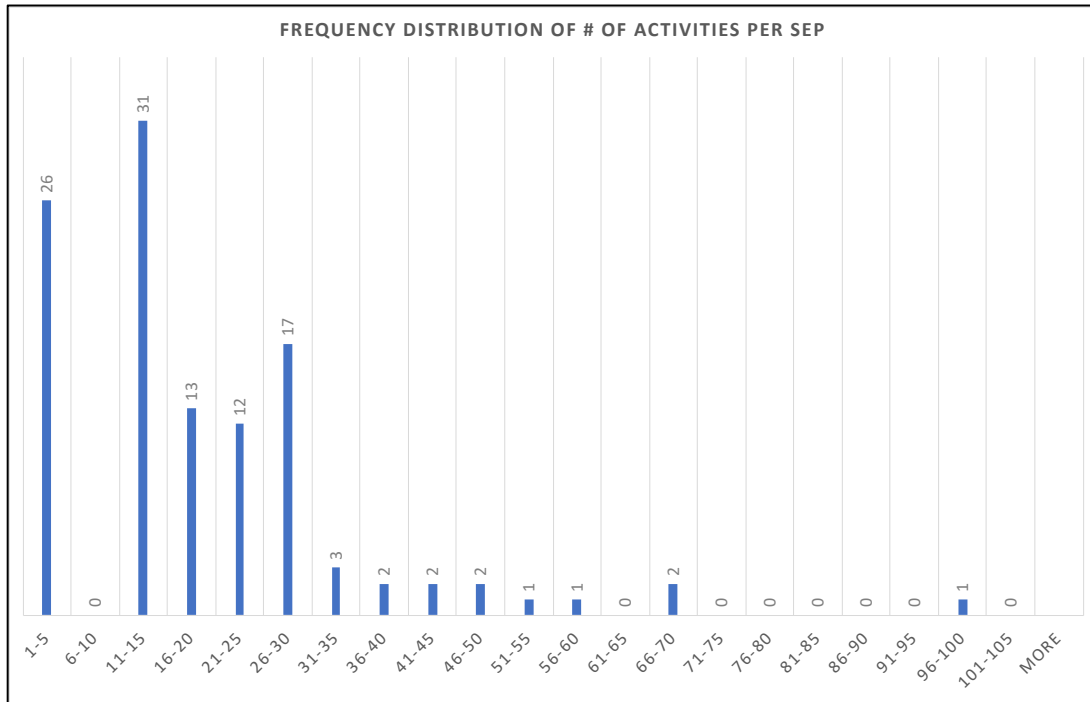


Figure 4. Frequency distribution of the number of activities submitted per SEP plan.

To better understand how colleges are attempting to increase equity in student success, the SEP reviewers categorized each activity by “equity asset type.” An equity asset type is a method for categorizing the type or kind of activity. Equity asset types include structures, programs, personnel, policies, capacity building-general, capacity building-equity focused, or the development of culturally relevant curriculum (see Table 2 for equity asset definitions).



Table 2. Equity Asset Types

EQUITY ASSET TYPE	DESCRIPTION
<b>Structures</b>	<p>Creating new or reintegrate how units, offices, and roles on campus work towards improving student success and outcomes.</p> <p>Implementing a technological system to support students, faculty or staff.</p>
<b>Programs</b>	<p>Specific activity proposed to address student equity.</p>
<b>Personnel</b>	<p>Hiring new staff/faculty/administrators to coordinate proposed equity activities or to support the equity effort in some capacity.</p>
<b>Policies</b>	<p>Developing new or revising existing guidelines and rules that govern the operation of the institution/daily routine.</p>
<b>Capacity Building - General</b>	<p>Professional development focused on providing training to staff, faculty, and administrators.</p>
<b>Capacity Building - Equity (Race Conscious)</b>	<p>Professional development focused specifically on training staff, faculty, and administrators to be reflective practitioners and to develop equity-minded competence.</p>
<b>Culturally Relevant Curriculum Development</b>	<p>Redesign of curriculum to be culturally relevant.</p>

*\*Note – Equity Assets definitions adapted from Felix & Fernandez Castro, 2018.*

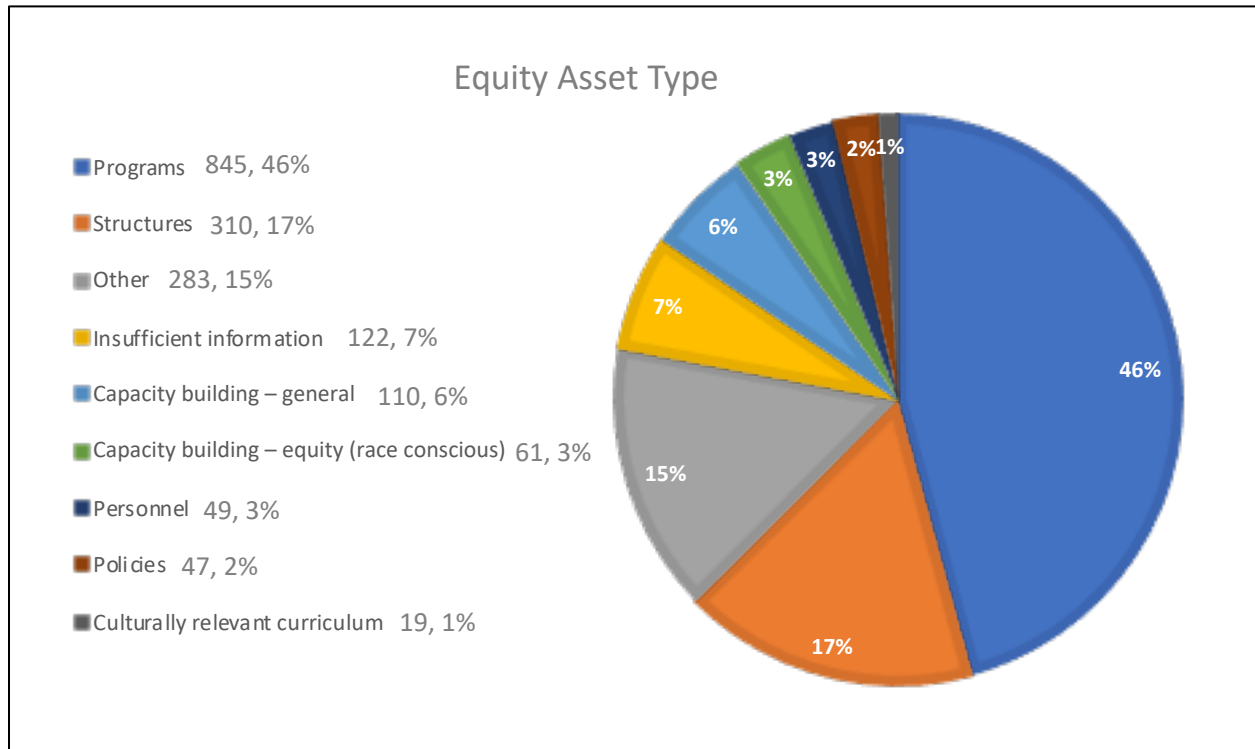


Figure 5. SEP equity asset type percentage and number.

The majority of activities (46% or 845) were identified as programs, followed by the creation of structures (17% or 310). Colleges submitted activities categorized as policies (2% or 47) and culturally relevant curriculum (1% or 19) the least (see Figure 5).

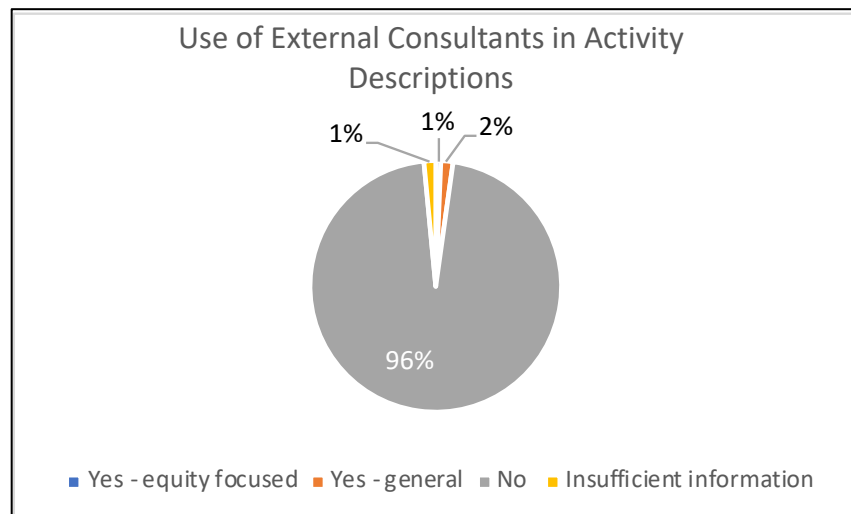


Figure 6. The percentage of SEP activities that mention the use of external consultants.



Finally, reviewers found that the vast majority of activities (96% or 1,782 activities) do not mention the use of external consultants (see Figure 6). This finding suggests that colleges either do not plan to hire external consultants in the area of equity or they have not yet made explicit plans to do so.

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## Strengths

There were three identified strengths of the SEPs: 1) minimal use of deficit-minded language within the activities, 2) the mention of other large initiatives within the SEPs, and 3) the majority included actionable activities.

### Minimal Use of Deficit-Minded Language within Activities

CUE has identified three common forms of language used in higher education: 1) Deficit-Minded, 2) Diversity-Related, and 3) Equity-Minded. Reviewers examined each SEP for type of language use. The three types of language are defined below.

The view that students are themselves responsible for inequity reflects what CUE calls “**deficit-mindedness.**” Deficit-mindedness attributes disparities in outcomes to the characteristics of

*“DI Students that received a letter grade of D, F or W will be invited to a workshop series during the Winter Intercession to enhance their study skills.”*

*This activity description does not include “deficit minded” words but rather holds the assumption that students are receiving a letter grade of D, F, or W because their study skills are lacking. The activity description is written from a deficit-minded framework, deflecting attention away from the role the instructor or the institution play in assigning D, F, or W grades to DI populations – CUE Researcher*

students rather than to institutional and practitioner characteristics that are detrimental for racially minoritized students. Deficit-minded perspectives rationalize race- and income-based educational inequities by pointing to students not being college-ready, lacking the behavioral patterns associated with normative conceptions of college students, having motivational problems, lacking self-efficacy, etc. From this perspective, students themselves must change in order to take advantage of what a college has to offer even if it was not built for them (Bensimon, 2007). The danger of deficit-mindedness is that it overlooks racialization as an enduring feature of academic organizations that is implicated in the

production of inequality in educational outcomes. Deficit-mindedness fails to consider that inequalities in educational outcomes may be manufactured by practitioners’ lack of racial literacy and pedagogical practices that are indifferent to the success of racially minoritized students. The most noticeable effects of deficit-mindedness can be seen in the proliferation of compensatory programs to help minoritized students integrate into the academic and social (racialized) environment of institutions of higher education.



**Diversity-related** language is the second type of language. CUE has identified diversity-related language as the most commonly used language in higher education. Diversity language reflects egalitarian values without acknowledging the presence of institutional racism and its consequences for students. Diversity language, e.g., “diverse students” “vulnerable populations” “students of color” is commonly used as a proxy for racial groups without naming them and

often leads to activities or solutions that are race-neutral. This language can stifle productive race-talk and as a consequence fails to address the permanence of racialization and its academic and social consequences for minoritized students.

In contrast, CUE identifies “**equity-minded**” language, as language that positions the practitioner or institution as responsible for student success. The term “equity-minded” refers to the mode of thinking exhibited by practitioners who are willing to assess their own racialized assumptions, to acknowledge their lack of knowledge of the history of race and racism, to take responsibility for the success of historically underserved and racially minoritized student groups, and to critically assess racialization in their own practices as educators and administrators. Equity-minded practitioners accept that race and racism are endemic in higher education (Bensimon, 2007; Bensimon, 2018; Bensimon, 2020).

Language that falls within this category identifies racial groups, the racialized systemic and institutional conditions that have led to their gaps in outcomes, and race specific solutions the institution or organization is planning to undertake. Specific examples of each language type are listed in Table 3.

