

2020-2025
EQUITY STRATEGIC PLAN
Listen, Learn, and Level Up¹
Foothill College

Content Draft Date: November 25, 2020

¹ Title of professional development training led by Foothill student leaders on Opening Day 2020. Borrowed with permission to use as a subtitle to the Equity Strategic Plan.

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PART ONE

EQUITY AT Foothill COLLEGE, TODAY AND TOMORROW

Foothill College has a history of providing transformative educational experiences that meet the goals for its students and produce outcomes that have served to lessen disparities among our most vulnerable populations. Individuals and areas of our campus have long sought to achieve student equity, whether on their own or in response to state-mandated equity plan requirements. While these state-mandated plans helped to fund equity activities on our campus and set goals to help move the work forward, those efforts have been relatively siloed, often intermittent, and sometimes were not interconnected with all areas of the campus to produce systemic impact on equity disparities. This Strategic Equity Plan is an effort to provide a sustainable, and systemic vision for achieving equity through eliminating demographically-predictable disparities at Foothill College. With a strong foundational vision, the college can then be guided toward action, collaboratively and within individual departments and areas. The Strategic Equity Plan will also serve as a partnering document to Foothill College's Educational Master Plan 2030, Facility Master Plan, and other planning documents.

Equity Philosophy and Values

In conversations with the campus, several things surfaced in regard to what our college community valued about equity. Our campus prides itself on being proactive versus reactive when addressing challenges. We appreciate spaces that embody team, family, and community spirit. We recognize our students are continuously improving and developing. Perhaps most

importantly, our college values and acknowledges individuals as whole people and sees their potential.

While our college is strong in its sentiment of our values, working within an institution that was inherently designed to systematically deny the right to education for so many can often make it difficult to fully enact those values. The system of education itself has a long history of upholding an oppressive premise about who gets access to quality education, and what that looks like. However, our college has always found ways to persist and we continuously challenge and aim to change the oppressive structure of education because we still believe in the value of education. The California Community College (CCC) system offers high quality, post-secondary education to all who want it, regardless of personal circumstances. Truly embodying this intent of the CCC's original mission requires constant disruption of systemic oppression.

SCOPE OF EQUITY WORK

One striking observation that surfaced during conversations with campus community was that we did not share a common understanding of equity. This made it challenging to 1) discern which students groups were being reached by our equity efforts; 2) help each member of the Foothill community conceptualize how they contribute to these efforts, and 3) demonstrate whether our myriad equity actions had local impact within a program and/or systemic impact across many areas of the college. The process to developing such a definition brought together college feedback, a common industry understanding of equity as described in educational code and scholarship on race and equity. An equity definition was first proposed at College Opening Day 2019, later revised to an equity scope of work by campus leadership at a January 2020 retreat, and ultimately agreed upon as a campus at College Opening Day 2020. It states:

Believing a well-educated population is essential to sustaining a democratic and just society, we commit to the work of equity, which is to dismantle oppressive systems (structural, cultural, and individual) and create a college community where success is not predictable by race.

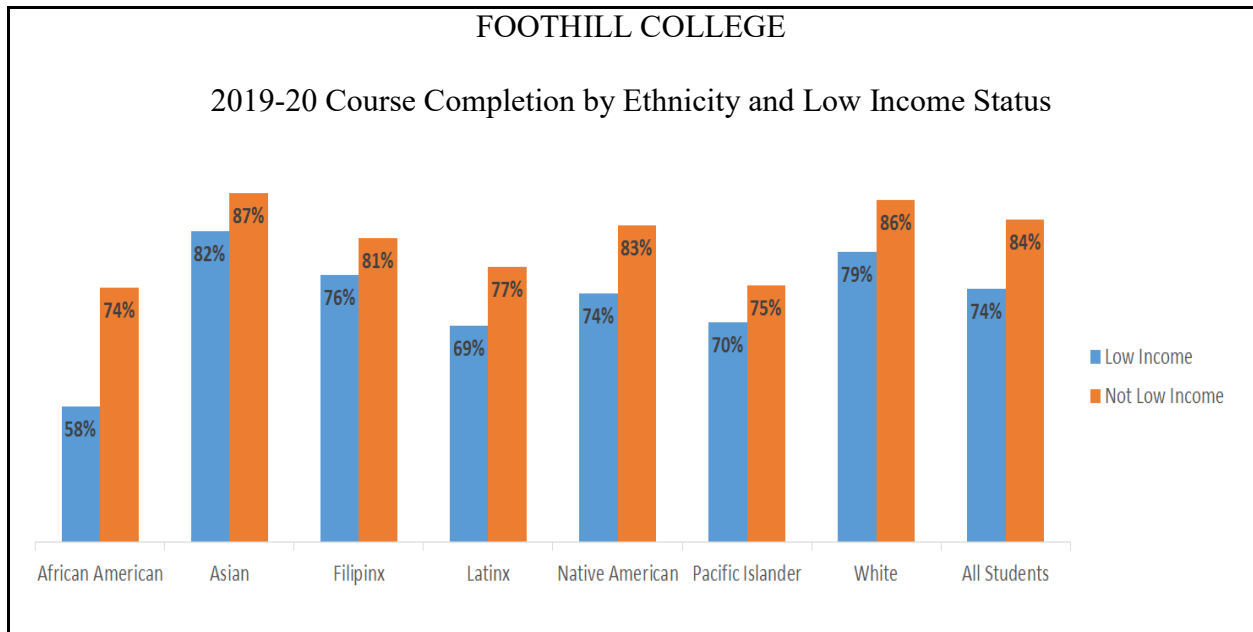
The learnings from the culmination of the aforementioned areas are elaborated in the Process of the Plan Construction section of this document.