Table 3. Language Type SEP Examples

Equity-Minded Language	Diversity Language	Deficit-Minded Language
<p><i>“Inquiry into the transfer process found that <u>Latinx students</u> did not know where the Transfer Center was located and <u>were not being referred there by faculty and staff.</u> Faculty and staff will be trained to include the Transfer Center as part of their practice and a comprehensive review of transfer documents is being conducted to understand <u>how the transfer process can be made clearer and more inclusive of the Latinx community.</u>”</i></p>	<p><i>“Foster direct student engagement opportunities including counseling advising, mentoring, and outreach geared toward <u>diverse student populations.</u>”</i></p>	<p><i>Provide opportunities for disproportionately impacted students to participate in local and national events <u>aimed at improving their success rate, self-confidence, and engagement.</u></i></p> <p><i>Improve advertising of programs and opportunities at the College for traditional and <u>non-traditional students.</u></i></p>

The reviewers were trained in how to identify the three different types of language and also were provided examples in relation to the SEP plans. The reviewers found that only 6% or 102 activities include some form of deficit-minded language. This means that 94% or 1,747 activity descriptions were identified as free from deficit-minded language (see Figure 7). This is a



positive finding and suggests that colleges, for the most part, did not use deficit-minded language within their proposed activities.

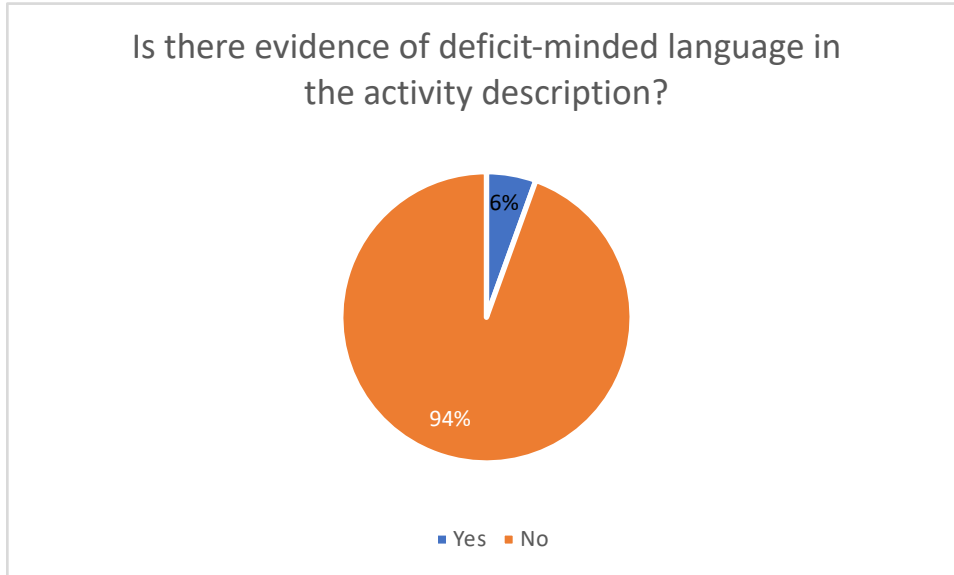


Figure 7. Percentage of deficit-minded activity descriptions.

The activities identified as using deficit-minded language include words such as “underprepared” or “poorly prepared”, “at risk”, “achievement gap”, “learning styles”, “disadvantaged”, and “non” or “untraditional.” A subset of activities were labeled deficit-minded although they did not include words that were deficit-minded but rather, the description held assumptions about student groups that were deficit minded. For example, the assumption that men of color are not engaged or that DI groups are not “up to speed” and therefore need to be caught up.

When reviewers were asked to examine the executive summaries holistically for language use, they filled in a word template that allowed them to visually see frequently used language (see Figure 8). Figure 7 shows that the majority of executive summaries use diversity related language (69% or 73 plans). This finding suggests that equity-minded

Equity Word Search Table		
	Term	No. of times referred to:
Equity-minded Language	Equity-Minded	
	Racial equity	
	Hispanic Serving Institution (HSI)	
	Race	
	Racism	
	Minoritized	
	Culturally relevant or responsive	
	Whiteness	
	Privilege	
	Total	
Diversity Language	Disproportionally impacted (DI) groups	
	Targeted groups	
	Identified groups	
	Underrepresented	
	Students of color	
	Total	
Deficit-minded Language	At-risk	
	All students	
	High-need	
	Underprepared	
	Untraditional	
	Underprivileged	
	Learning style(s)	
	Achievement gap	
	Total	

Figure 8. Equity word search template.



language was utilized the least (only 12% or 13 of the SEPs) across the executive summaries and also that there is more deficit-minded language reflected in the executive summaries when compared to the individual activity descriptions (19% of all plans compared to only 6% of all activities).

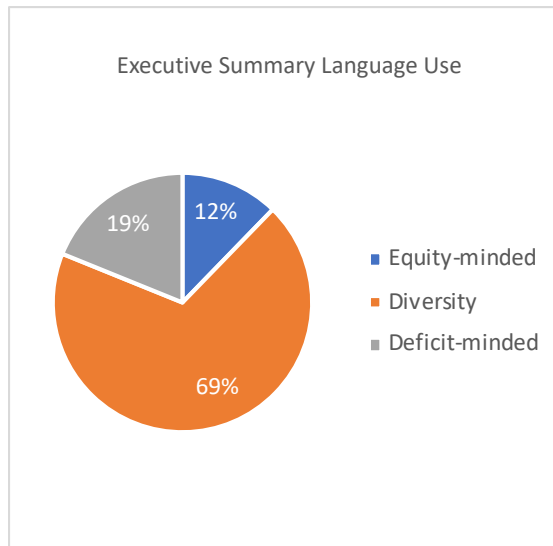


Figure 9. SEP executive summary language use.

### The Mention of Other Large Initiatives within the SEPs

The findings indicate that colleges are attempting to integrate other state initiatives within their SEPs. One of the protocol questions asked reviewers to indicate whether the plan included references to other initiatives, including AB 705, Guided Pathways, Strong Workforce, Vision for Success, College Promise Grant, Integrated Plan, or Basic Skills. Approximately 94 (83%) of the 113 plans referenced at least one of these initiatives. This data suggest that colleges referenced these other initiatives within their plan, which shows an attempt to integrate their efforts.



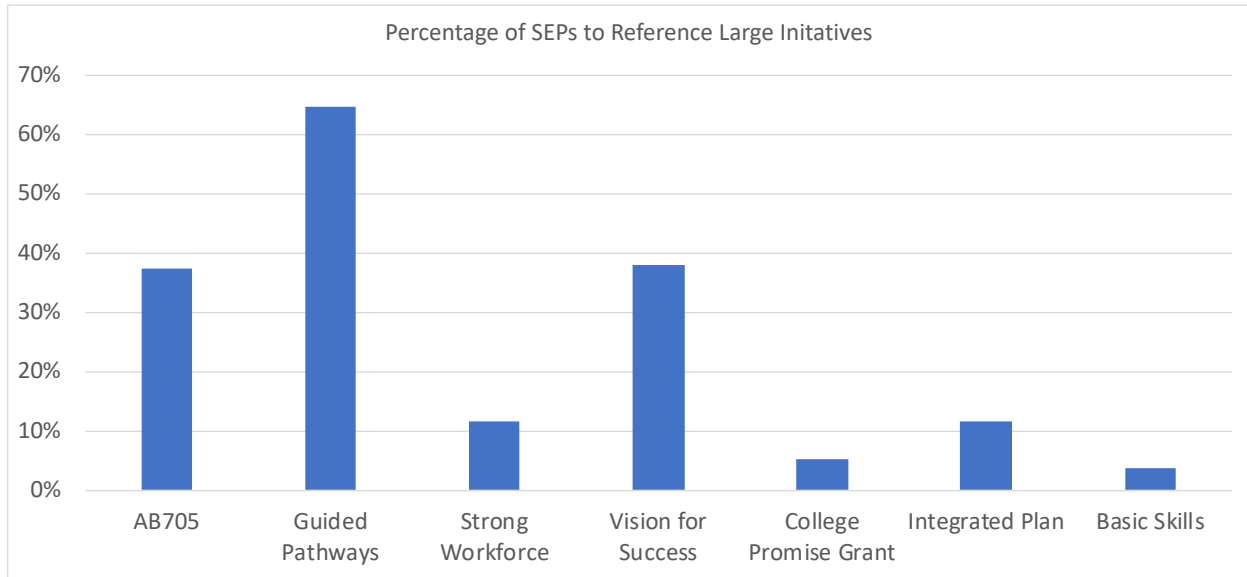


Figure 10. Percentage of SEPs to reference large initiatives. SEPs were included in this data if the initiative was mentioned in the text of the executive summary or within an activity description. SEPs were not included in this data if the initiative was referenced in a citation.

Note. The list of large initiatives reflected in the figure is not exhaustive. These initiatives represent the most frequently referenced within the plans.

Figure 10 shows that referencing other initiatives in SEP plans was common. Guided Pathways was the most referenced initiative, mentioned in 65% of all examined plans. Both AB 705 and Vision for Success were referenced similarly in approximately 38% of all examined plans.

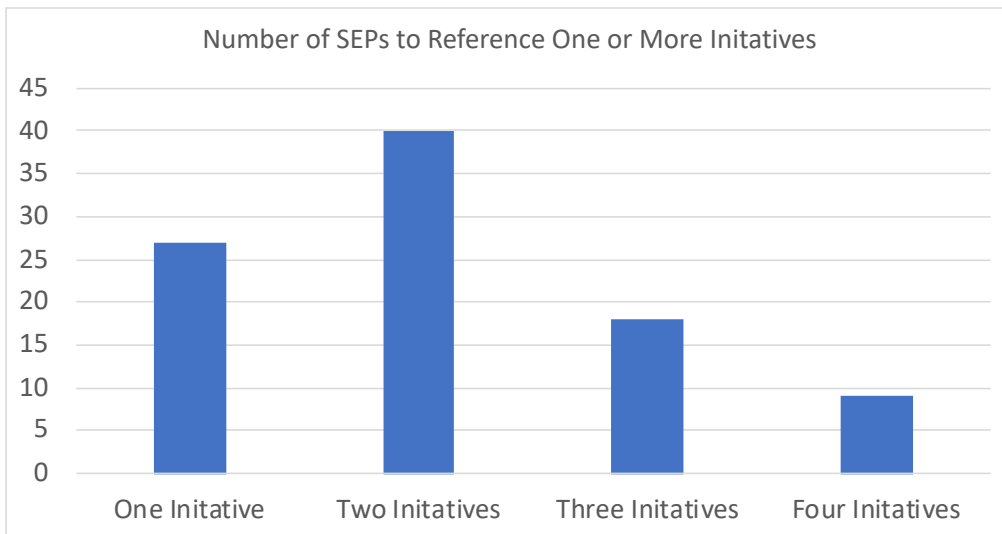


Figure 11. Number of SEPs that reference one or more initiatives.

Note. The list of large initiatives reflected in the figure is not exhaustive. These initiatives represent the most frequently referenced within the plans.

The data was also examined to understand how many initiatives colleges included within their plans. Figure 11 shows that of the colleges that did reference other initiatives within their SEPs, the majority included at least two of the initiatives (40 colleges), followed by one initiative (27 colleges), three initiatives (18 colleges), and four initiatives (9 colleges). These findings provide reason to speculate that many of the colleges are attempting to align efforts across initiatives.

### Actionable Activities

Finally, reviewers were asked to evaluate whether the activity was “feasible” based on what was written into the activity description. For example, was there enough information and detail within the description for the reviewer to understand what the activity would entail? Was the activity description written in a manner that it seemed conceivable that the college could actually implement the activity? Or, was there a lack of information or detail, making the activity less actionable or feasible? Table 4 provides an illustration of both an unactionable and actionable activity.

Table 4. Unactionable and Actionable Activity Examples

Example of an Unactionable Activity	Example of an Actionable Activity
Expand partnerships with financial aid office to promote and encourage FAFSA/DA/BOG completion	MESA Week Zero is an intensive, four-day (9am - 2pm) orientation program for new incoming students identified as low-income, Latino, Native American, and African American who are declared in the STEM disciplines, as well as a cohort of continuing MESA students. MESA Week Zero brings these students to campus two weeks before the fall semester begins to go through a series of activities that expose them to STEM disciplines and requirements, STEM faculty, Community STEM Professionals, and STEM student leaders.

The unactionable or unfeasible activity in Table 4 is unactionable because it does not provide enough detail as to how the activity will be implemented. For example, what does it mean to “expand partnerships with financial aid?” What steps does that entail and who would be involved? How long would this process take? On the other hand, the actionable activity provides detail in terms of implementation. It provides when the activity will take place, the duration, which student groups will be involved, and what types of activities will be part of the strategy. Providing sufficient detail and identifying specific student racial groups demonstrates forethought and planning, making the activity more likely to become reality.



The reviewers identified 61% or 1,121 activities as feasible, 35% or 647 as insufficient information, and only 4% of the total activities as infeasible (see Figure 12). This is a positive finding and suggests that more than half of the activities have sufficient details to be labeled “feasible.”

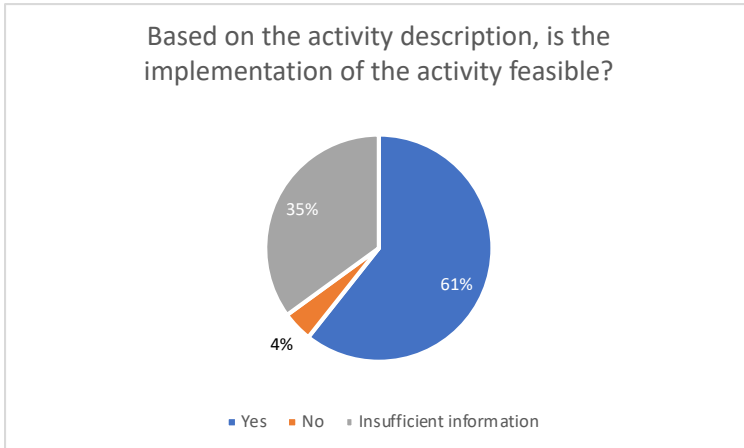


Figure 12. Percentage of activities that were identified as “feasible” or “actionable.”



## Findings

This section delineates the findings of the analysis. The findings are organized by the project’s guiding questions.

### In what ways do the SEPs address racial equity?

Overall, the SEPs demonstrate **generic equity not racial equity, meaning that racial equity is largely not addressed.** For example,

- The majority of activity descriptions do not include references to specific racial groups, despite metrics that specifically name racial groups.
- Activity descriptions tend to be focused on “**all**” students or disproportionately impacted (DI) students in the aggregate.
- Most plans do not address racism.
- Finally, most plans do not define the term “equity.” When colleges did provide their definition of equity, it was generic and did not reference race.

Reviewers examined all activities submitted by the colleges to understand if the corresponding metrics for the activity were **Race-Neutral** or **Race-Specific**. A “race-neutral metric” is a metric that does not refer to a specific racial group (i.e., Black) for that given activity. A “race-specific metric” is a metric where at least one of the listed metrics refers to a specific racial category (i.e., Black or Latinx students). An example is provided in Figure 13.

- **Race-Neutral Metrics:** None of the metrics refer to a specific racial group (i.e., Black) for that given activity
 

Corresponding Metrics:  
Overall : All : Completed Both Transfer-Level Math and English Within the District in the First Year
- **Race-Specific Metrics:** At least one of the listed metrics refers to a specific racial category (i.e., Black or Latinx students)
 

Corresponding Metrics:  
Black or African American : Female : Enrolled in the Same Community College

Figure 13. Race-neutral and race-specific definition and metric example.



For each of the proposed activities, the colleges listed the corresponding metrics that would be targeted by the specific activity. The data show that 60% of the activities have race-specific corresponding metrics, meaning they specifically name at least one racial ethnic group within the metrics (Figure 14).

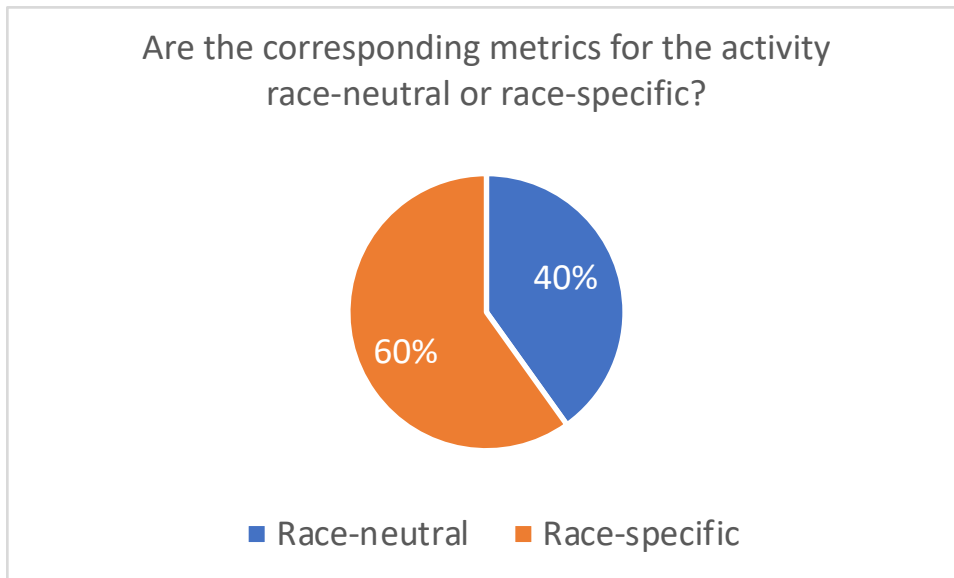


Figure 14. Activity metrics, categorized as race-neutral or race-specific

The activities were also reviewed for race neutrality in their descriptions. Table 5 provides definitions for a race-neutral and race-specific activity description and corresponding examples.



Table 5. Race-Neutral and Race-Specific Activity Description Examples

	Definition	Activity Description & Metrics Example	Rationale
Race-Neutral	The activity description does not refer to any specific racial group (i.e., Black)	<p><i>Design and implement a mentoring program, special orientation and monthly support sessions aimed to increase certificate and associate degree completion.</i></p> <p><b>Corresponding Metrics:</b> Overall : All : Completed Both Transfer-Level Math and English Within the District in the First Year Black or African American : Male : Attained the Vision Goal Completion Definition Hispanic or Latino : Male : Completed Both Transfer-Level Math and English Within the District in the First Year Hispanic or Latino : Female : Completed Both Transfer-Level Math and English Within the District in the First Year</p>	<p>The activity description is focused on the general student population.</p> <p>The metrics associated with the activity are race-specific.</p>
Race-Specific	The activity description mentions at least one specific racial group (i.e., Latinx)	<p><i>The college will conduct targeted outreach activities to increase the number of <b>African American and LGBTQ students</b> that complete the matriculation process. Activities may include making presentations about the Umoja program and LGBTQ services at local high schools, college preview days, promoting dual enrollment opportunities, and contacting applicants via the call center to answer questions about the matriculation process.</i></p> <p><b>Corresponding metrics:</b> Black or African American : Female : Enrolled in the Same Community College</p>	<p>The activity description is focused on a specific racial/ethnic group - which aligns with the targeted metrics for this activity. Alignment between metrics and activity are critical to closing equity gaps.</p>

While 60% of the activities have race specific metrics, only 13% of the activity descriptions themselves are race-specific (Figure 15). This calls attention to the finding that, although colleges identified metrics that showed racial inequities, when they went to write an activity



description to target those metrics, the activity was written generally or for “all” students. Colleges had an opportunity to be race-specific but were not.

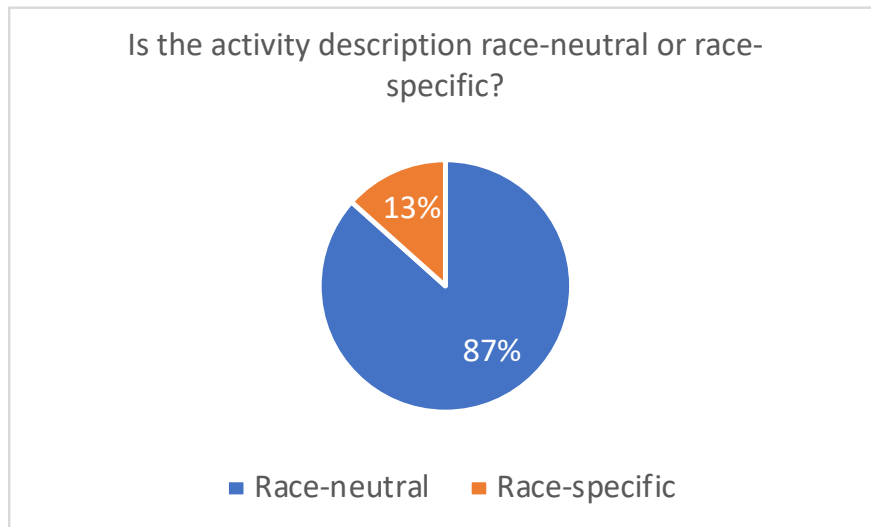


Figure 15. Activity descriptions, categorized as race-neutral or race-specific

Additionally, 19% of all activities that were identified as race-specific in their metrics were also race-specific in their activity description. This means that 81% of activities that had race-specific metrics created a race-neutral activity description.

One of the questions that CUE often gets asked is, “why is it more beneficial to name specific groups in action statements or strategies to close equity gaps?” Creating activities or implementation strategies that are targeted at specific racial-groups have a heightened level of intentionality. Activities or implementation strategies that are focused on all students have less likelihood of closing equity gaps but more so, elevating all student groups. “Equity” does not mean creating activities for “all” students but being intentional about specifically addressing impacted student groups.

At the conclusion of the analysis of each college, reviewers were asked to categorize the activities holistically as “equity-minded,” “equality for all,” or “equity deficient” using a rubric created by CUE (see Appendix B). As an example, activities that were categorized as “equity-minded” specifically named racially minoritized students in the activity description, included reflective practice and inquiry in select activities, and focused on building the race-consciousness of their practitioners within equity plan activities. Activities that aligned more so with an “equality for all” categorization, tended to name marginalized students in the aggregate, include general professional development in their activities and have limited, if any, inquiry planned within their activities. The final category of activities, equity-deficient, focused on “all students,” on the creation of programs to remediate students rather than professional development, and did not include inquiry at all. Only 8% of all activities (151 out of 1,845) were



categorized as equity-minded, with the majority categorized as equity deficient (54%) and equality for all at 38% (Figure 16). This finding demonstrates that the majority of the activities were focused on “all” students.

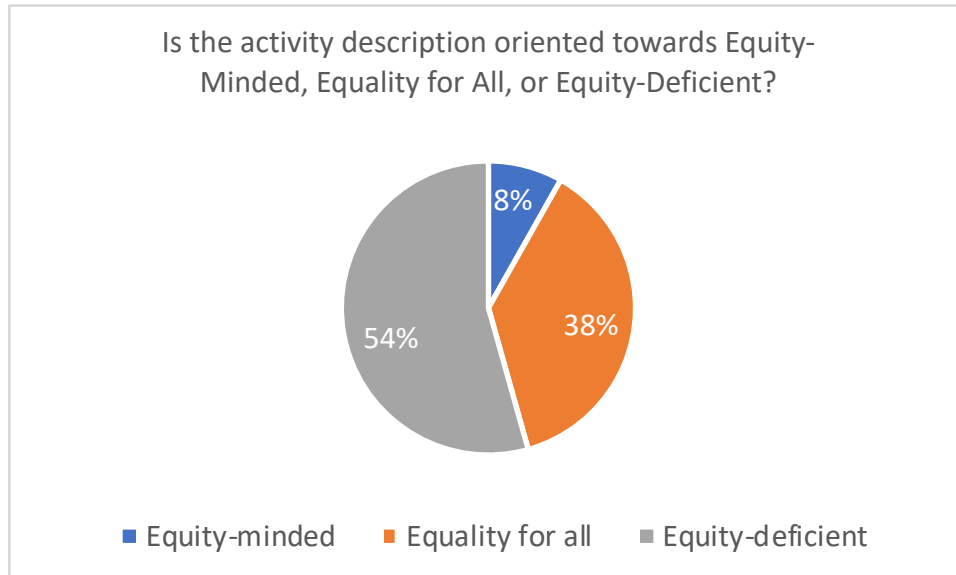


Figure 16. Activity descriptions categorized as “equity-minded,” “equality for all,” or “equity-deficient”

Reviewers were also asked to identify whether colleges provide a definition for the term “equity.” The findings demonstrate that only 17% of plans identify a college definition for equity. This low percentage is not surprising, as colleges were not asked to provide a definition. However, careful analysis of the 17% of plans with equity definitions reveal that more than half (61%) do not reference race in their definition.

Finally, reviewers were asked to identify if the college’s plan addressed any form of racism within the plan. The majority of plans do not mention the term racism (86%) (see Figure 17).