Why Center Race?

At Foothill, when we talk about equity, we are intentional in our choice to center race. Since its inception, the system of education in the United States was never intended to serve all demographic groups and many continue to be marginalized, including but not limited to persons of color, women, LGBTQ, veterans, disabled persons, and the economically disadvantaged. And, like most other institutions, despite our ongoing efforts over the years, Foothill continues to have demographically predictable disparities in student success.

We are mindful, though, that when we as a college disaggregate our educational outcomes data by demographic group, we see *racial* disparity within all groups. For example, course completion is one indicator that is used to assess students' progress in the classroom as well as on their educational journey. In 2019-20, our college's course completion rate was 81%, with non-low-income students' course completion at 84% and low-income students' course completion at 74%. Students with less financial means may have fewer resources. These results, disaggregated by ethnicity, demonstrate that across all ethnic groups, students from low-income households complete their courses at a lower rate compared to those who are not from low-income households.

FIGURE 1:

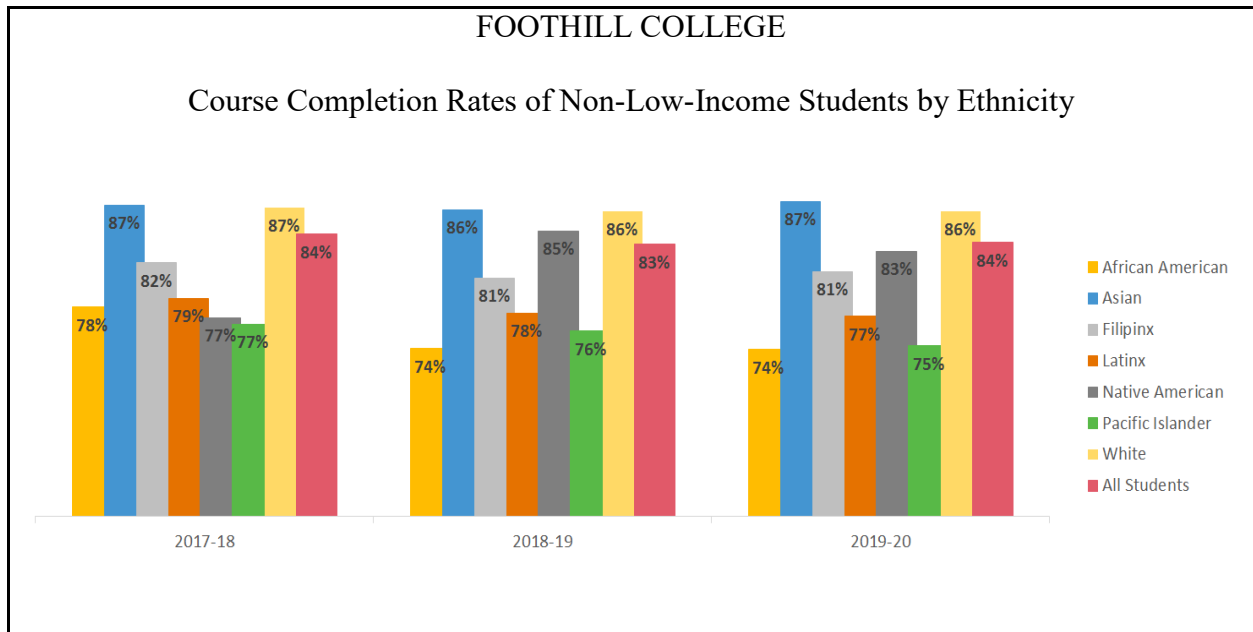


Source: FH IRP, Credit Enrollment

Low-income students are those whose household income is less than \$25,000.

However, while non low-income students may have access to more resources that aid in their course success, what is dishearteningly predictable is that even within this group, students don't experience course success at comparable rates (Figure 2). Furthermore, when course completion is replaced with other metrics like course retention, graduation or transfer, our results do not differ. By "predictable", we are not making a claim about our students' intelligence or ability to attain their education goal. Instead, what *is* predictable is our college's completion outcomes and how they continue to reflect a persistent pattern of what we have achieved, and fall short in achieving. If we view course completion as an indicator of our college's collective effort in helping students progress on their educational journey, which ethnic student groups do we do a better job at serving? Conversely, which student groups are we not serving as well?

FIGURE 2:



Source: FH IRP, Credit Enrollment

Non-low-income students are those whose household income is \$25,000 or more.