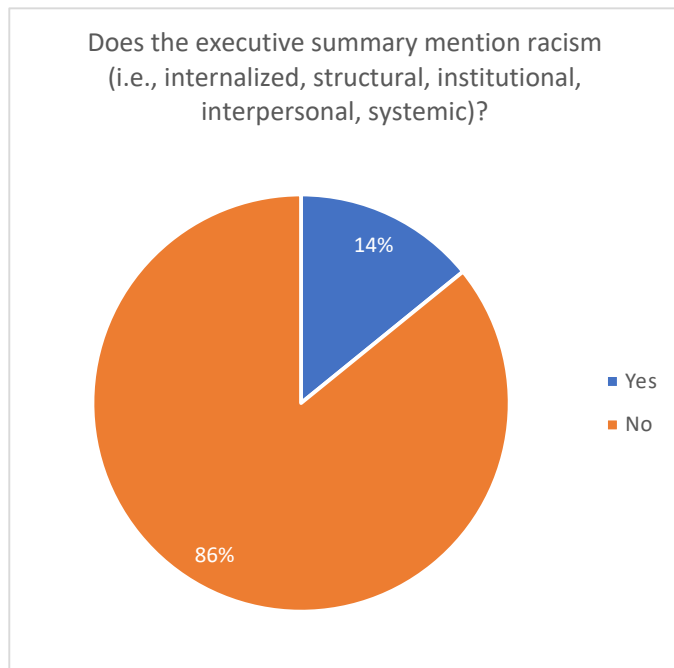


Figure 17. Inclusion of racism in executive summaries

### How do community colleges utilize the Student Equity Plans as a tool to meet the Chancellor’s Office Vision for Success transfer goal, specifically for racially minoritized students?

The Chancellor’s Office Vision for Success goal for transfer was intentionally selected as a focal area for this analysis as transfer rates continue to show racial inequities nationally and in California. California community colleges are the institution of choice for the growing Latinx community, first-generation college-goers, low-income students, and many more who have been deprived of educational opportunities that are taken for granted by economically-advantaged populations. Yet, less than half of students transfer to four-year institutions or finish a degree/certificate within *six* years. Transfer is a racial equity issue in that transfer represents a primary vehicle or pathway for the state’s college-going minoritized population. According to the Chancellor’s Office, 41% of white and 54% of Asian students transfer within six years, while only 34% of Black and 29% of Latinx students<sup>7</sup> transfer in the same time period. As a result, the analysis had reviewers first examine the percentage of activities that focused on transfer and second, identify the percentage of transfer-focused activities that were directed at racially minoritized students.

The results of the analysis show that the vast majority of colleges do not utilize the SEP as a tool to meet the Vision for Success transfer goal. We found **a lack of attention to transfer** across

<sup>7</sup> The data reflect student cohorts that started in 2012-2013 academic year and transferred six years later. Data obtained from California Community College Chancellor’s Office Data Mart.



the plans, with even less attention paid to transfer equity. The majority of activities are not explicitly related to transfer (only 16% of all activities). This means that the majority of activity descriptions do not include transfer (Figure 18).

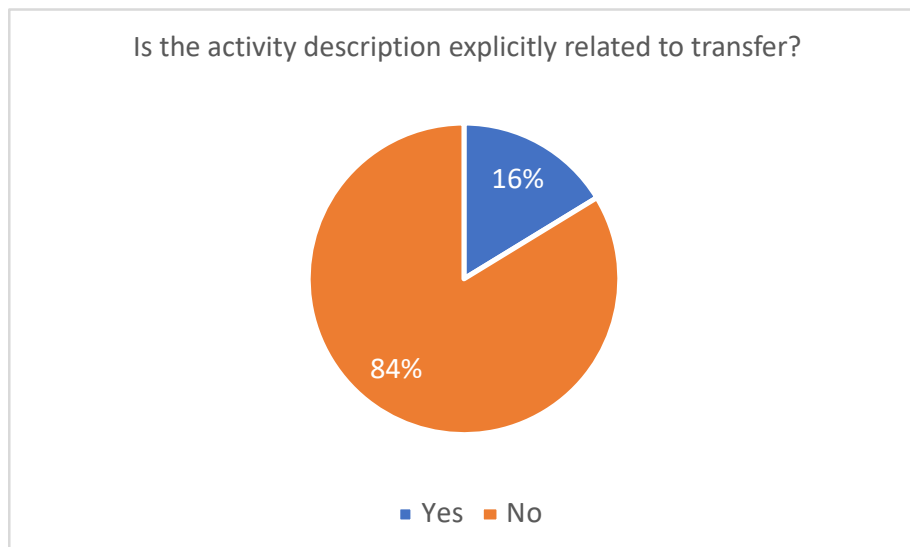


Figure 18. Percentage of transfer related activity descriptions

Further, of all the activity descriptions that explicitly referenced “transfer,” 83% were race-neutral and 17% race-specific. This finding suggest that when colleges did write an activity description that focused on transfer it likely did not reference specific racial groups.

This data was also examined for specific efforts to either create more Associate Degrees for Transfer (ADT) or include ADTs in their transfer strategy. ADTs guarantee transfer students admission to the CSU and represent a mechanism to increase student transfer for minoritized students (Campaign for College Opportunity, 2019). The transfer process is a “labyrinth of rules” and can be difficult to navigate, specifically for racially minoritized students (Dowd, Bishop, Bensimon, & Witham, 2012, p. 176). Providing a guaranteed pathway presents a policy mechanism for

### ***Race-Neutral & Race-Specific Transfer Activities***

#### **Race-Neutral Transfer Activity:**

**“The district will establish a Transfer Academy focused on creating a community of students planning to transfer.”**

#### **Race-Specific Transfer Activity:**

**“Support services to increase the number of Native American students who transfer to four-year colleges and universities, earn degrees, and return to the communities as leaders and mentors.”**



colleges to increase the transfer of minoritized students. Of the 16% of activities (297) that include “transfer,” only 5.7% (17) of these include “ADT” or “Associate Degree for Transfer” within the description. This means that of the total activities submitted from all the colleges, less than 1% identified ADTs as a strategy to increase transfer or close equity gaps in transfer. **This is a missed opportunity to increase transfer equity for racially minoritized students.**

Finally, of all the activity descriptions that reference transfer, 71% focused on student support services, 5% were classroom-focused, and 12% focused on both student support services and the classroom. This finding suggests that colleges view transfer as the responsibility of practitioners external to the classroom and in student services. This topic was examined another way by assessing each activity for the inclusion of instructional faculty members. Similar results were drawn from this data. Of those activities that specifically reference transfer, only 13% include or engage instructional faculty, and approximately 80% of transfer focused activities do not engage instructional faculty members. Faculty involvement has been shown to be clearly aligned with the success of racially minoritized students, both in increasing a student’s sense of belonging generally and also in facilitating transfer (Pak, Bensimon, Malcom, Marquez, & Park, 2006; Bensimon & Dowd, 2009; Carrasco-Nungaray & Vallejo Pena, 2012). Sense of belonging refers to the perceptions that students (generally) have of how well they “fit in” at college, how warm their relationships are with peers and faculty, and how “unpressured” they feel by the “normative differences” between themselves and the campus environment (Hurtado & Carter, 1997). As researchers have found, for students of color in particular, a sense of belonging is associated with retention and achievement (Harris & Wood, 2013; Hurtado & Carter, 1997). Faculty involvement is also associated with racially minoritized student transfer success. More specifically, Latinx students experience increased transfer success when their faculty: develop relationships with them, share their experiences with them, especially if related to transfer, and connect them to transfer resources (Carrasco-Nungaray & Vallejo Pena, 2012).

To be a tool of racial transfer equity aligned with the Vision for Success transfer goal, SEPs need to include an increased on focus on transfer and transfer equity.

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### In what ways do the colleges acknowledge a lack of capacity to address racial equity in the Student Equity Plans?

A critical component of taking institutional responsibility for inequitable outcomes is the inclusion of activities that are directed inward or towards the cultural change of the campus and practitioners. This includes all efforts that focus on professional development specifically related to increasing practitioners’ level of equity-mindedness. This is in direct contrast to strategies that focus on creating programs, policies, or implementing new structures. CUE has found that there is an assumption that structure, techniques, or programs are free of race(ism), class(ism), or sex(ism). This is problematic because the solutions suggested and then implemented may achieve changes in how they are done, but those solutions may fail to achieve deeper cultural changes or the transformation of practitioners to perform their practice according to principles of equity-mindedness.



Reviewers found that colleges proposed more activities that were either structural or student focused rather than focused on cultural change (i.e., training practitioners on how to be equity-minded). For example, the majority of activities were identified as programs (46%), while only 6% were focused on general professional development and just 3% focused on professional development specifically focused on equity. Only 1% of activity descriptions were focused on creating culturally relevant pedagogy (Figure 19).

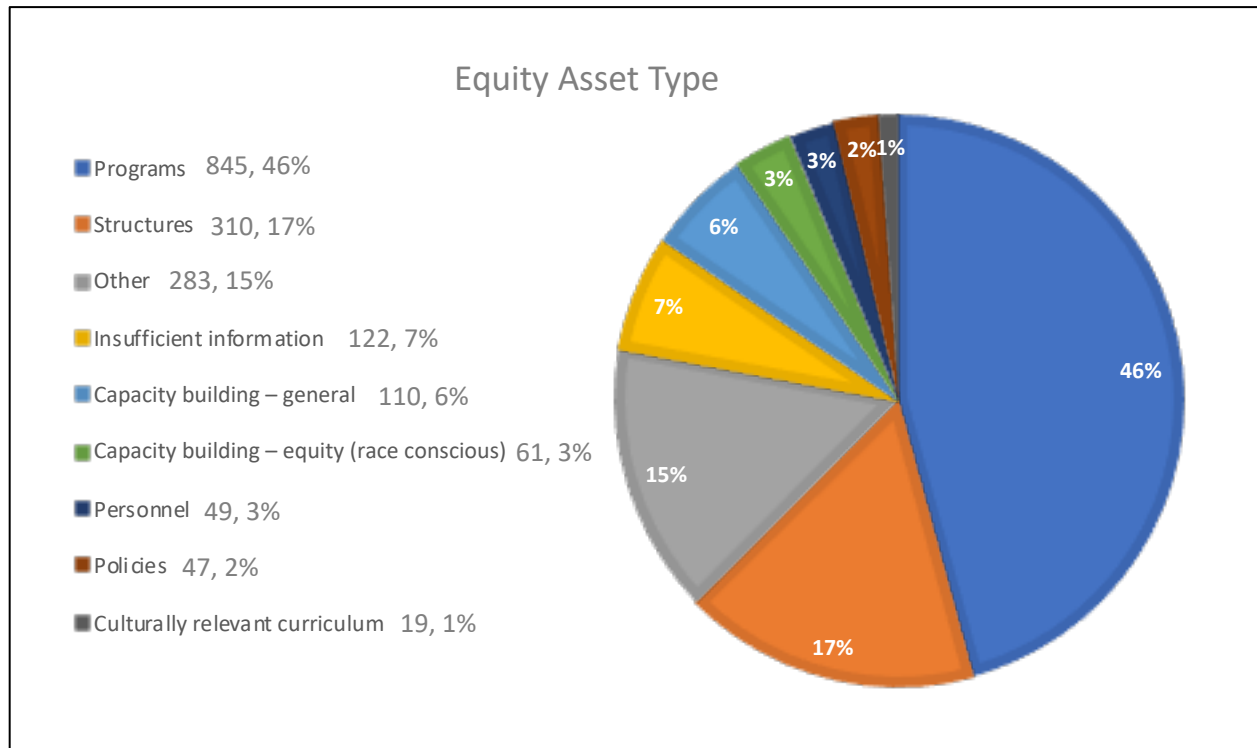


Figure 19. SEP equity asset type percentage and number.  
Note- For definitions of each of the equity asset types, please see page 6.

Additionally, the focus of change (i.e., the population the activity targeted) was predominately the student (46%) with “no specific individual/group mentioned” as the second largest group (16%) and 9% “insufficient information” (Figure 20).

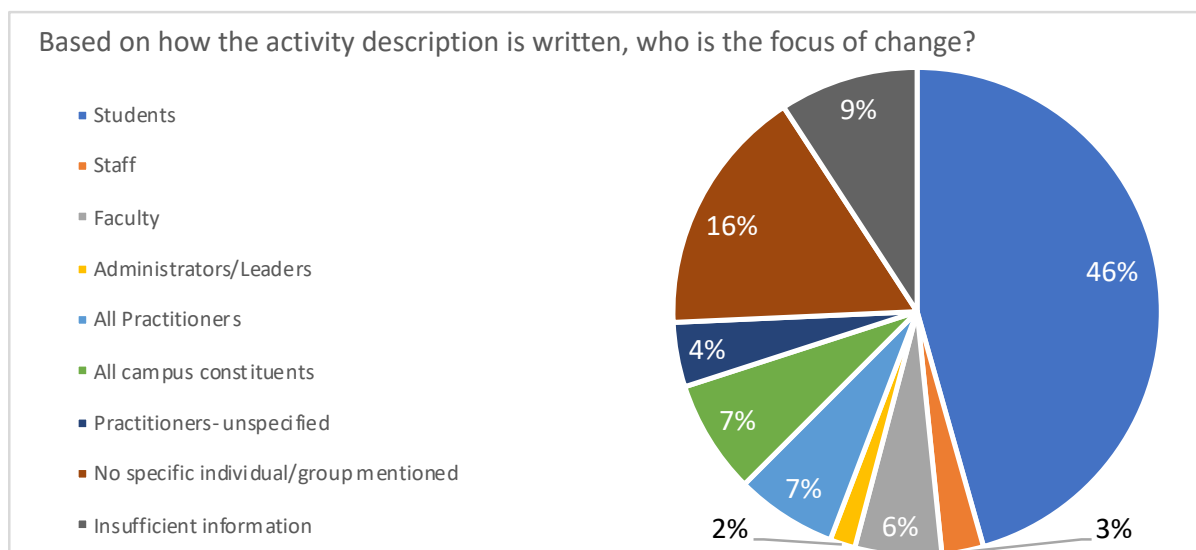


Figure 20. Activity descriptions and focus of change.

This data suggests that the colleges are less focused on institutional change or practitioner change and more focused on creating strategies to assist, support, or change the student. This approach does not consider the cultural change or social change necessary to close racial equity gaps. For example, a new student support program or structure such as pathways that does not consider institutionalized racism, the implicit biases of faculty or staff, or deeply ingrained beliefs regarding how students succeed is unlikely to close racial equity gaps.

### How are colleges engaging in self-assessment and inquiry as a method to create change for racially minoritized students?

Inquiry and reflective practice are key elements of CUE's theory of change. Traditionally, higher education views change from a "solutions-focused perspective." This approach, also known as a Best Practice Model or Data Paradigm, starts with an examination of data, followed by the identification of an inequitable outcome, and as a result, solutions are created based on the best practices of what other colleges are doing or on what the literature suggests can help close the loop (see Figure 21). The common assumption from this model is that the problem is understood. In contrast, the "Inquiry Paradigm" takes into account the unique context of the college, where practitioners investigate their own practices to better understand why an inequity may be occurring (see Figure 22). This "Best Practitioner" approach to change relies on practitioner self-reflection rather than applying a best practice that may not work within the unique context of that particular college (Bensimon, 2007).

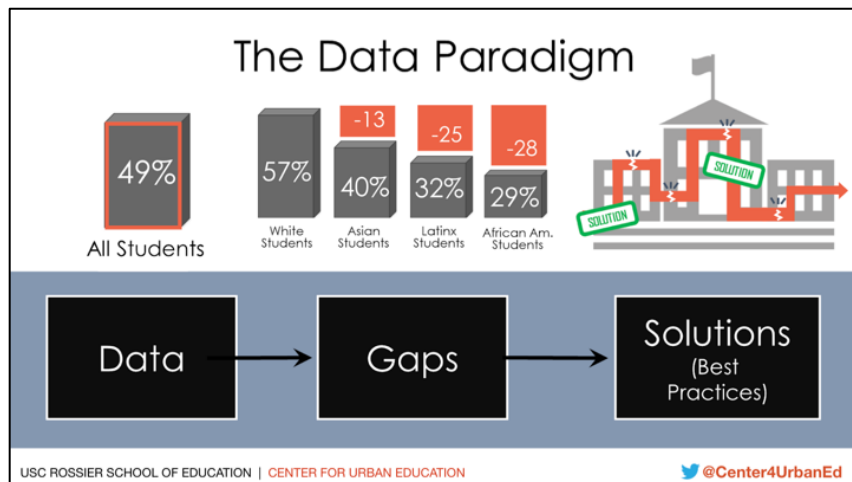


Figure 21. The Data Paradigm approach to change.

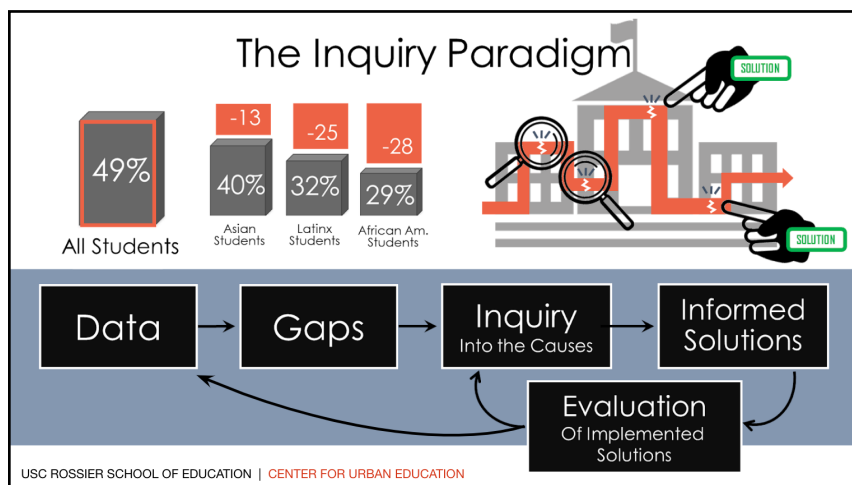


Figure 22. The Inquiry Paradigm approach to change.

Inquiry is a process of trying to understand why an equity gap is occurring. Inquiry into classroom practice might include the analysis of course-level data disaggregated by race or a document review of course syllabi and assignments from an equity perspective. Student service inquiry may take the form of observations of the transfer center or tutoring center or a website review from a racial equity perspective. Practitioner inquiry is critical to racial equity because regardless of office/unit/practitioner role, the inquiry model will provide insight into how practices may not be working for racially minoritized students (Bensimon, 2012). This allows for practitioners to create informed decisions to tailor solutions to their college or classroom. We acknowledge that conducting inquiry is time consuming. Inquiry, as a tool of racial equity, should become a standard operating procedure of the college, meaning the administration should allocate time and space for this work. An example of an SEP activity that includes inquiry is presented in Figure 23.



### Example: Activity Description that Includes Inquiry

An inquiry team will assess the effectiveness of services across campus through a racial equity lens. The inquiry team will be trained on the principles of equity-mindedness and on key methods of inquiry: observations, interviews, and document reviews. The focus of the inquiry activities will be to systematically map all services, activities, structures, and staffing that contribute to equity planning metrics.

Practitioners will approach inquiry from a "racial equity lens" – meaning that they will examine how racially minoritized students fare as result of the practice

The inquiry team will review and evaluate the documents, websites, practices etc. around core services and programs that help students achieve the metric outcomes, including, but not limited to: • The onboarding process • First-year student services • Transfer services • Career services • Academic support services (SI, tutoring) • Early alert systems

The methods of inquiry allow practitioners to better understand the fine-grained daily practices of specific student services and how they may or may not be supporting racially minoritized students



Figure 23. Example of an activity that includes inquiry.

The analysis shows very little inquiry within the activity descriptions (only 8% of all activities, see Figure 24). The majority of colleges approached the task of writing an equity plan from a “solutions-focused” perspective. This suggests that either colleges have already conducted inquiry into their practices and understand why specific equity gaps are occurring or that they have instead focused on creating solutions.

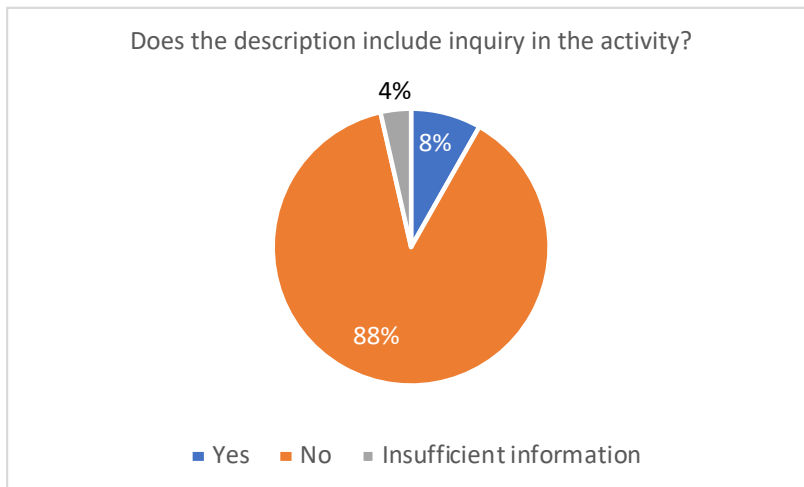


Figure 24. Percentage of activity descriptions that include inquiry

Part of inquiry includes the routinized analysis of data disaggregated by race. Reviewers were asked if the college's approach involved a routine analysis of data disaggregated by race. Over three quarters of plans (76%) did not mention having a process for routinely analyzing data at any level disaggregated by race (Figure 25).

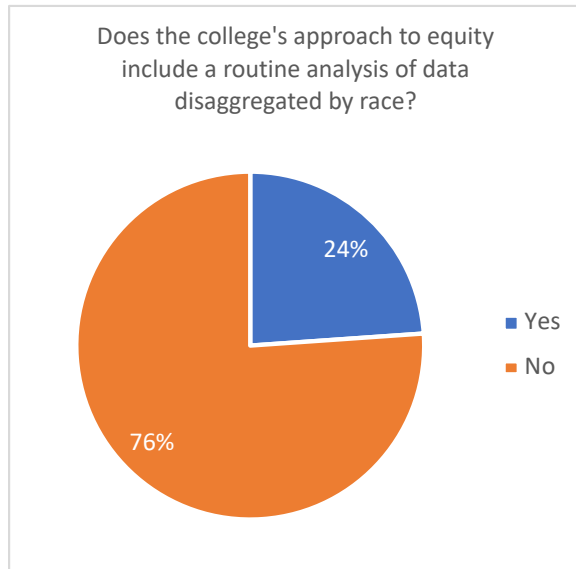


Figure 25. Percentage of executive summaries that specifically include routine data analysis disaggregated by race as part of their equity approach.

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### Is the equity effort at the college a campus-wide effort or is it fragmented, or owned by specific departments, programs, or units?

SEPs were also examined to better understand whether the equity effort presented in the plans was campus-wide, meaning the approach engaged multiple actors from various roles across campus or fragmented, meaning that implementing the equity plan was largely the responsibility of specific offices, departments, or specific practitioners. A campus-wide approach to equity is essential to achieve racial equity in that traditionally the responsibility for achieving equity is placed at the periphery of the classroom – an approach that has not worked. Research suggest that the classroom environment, particularly the delivery of curriculum and interaction with faculty members, has critical implications for the success of racially minoritized students (Ladson-Billings, 1995).

The equity effort for the majority of plans was focused on one or two departments, rather than campus-wide. This means that colleges tended to create activities and action plans that were the responsibility of student services or the administration, with less involvement from instructional faculty members or a focus on the classroom or classroom delivery. For example, the majority of activity descriptions were focused on decreasing equity gaps by implementing student service





oriented activities (60%), as opposed to classroom-focused activities (7%) or a combination of student services and classroom focused activities (14%) (Figure 26). This finding suggests that closing equity gaps is largely viewed as a concern or the responsibility of student services, with less change directed at what happens in the classroom or the training of faculty.

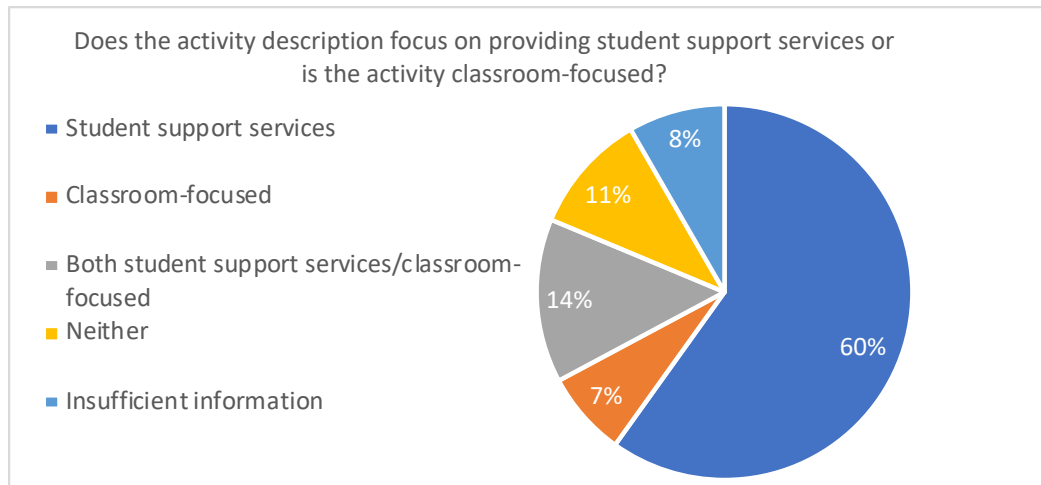


Figure 26. Percentage of activity description focused on student services or the classroom

Reviewers were also asked to identify whether an activity description specifically included or engaged instructional faculty members. Figure 27 shows that the majority of activities (72%) do not explicitly involve instructional faculty members, meaning that a focus on the classroom in activity descriptions or including instructional faculty members in equity work was not the norm.

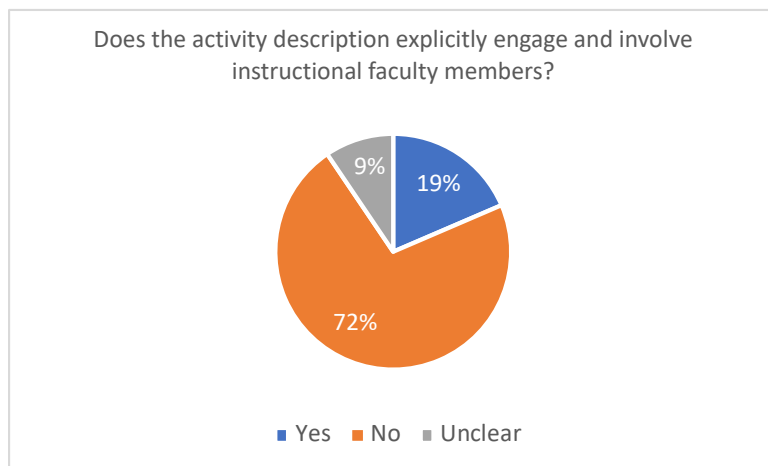


Figure 27. Percentage of activity descriptions that include or engage instructional faculty members

Creating an equity effort that focuses on the work of faculty and what happens in the classroom is critical to closing equity gaps.



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## Summation of Findings & Elements of an Exemplar Student Equity Plan

CUE captured eight Critical Data Points in the findings, highlighted below. Additionally, as a result of the analysis, CUE identified six Elements of an Exemplar Student Equity Plan and Checklist that identify a racially-focused SEP. These two elements are delineated below.

### Critical Data Points

1. Only 1% of equity plan activities are dedicated to the creation or delivery of culturally relevant pedagogy
2. Only 3% of equity plan activities included capacity building or professional development focused on equity
3. 94% of the plans avoided deficit-minded language.
4. 87% of activity descriptions did not mention race or a specific racial group, meaning only 13% of activity descriptions were race-specific.
5. More than half (54%) of activities in the equity plans were focused on “all students” instead of specific disproportionately impacted populations.
6. Of all the equity plan activities, only 16% mention transfer in the description.
7. Less than 1% of all equity plan activities focused on utilizing the Associate Degree for Transfer (ADT) in their equity strategy
8. Approximately 2/3 of the equity plan activities do not explicitly involve instructional faculty members

### Elements of an Exemplar Student Equity Plan & Checklist

As a result of this project, CUE identified six elements that are critical to creating an exemplar SEP. A strong SEP positions the student success of racially minoritized students as the responsibility of the institution. An exemplar plan focuses on building an equity-centered campus where leadership, faculty, and staff are all oriented toward racial equity in all facets. The plan would build on an equity framework for the college, with an actionable set of activities and initiatives. The identification of these elements is timely, in that in the Chancellor’s Office most recent Call to Action, dated June 5, 2020, encourages colleges to update their “equity plans with urgency” and to more directly address “equity and structural racism.” The elements can provide a guide by which to review current SEPs. The six identified elements are listed below.



1. Embrace a focus on racial equity
2. Accept racial inequity as a problem of institutional performance
3. Incorporate the use of inquiry to remediate practice
4. Focus inward on cultural change through equity-focused professional development
5. Use equity-minded language in documents and daily practice
6. Implement equity-minded data use and assessment

Table 6 provides a checklist to assist colleges in reviewing their own SEP or creating a new plan. To read more about how one college implemented the six elements of an exemplar SEP, please see “Creating an Actionable Equity Plan” at <https://www.cue-tools.usc.edu/case-study-smc>.



Table 6. Six Key Elements of an Exemplar Equity Planning Checklist

<b>Element</b>	<b>Your plan should have ...</b>	<b>Make sure your plan does not have ...</b>
<b>1. Embrace a focus on racial equity</b>	<p>A clear statement of focus around racially minoritized students</p> <p>Explicit language about which groups the plan is focused on (e.g., Black and Latinx students)</p>	<p>Unclear or broad statements about diversity and racial equity (e.g., “underrepresented minorities” or “diverse students”)</p> <p>A focus on “all” students as a means to reduce inequities</p>
<b>2. Accept racial inequity as a problem of institutional performance</b>	<p>Acknowledgment of how your institution historically has or has not served and supported racially minoritized students</p> <p>A focus on approaches that help faculty and staff become more equity-minded</p>	<p>Language that places the burden of change on the student, asking them to be “college-ready”</p> <p>A focus on creating structures or programs aimed at student change</p>
<b>3. Incorporate the use of inquiry to remediate practice</b>	<p>A clearly articulated approach to building the skill of and/or applying action inquiry</p> <p>A supported structure that allows faculty and staff to come together to reflect on their practices—both what is working and what is failing</p>	<p>An overreliance on data alone to guide action</p> <p>A tendency to jump to creating solutions before understanding why or how the problem is occurring</p> <p>A focus on “best practices” that may not fit your campus’s unique context</p>
<b>4. Focus inward on cultural change through equity-focused professional development</b>	<p>An outline of investments in equity-minded (or focused) professional development</p> <p>A calendar or list of activities, engagements, and tools for faculty and staff to become more equity-oriented</p>	<p>An overreliance on leadership and/or messaging to drive cultural change</p> <p>A focus on structural solutions or additional resources to solve racial inequities</p> <p>Race-neutral professional development</p>
<b>5. Use equity-minded language in documents and daily practice</b>	<p>A commitment to using equity-minded language</p> <p>An explanation of key terms</p>	<p>Deficit- or diversity-minded language</p>
<b>6. Implement equity-minded data use and assessment</b>	<p>Proof of or a plan for broad access to (and sense making of) disaggregated student equity data</p> <p>Guidelines to approaching data with an equity lens</p> <p>Clear targets in regard to closing racial gaps</p>	<p>An approach to data use that’s not coupled with an equity lens</p> <p>A plan for data use that is restricted to your institutional research team</p>



## District/College Level Recommendations

This section outlines the primary recommendations for districts/colleges as a result of the SEP review. CUE acknowledges that many colleges are already doing this work or have started it. System-level recommendations on the SEP process were provided to the Chancellor's Office in a separate memo.

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### **How can districts/colleges address racial equity in their plans?**

1. Ensure alignment between the metrics assigned to activities and the activity descriptions. For example, if the metric highlights a gap for Black students, ensure that the activity created to address the gap for Black students specifically addresses Black students.
2. Specifically address how the district or college is or plans to develop the capacity of practitioners to have productive conversations about race and racism.
3. If not already done so, grapple with what equity means to the district/college and how racial equity fits into that definition. Include this definition in the SEP.
4. Take the position that "Equity" does not mean "all students." This position sends a strong message that an equity plan should be focused on populations that have equity gaps and not "all students."
5. Create equity strategies that target specific student groups rather than "all" students.

### **How can districts/colleges focus more on meeting the Chancellor's Office Vision for Success transfer goal, with a specific focus on transfer equity in the plan?**

1. Create activity descriptions focused on transfer that are race-conscious. For example, if the college has transfer racial equity gaps, then the strategies created to close the racial equity gap should specifically focus on the transfer of that specific population.
2. Create activities or strategies that include ADTs. Continue to create ADTs and routinize the analysis of ADT data by race/ethnicity. This can help the college identify how racially minoritized students are using ADTs and in what areas.
3. Address how instructional faculty members are part of the equity effort. Create campaigns to bolster attention towards the importance of developing "faculty transfer agents." Provide specific and tangible examples of how faculty members can act as transfer agents in classroom delivery, in the syllabus, and in assignments.

### **How can districts/college address equity-minded capacity within their plans?**

1. Include the district/college level strategy around equity-minded capacity building. For example, include comprehensive and intensive capacity building programs that teach



practitioners / stakeholders the methods of critical inquiry and reflection and how this is directly related to racial equity.

2. Discuss in the plan how all actors within the district/college ecosystem play a role in the equity plan. This includes having clearly identified roles for specific actor groups (administrators, student support service members, instructional and non-instructional faculty members).

### **How can districts and colleges include inquiry and reflective practice within their plans?**

1. Continue to develop capacity to conduct reflective practice and inquiry at all levels (staff, faculty, administrators) of the college. This means creating an inquiry model that is implemented annually. Discuss the district/college's inquiry model within the plan.
2. If not already done so, create a routinized process for practitioners to examine data disaggregated by race at all levels of the institution (college, department, and classroom levels). Discuss and provide details on this process within the plan.

### **How can districts/colleges create an equity effort that is campus-wide within their plan?**

1. Create specific strategies for engaging instructional faculty in the equity effort as well as the importance of creating a culture of faculty equity agents. Chart these strategies within the equity plan.
2. Provide specific faculty focused trainings on what it means to be equity-minded in the classroom. Demonstrate specific equity-minded classroom practices that can be implemented campus or department wide – including classroom-level data analysis, syllabi review, attendance/progress mapping, and classroom observations from an equity perspective. Chart these strategies within the equity plan.



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## Appendix A – Student Equity Plan Research Protocol

# Student Equity Plan Review Protocol



Developed by Megan Chase with assistance from Eric Felix, Estela Bensimon, Jason Suarez, Cynthia Mosqueda, and the Center for Urban Education staff.



CENTER *for* URBAN  
EDUCATION

**USC Rossier**  
School of Education

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Reviewer Name: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Institution Name: \_\_\_\_\_

**NOVA Activities**

**Worksheet Instructions**

The activities/metrics in the tables below were populated directly from the Student Equity & Achievement plan submitted by the college. Please read each activity title, description, and metrics for each activity and answer the corresponding questions. Please note that each question has a dropdown menu to choose from and select questions ask for addition information to be typed into a text field. If needed, please refer to the "glossary of terms" or the "response definitions" sheets for clarification.

Number of Activities: \_\_\_\_\_

#	Activity Title	Activity Description	Responses	
1				
	<b>Questions</b>			
	1. Please list the total number of groups focused on in the activity.			
	2. Which groups/metrics are the focus of the activity (as shown in the Nova list of corresponding metrics?)			
	3. Are the metrics listed in #2 race-neutral or race-specific?			
	4. Is the activity description race-neutral or race-specific?			
	5. Are the groups that are identified in #2 explicitly written into the activity description?		If your answer was inferred, No, or select groups please explain which student groups are missing?	
	<a href="#">6. What is the equity asset type?</a>			
	7. Does the activity description focus on providing student support services or is the activity classroom-focused?			
	8. Does the activity description explicitly engage and involve instructional faculty members?			
	9. Based on how the activity description is written, who is the focus of change?			
	10. Does the description include inquiry in the activity?		If yes, please list the types of inquiry planned as part of the activity.	
	11. Does the activity include external consultants?			
	12. Is there evidence of deficit-minded language in the activity description?		If yes, please list the words or phrases.	
	13. Is the activity description explicitly related to transfer?			
	14. Based on the activity description, is the implementation of the activity feasible?		If no, please explain.	
	<a href="#">15. Using the Equity-Minded criteria provided (Table 1 - "Equity-Minded Criteria" tab), is this activity description oriented towards Equity-Minded, Equality for All, or Equity-Deficient?</a>		Please comment as to why you rated the activity description Equity-Minded, Equality for All, or Equity-Deficient.	



Reviewer Name: Please fill in Reviewer Name on the Activities tab

Institution Name: Please fill in Institution Name on the Activities tab

**Overall Equity Interpretation**

**Worksheet Instructions**

To prepare to answer the questions listed below, first read through the list of questions to orient yourself to the content. After you have reviewed the questions, **please review the college's executive summary**. The executive summary was provided to you in hardcopy and can be found at the box link corresponding with the college. As you read through, pay particular attention to how racial equity is framed, whom the college holds responsible for student success, and the language used to describe students. Feel free to make notes in the margins and highlight text that is particularly unique or striking (either as exemplar examples of equity-mindedness or areas that you believe the college can improve in terms of equity). Once you have read the document, please answer the questions below. When providing textual evidence, please add the page number. If needed, please refer to the "glossary of terms."

Category	Questions	Responses
Guiding paradigm	1. Does the executive summary position the participation and success of students from racial, ethnic, and indigenous communities historically underserved by higher education as an institutional responsibility?	Please explain your response.
	2. Based on your analysis, whom or which group is the focus of change centered?	Please provide direct evidence for your response.
Equity and Racial Equity Discourse	3. Does the executive summary provide a college definition of equity? If yes, is the definition race-neutral or race-specific?	If yes, please list it here.
		<a href="#">How is the definition of equity similar or different from how CUE defines equity?</a>
	4. Does the executive summary mention racism (i.e., internalized, structural, institutional, interpersonal, systemic?)	What is the context in which the term is used?
	5. Please fill in the Equity Word Search Table below for the executive summary. After reflecting on the language groups referenced (Equity-Minded, Diversity, and Deficit-Minded) and the context in which these words appear in the executive summary - does the college tend to use more Equity-Minded, Diversity, or Deficit-Minded language? Please use the open text space to the right to provide any interpretations you have.	Please provide any comments or interpretations you have after completing the word search.
	6. Does the college use deficit-minded language to describe students? (note- you can refer to the word search table as a reference as well as your own knowledge of deficit-minded language)	If yes, please provide examples.

**Equity Word Search Table**

	Term	No. of times referred to:
Equity-minded Language	Equity-Minded	
	Racial equity	
	Hispanic Serving Institution (HSI)	
	Race	
	Racism	
	Minoritized	
	Culturally relevant or responsive	
	Whiteness	
	Privilege	
	Total	
Diversity Language	Disproportionally impacted (DI) groups	
	Targeted groups	
	Identified groups	
	Underrepresented	
	Students of color	
	Total	
Deficit-minded Language	At-risk	
	All students	
	High-need	
	Underprepared	
	Untraditional	
	Underprivileged	
	Learning style(s)	
	Achievement gap	
	Total	



Equity Framing	7. Does the executive summary mention a rationale as to why equity work at the campus is important?		If yes, please list the rationale.	
	8. Is the case for equity framed on the basis of economic, demographic, and/or a moral imperative?			
	9. Does the executive summary include an equity imperative (as demonstrated in the example in the glossary)?		If yes, please add the equity imperative.	
	10. Is the equity effort presented as a cohesive/collaborative college-wide effort or is it fragmented and owned by select offices or departments?		If fragmented, who is largely responsible for the equity effort? Who is left out?	
	11. Based on your analysis, are instructional faculty an integral part of the equity effort at the college?		If yes or somewhat, please provide direct evidence for your response.	
	12. Reflecting on the activities and the executive summary holistically, is the majority of the plan focused on achieving success for all students, all disproportionately impacted groups, or specifically select minoritized populations?			
Culture of Inquiry	13. Does the college's approach to equity include strategies to better understand their inequities by engaging faculty and other college practitioners in a process of inquiry?		If yes, please provide direct evidence for your response.	
	14. Does the college's approach to equity include a routine analysis of data disaggregated by race?		If yes, please provide direct evidence for your response.	
	15. Does the college's approach to equity include professional development for practitioners (administrators, faculty and staff) focused on understanding and becoming equity-minded practitioners?		If yes, please provide direct evidence for your response.	
Concluding Thoughts	16. Based on your analysis, what would you say are the overall strengths of SEP at this college? Please draw on concrete examples from the plan. Please refer to the Equity-Minded criteria Tables 1 and 2, if needed.			
	17. What are the weaknesses, as related to equity-mindedness? Please draw on concrete examples from the plan. Please refer to the Equity-Minded criteria Tables 1 and 2, if needed.			
	18. Please use this space to add anything particularly striking or unique about the plan – both positive as well as areas in need of improvement. Please refer to page number.			
	19. Please reflect on the "Activity Summary" sheet and on the executive summary. Does the tone and equity framing of the executive summary align with the activities outlined in the college's proposed activities? For example, if the executive summary positions equity as an institutional/practitioner responsibility, are the proposed activities focused on changing the institution/practitioner? OR, if the executive summary underscores the importance of racial equity, are the proposed activities race-specific? Please elaborate on any discrepancies identified.			
Other Initiatives or Reforms	20. After reviewing the college's equity planning materials, what other initiatives or reforms are included (e.g., Vision for Success, Strong Workforce, Guided Pathways)? (please list by separating your responses with a comma)			
Evaluation & Assessment	21. Does the executive summary provide an evaluation or assessment plan to evaluate their proposed activities?			
Past Equity Efforts	22. Does the executive summary discuss/outline the college's previous equity planning efforts?			
Overall Equity Interpretation	23. <u><a href="#">Using the Equity-Minded criteria provided (Table 2 - "Equity-Minded Criteria" tab.) is this plan oriented towards Equity-Minded, Equality for All, or Equity-Deficient?</a></u>		Please comment as to why you identified the plan as Equity-Minded, Equality for All, or Equity-Deficient?	

Note – The protocol was created and utilized in excel. This pdf does not show the “pull-down” response options. This version also only shows one activity chart. The activity chart was filled in for each activity submitted for the college, sometimes as few as two and as many as 100 activities.

## Appendix B – SEP Protocol Rubrics and Supporting Materials

### **EQUITY-MINDED CRITERIA FOR ACTIVITIES RUBRIC**

EQUITY-MINDEDNESS	EQUALITY FOR ALL	EQUITY-DEFICIENT
<input type="checkbox"/> Focuses on and names specific disproportionately impacted (DI) minoritized groups (African American/Black, Latinx, Native American ( <b>Race-conscious</b> ))	<input type="checkbox"/> Focuses on DI groups or all students ( <b>Race-neutral/color-blind</b> ) or aggregates minoritized students into groups (i.e., “students of color” “underrepresented”)	<input type="checkbox"/> Tends to focus on all students ( <b>Race-neutral/color-blind</b> )
<input type="checkbox"/> Includes reference to reflective practice and analyzing data disaggregated by race ( <b>Culture of inquiry</b> )	<input type="checkbox"/> Includes reference to analyzing data but is not necessarily disaggregated by race	<input type="checkbox"/> Does not include reference to analyzing data to make improvements
<input type="checkbox"/> Focuses on professional development to develop equity-mindedness as defined by CUE ( <b>Practitioner-focused</b> )	<input type="checkbox"/> Focuses on professional development, but the activities do not explicitly focus on developing a race-conscious perspective	<input type="checkbox"/> Does not focus on professional development but rather on creating policies and programs directed at the student
<input type="checkbox"/> Is <b>Inquiry-focused</b> – meaning the activity is either geared towards learning or investigating why the equity gap is occurring or was developed after inquiry occurred	<input type="checkbox"/> Is <b>Solution-focused</b> for the most part – meaning the activity is geared towards fixing the equity gap rather than learning how or why the gap is occurring	<input type="checkbox"/> Is focused on the status quo – meaning the activity is "more of the same" and, in essence, will serve to perpetuate the current situation



<input type="checkbox"/> Is presented in a manner that positions the college as responsible for student success, where the focus of change is placed on the institution or practitioner ( <b>Institutionally/ Practitioner-focused</b> )	<input type="checkbox"/> Is presented in a manner that positions the college as responsible for student success, where the focus of change is placed on the institution or practitioner ( <b>Institutionally/ Practitioner-focused</b> )	<input type="checkbox"/> Is presented in a manner that positions the student as primarily responsible for student success, where the focus of change is directed toward the student ( <b>Student-focused</b> )
<input type="checkbox"/> Uses <b>equity-minded language</b> - language that focuses on specific minoritized groups (African Americans/Blacks, Latinx, and Native American students)	<input type="checkbox"/> Uses language that is more general to all DI groups ( <b>diversity language</b> ) or aggregates racially minoritized students (i.e., students of color, underrepresented students)	<input type="checkbox"/> Uses language that is more general to all students
<input type="checkbox"/> Uses positive and affirming/validating language to describe students	<input type="checkbox"/> Uses positive and affirming/validating language to describe students	<input type="checkbox"/> Uses <b>deficit-minded language</b> to describe students (this includes the use of biased or stereotypical assumptions made about students)
<input type="checkbox"/> Uses language that adheres to a "best practitioner" approach to student success	<input type="checkbox"/> Uses language that adheres to a "best practitioner" approach to student success as well as "best practices"	<input type="checkbox"/> Uses language that adheres to a "best practice" approach to student success
<input type="checkbox"/> Focuses on the engagement and involvement of instructional faculty in the equity effort	<input type="checkbox"/> Includes instructional faculty in the equity effort but the primary strategy to decrease inequities is focused on student support services	<input type="checkbox"/> The equity effort is the primary responsibility of student services or administration - with rare involvement by instructional faculty



**ACTIVITIES & EXECUTIVE SUMMARY EQUITY-MINDED CRITERIA RUBRIC**

EQUITY-MINDEDNESS	EQUALITY FOR ALL	EQUITY-DEFICIENT
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Focuses and names specific disproportionately impacted (DI) minoritized groups (African American/Black, Latinx, Native American) (<b>Race-conscious</b>)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Focuses on DI groups generally or all students (<b>Race-neutral/color-blind</b>) or aggregates minoritized students into groups (i.e., “students of color” “underrepresented”)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Focuses on all students</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Frames inequitable outcomes as a problem of practice (<b>Institutionally/Practitioner-focused</b>)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Frames inequitable outcomes as a problem of practice (<b>Institutionally/ Practitioner-focused</b>)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Frames inequitable outcomes as a result of student deficits (<b>Student-focused</b>) or things beyond the control of the institution or practitioner</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Focuses on professional development to develop equity-mindedness as defined by CUE (<b>Practitioner-focused</b>)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> The plan shows an effort to focus on professional development but the activities may not explicitly focus on developing a race-conscious/equity-minded perspective</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> The majority of activities presented in the plan focus on creating structures, policies, or programs - not on the development of practitioners (<b>Student-focused</b>)</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Includes <b>inquiry-focused</b> activities, meaning there is a balance in the plan between activities that are geared towards learning or investigating why equity gaps exist and on activities to close the gaps</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Includes <b>inquiry-focused</b> activities, meaning there is a balance in the plan between activities that are geared towards learning or investigating why equity gaps exist and on activities to close the gaps</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Is focused on the status quo – meaning the planning effort is “more of the same” and, in essence, will serve to perpetuate the current situation</li> </ul>



<p><input type="checkbox"/> Presents an evaluation plan, specifically mentioning the importance of collecting, monitoring, and reporting data by race. Discusses the importance of collecting quantitative AND qualitative data</p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> Presents an evaluation plan, specifically mentioning the importance of collecting, monitoring, and reporting data but not necessarily by race</p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> Evaluation plan lacks detail or is non-existent, does not consider race</p>
<p><input type="checkbox"/> Positions the participation and success of students from racial, ethnic, and indigenous communities historically underserved by higher education as an institutional and practitioner responsibility (<b>Institutionally-focused/practitioner-focused</b>)</p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> Positions the participation and success of students from DI groups generally as an institutional and practitioner responsibility, with no explicit focus on race (<b>Institutionally-focused/practitioner-focused</b>)</p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> The plan is presented in a manner that positions the student as primarily responsible for student success (<b>Student-focused</b>)</p>
<p><input type="checkbox"/> Uses <b>equity-minded language</b> and does not include <b>deficit-minded language</b></p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> May use <b>equity-minded language</b> but also uses vague language or <b>diversity language</b></p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> Uses <b>deficit-minded language</b> to describe students (this includes the use of biased or stereotypical assumptions made about students)</p>
<p><input type="checkbox"/> Includes instructional faculty in the equity effort (instructional faculty are not cursory to the equity effort)</p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> All practitioners are positioned to be responsible for implementing the equity effort - with less emphasis on instructional faculty</p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> The equity effort is the primary responsibility of student services or administration - with rare involvement by instructional faculty</p>





<p><input type="checkbox"/> The plan identifies the practice of faculty routinely reflecting on their course-level data disaggregated by race to create an equitable classroom space (<b>Culture of inquiry</b>)</p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> The notion of analyzing data disaggregated by race at the course-level is not included nor is the creation of inquiry teams to reflect on practice</p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> The routinized analysis of course-level data is not presented as a strategy to increase equity</p>
<p><input type="checkbox"/> There is a balance between equity efforts focused external to the classroom and internal (acknowledges the importance of equity-minded teaching and creating equity-minded classrooms/faculty- with a specific focus on the classroom as a racialized space)</p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> There is a balance between equity efforts focused external to the classroom and internal (but no clear focus on race or racialized practices inside or outside of the classroom)</p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> Student support services are the primary actors in terms of implementing the equity effort, with minimal instructional faculty involvement, with no focus on race or classroom practices</p>
<p><input type="checkbox"/> College has a definition of equity that includes racial equity</p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> College has a definition of equity that does not include racial equity</p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> No clear college definition of equity</p>
<p><input type="checkbox"/> Uses language that adheres to a "best practitioner" approach to student success</p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> Uses language that adheres to a "best practitioner" approach to student success as well as "best practices"</p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> Uses language that adheres to a "best practice" approach to student success</p>
<p><input type="checkbox"/> Plan acknowledges racism and the role racism plays in perpetuating inequities in higher education</p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> Plan does not acknowledge racism and the role racism plays in perpetuating inequities in higher education</p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> Plan does not acknowledge racism and the role racism plays in perpetuating inequities in higher education</p>
<p><input type="checkbox"/> Plan includes an equity imperative that places race as an equity priority</p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> Plan mentions a commitment to equity but is general in that commitment</p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> Plan does not mention a commitment to equity or how equity is related to their mission</p>



## GLOSSARY OF TERMS

TERM	DEFINITION
<b>"Best Practice"</b>	"Best" practices are prized possessions in higher education. Backed by research, they are claimed to be effective across a variety of settings and for a wide range of populations. For example, out of the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE) came a list of 10 "high-impact practices" (e.g., first-year experiences, internships, study abroad, learning communities) that are supposed to improve students' engagement in their academic pursuits (Kuh, 2008).
<b>"Best Practitioner"</b>	From the perspective of practice theory, "best practitioners" are the catalysts of change. Best practitioners develop context-dependent knowledge and use this knowledge and their own experiences to facilitate student success.
<b>Deficit-Minded</b>	Refers to the funds of knowledge that prevent individuals from seeing racial inequity or cause them to interpret disparities as a deterministic deficiency that afflicts Latinx, African American, and Native American students in particular.
<b>Equity</b>	"Equity is a standard for judging whether a state of affairs is just or unjust" (Dowd & Bensimon, p.9, 2015). Equity is not the same as equal opportunity or fairness. Equity is a means of corrective justice (McPherson, 2015) for the educational debt (Ladson-Billings, 2006) owed to the descendants of enslaved people and other minoritized populations willfully excluded from higher education. Equity is an antiracist project to confront overt and covert racism embedded in institutional structures, policies, and practices (Pollock, 2009; Kendi, 2019). The achievement of equity requires a justice orientation and a shift in power relationships.



<b>Equity-Minded</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>•Being color-conscious (as opposed to color-blind) in an affirmative sense. To be color-conscious means noticing and questioning patterns of educational outcomes that reveal unexplainable differences for minoritized students and viewing inequalities in the context of a history of exclusion, discrimination, and educational apartheid.</li><li>•Being aware that beliefs, expectations, and practices can result in negative racialization. Examples of racialization include attributing unequal outcomes to students’ cultural predispositions and basing academic practices on assumptions about the capacity or ambitions of minoritized students.</li><li>•Being willing to assume responsibility for the elimination of inequality. Rather than viewing inequalities as predictable and natural, allowing for the possibility that they might be created or exacerbated by taken-for-granted practices and policies, inadequate knowledge, a lack of cultural know-how, or the absence of institutional support. (Bensimon, 2007; Bensimon, 2012;)</li></ul>
<b>Inquiry</b>	Inquiry is a systematic way to reflect on our own practices and practices of organizations/institutions with the goal of learning what is and is not working – specifically for racially minoritized and low-income students. Inquiry is the process of trying to understand why an equity gap is occurring. Inquiry can take many forms. For example, <b>inquiry into classroom practice</b> might include the analysis of course-level data disaggregated by race or a document review of course syllabi and assignments from an equity perspective. <b>Student service inquiry</b> may take the form of observations of the transfer center or tutoring center or a website review from an equity perspective. The goal of inquiry, regardless of office/unit/practitioner role, is to better understand how practices may not be working for racially minoritized students.
<b>Institutional Racism</b>	Racial inequity within institutions and systems of power, such as places of employment, government agencies and social services. It can take the form of unfair policies and practices, discriminatory treatment, and inequitable opportunities and outcomes. A school system that concentrates people of color in the most overcrowded and under-resourced schools with the least qualified teachers compared to the educational opportunities of white students is an example of institutional racism.
<b>Internalized Racism</b>	The private racial beliefs held by and within individuals. The way we absorb social messages about race and adopt them as personal beliefs, biases, and prejudices are all within the realm of internalized racism. For people of color, internalized oppression can involve believing negative messages about oneself or one’s racial group. For white people, internalized privilege can involve feeling a sense of superiority and entitlement, or holding negative beliefs about people of color.
<b>Interpersonal Racism</b>	How our private beliefs about race become public when we interact with others. When we act upon our prejudices or unconscious bias — whether intentionally, visibly, verbally or not — we engage in interpersonal racism. Interpersonal racism also can be willful and overt, taking the form of bigotry, hate speech, or racial violence.



<b>Race</b>	A socially constructed system of categorizing humans largely based on observable physical features (phenotypes) such as skin color and ancestry. There is no scientific basis for or discernible distinction between racial categories. The ideology of race has become embedded in our identities, institutions, and culture and is used as a basis for discrimination and domination. The concept of racism is widely thought of as simply personal prejudice, but in fact, it is a complex system of racial hierarchies and inequities. At the micro level of racism, or individual level, are internalized and interpersonal racism. At the macro level of racism, we look beyond the individuals to the broader dynamics, including institutional and structural racism.
<b>Race Consciousness</b>	Awareness of the racialized experiences students have in the classroom, the college environment, and in society that reinforce oppression rather than dismantling it.
<b>Racial Privilege</b>	Race-based advantages and preferential treatment based on skin color, while racial oppression refers to race-based disadvantages, discrimination, and exploitation based on skin color.
<b>Racially Minoritized</b>	Following David Gillborn (2005) and Shaun Harper (2012), we use the term “minoritized” rather than minority to underscore what Harper describes as “the social construction of underrepresentation and subordination in US social institutions” (p. 9). He continues, “Persons are not born into a minority status nor are they minoritized in every social context (e.g., their families, racially homogenous friendship groups, or places of worship). Instead, they are rendered minorities in particular situations and institutional environments that sustain an overrepresentation of Whiteness” (p. 9). “Racially minoritized” refers to the objective outcome, experienced by “minority” racial-ethnic groups, of the exclusionary practices of more dominant groups resulting from historical and contemporary racism (Gillborn, 2005). The use of the expression “minoritized” in preference to “minority” reflects the ongoing social experience of marginalization, even when groups subject to racial-ethnic discrimination achieve a numerical majority in the population. “Minoritized” thus reflects the fact that with few exceptions—historically Black colleges and universities (HBCUs) being the most prominent example—American colleges and universities were founded and designed to serve White students.
<b>Reflective Practice</b>	Reflective practice encourages practitioners to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Understand the nature of institutional performance as it relates to education outcomes;</li><li>• Question the relationship between equity gaps and their own practices as faculty/administrators;</li><li>• Ask counterintuitive questions and doubt their own knowledge;</li><li>• Examine local conditions on their campuses;</li><li>• Place themselves within this context and see how they may be contributing to equity gaps.</li></ul>



<b>Structural Racism</b>	The racial bias across institutions and society. It describes the cumulative and compounding effects of an array of factors that systematically privilege white people and disadvantage people of color. Since the word “racism” often is understood as a conscious belief, “racialization” may be a better way to describe a process that does not require intentionality. Race equity expert John A. Powell (2013) writes: “ ‘Racialization’ connotes a process rather than a static event. It underscores the fluid and dynamic nature of race... ‘Structural racialization’ is a set of processes that may generate disparities or depress life outcomes without any racist actors.”
<b>Systematic Equity</b>	A complex combination of interrelated elements consciously designed to create, support and sustain social justice. It is a robust system and dynamic process that reinforces and replicates equitable ideas, power, resources, strategies, conditions, habits, and outcomes.

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**QUESTION RESPONSE DEFINITIONS**

SHEET/QUESTION #	RESPONSE OPTION DEFINITIONS	EXAMPLES
Activity/#3	<p><b>Race-Neutral:</b> The response "race-neutral" is used when none of the metrics refer to a specific racial group (i.e., Black)</p>	<p>Overall : All : Attained the Vision Goal Completion Definition (only metric listed)</p>
	<p><b>Race-Specific:</b> The response "race-specific" is used when at least one of the listed metrics refers to a specific racial category. For example, Black or Latinx students</p>	<p><b>Hispanic or Latino</b> : Male : Completed Both Transfer-Level Math and English Within the District in the First Year  <b>Hispanic or Latino</b> : Female : Completed Both Transfer-Level Math and English Within the District in the First Year</p>
Activity/#4	<p><b>Race-Neutral:</b> The response "race-neutral" is used when the activity description does not refer to any specific racial group (i.e., Black)</p>	<p>Design and implement a mentoring program, special orientation and monthly support sessions aimed to increase certificate and associate degree completion.</p>
	<p><b>Race-Specific:</b> The response "race-specific" is used when the activity description mentions at least one specific racial group (i.e., Black)</p>	<p>In-person orientations and bridge programs will be developed for <b>African American</b> students and other disproportionately impacted groups. Orientations and bridge programs will help first time college students acclimate to a college environment and prepare them academically for the rigors of college.</p>



<b>Activity/#5</b>	<p><b>Explicit:</b> A target group is explicitly mentioned by name in the activity details section</p>	<p>Math and English disciplines will engage in actively developing communities of practice focused on researching and developing culturally relevant lessons and activities for disproportionately impacted (DI) student populations. Math and English faculty will pilot best practices in courses with high enrollments of DI students. Courses will be supported with embedded tutoring and supplemental instruction. Math and English faculty will also work towards developing themed classes for DI student populations, including foster youth, LGBTQ, <b>African American, and Latinx.</b></p>
	<p><b>Inferred:</b> Needing to deduce or conclude from the description rather than from explicit statements</p>	<p>Form a council of categorical and grant program directors to share best practices in serving disproportionately impacted students.</p>
	<p><b>No:</b> There is no mention of the targeted groups mentioned in the response to question #2 and the activity description</p>	<p>Specific training for staff, faculty, counselors, and advisors regarding working with diverse student populations.</p>
	<p><b>Select groups:</b> Only specific targeted groups that are listed in the metrics section are specifically named in the activity description</p>	<p>Development of a Cross Cultural Center to serve as a hub of activities and support for populations such as Dreamers, Foster Youth, Homeless, LGBTQI+, etc.) <b>(African American males are listed as a target group for this activity but this group is not mentioned in the description)</b></p>
	<p><b>Metric is focused on all groups only:</b> There is no mention of specific targeted groups in the activity description and the only metric listed is specific to "all" student groups</p>	<p>Develop project management and communication plans for college-wide initiatives.</p>





<b>Activity/#7</b>	<b>Student support services:</b> The primary aim of the activity is to provide some type of support service to students	Create a more streamlined and effective on boarding process for the student life cycle - informed by student voice.
	<b>Classroom-focused:</b> The primary aim of the activity is focused on what happens inside the classroom	To approve the college's new Diversity requirement and to develop an equity curriculum designer to assist faculty in developing equity-advancing curriculum.
	<b>Both</b> - student support services and classroom-focused: The activity has support services and classroom-focused elements	Development of an Umoja Program (Learning Community model with a focus on African American students).
	<b>Neither</b> - student support services or classroom-focused: The activity cannot be identified as primarily a student support service or classroom-focused activity	Develop a Data Coaches program and train faculty and classified staff on how to have equity centered data dialogues.
	<b>Insufficient information:</b> The description lacks details to decide whether the activity is student support service oriented or classroom-focused	Assess the degree of "welcoming and belonging" through equity document review, student focus groups, and area equity walks.