By shifting from a deficit lens, which focuses on which students may be deemed not college ready, to one that questions how we may be creating barriers with our current approach to serving students, and *who* is harmed by those barriers, the responsibility is then on us as a college to instead be student ready. Identifying these racial disparities, and our hand in perpetuating them, allows us to make the shift to meet students where they are. By centering race, we do not suggest to ignore disparities for other marginalized groups. Instead, we suggest that as we attend to disparities for other groups we consistently and intentionally address students of color within those groups. We must center race in our work and discussions even as we act to mitigate other group disparities.

We realize the topic of race is sometimes difficult and uncomfortable to discuss. As humans who have been socialized to avoid this topic, we recognize our strong predisposition to shift focus away from race in our dialogues and planning efforts. However, if we are to dismantle

systemic barriers² at Foothill College, we must talk about race. Centering race is an attempt to focus rather than to exclude. By consistently centering race in our plan, even as we seek to eliminate inequity for all groups, we are holding ourselves unwaveringly accountable to our most historically underserved of groups. This college Strategic Equity Plan is one step along the path of that purpose and vision for the Foothill College community.

PROCESS OF PLAN CONSTRUCTION

Historical Context

The work of equity and diversity is not new to the Foothill community. As the elements of the plan come together, there is a recognition of alignment across three areas aimed to inform the vision for equity at Foothill: campus feedback, scholarship on race and equity, and California state initiatives. Organically, these three areas revealed consistency in thought and focus, providing a common foundation from which to build.

The development of this Strategic Equity Plan began as an evaluation of the 2015-16 Student Equity Plan³, charged to the Equity and Education governance council. The activities described in the plan were to be evaluated annually, with the desired goals to be achieved by the 2019-20 academic year. Due to the large and operational undertaking an evaluation requires, Equity and Education tasked the Office of Equity to complete the evaluation and share its assessment with the council.

Through this process, some general observations surfaced. While it was proposed in the 2015-16 plan, our college lacked an entity overseeing the implementation and annual evaluation

²Systemic barriers are policies, practices or procedures that result in some people receiving unequal access or being excluded.

³ 2015-16 Student Equity Plan: https://foothill.edu/president/Foothill_Student_Equity_Plan_Final.pdf

of the plan and its activities, and did not have a strategy to institutionalize this process. Furthermore, years of conversations in venues such as shared governance committees, program review, and professional development activities demonstrated a need for a shared vision of equity, anchored by a common definition or scope of work. While the metrics in the state-mandated plan meant to indicate progress of student outcomes, they ultimately were not sufficient in addressing the cultural and systemic change our college was asking for. Previous state equity plans led with a particular set of metrics, whereas this Strategic Equity Plan has developed organically through campus inquiry and self-reflection, informed by issues surfaced from the campus community.

State Legislation and Equity Initiatives

As a public institution of higher education, our college shares in the state’s goal to provide educational opportunity and success to the broadest possible range of our state’s population. California Education Code Section 66010.2 leads with the idea that efforts should be made with regard to those who are historically and currently underrepresented, and affirms a commitment to academic excellence through quality teaching and programs. It goes on to address an aim to provide educational equity, not only through a “diverse and representative body and faculty, but also through educational environments in which each person, regardless of race, gender, gender identity, gender expression, sexual orientation, age, disability, or economic circumstances, has a reasonable chance to fully develop his or her potential.”⁴ This code addresses concepts of fairness and inclusion, offering opportunities for all groups and ensuring social, institutional, and/or personal circumstances do not prevent students from reaching academic goals.

⁴ California Education Code: <https://codes.findlaw.com/ca/education-code/edc-sect-66010-2.html>

The state has taken large strides to set forth systemic initiatives for local implementation, with a particular focus on institutionalizing campus equity efforts through mandated student equity plans. The most recent 2019-2022 state required Student Equity Plan was drafted largely by the Office of Equity in collaboration with and guidance from the Equity and Education governance council. The plan was shared across campus for discussion and feedback⁵ and was approved by the District Board of Trustees in June 2019.

Additionally, part of the state's efforts to achieve equity are through initiatives intended to transform the experience of students at the community college and remove barriers to progress in their educational journey. Vision for Success is the state's effort to make sure students from all backgrounds succeed in reaching their goals and improving their families and communities, eliminating equity gaps once and for all. It is a vision with bold goals to improve student outcomes, including closing equity gaps, increasing degree and certificate attainment and transfers to four-year institutions, reducing excess unit accumulation by students, and securing gainful employment.

In that spirit, two of the most recent initiatives from the state are Guided Pathways and AB705. The Guided Pathways framework creates a highly structured approach to student success that provides students with a set of clear course-taking patterns to promote better enrollment decisions and completion of their educational goal at our college. At Foothill, we are approaching that Guided Pathways effort through four teams: Meta Majors, Onboarding, Communication, and Technology and Data. AB705 is a bill that took effect in January 2018 and

⁵ The 2019-2022 Student Equity Plan was presented to Academic Senate, Classified Senate, and President's Cabinet, as well as all governance councils (College Advisory Council, Community & Communication, and Revenue & Resources, with specific endorsement from Equity & Education), resulting in submission to the state with signatures from the College President, VP of Finance, EVP of Instruction and Student Services, and Academic Senate President.

requires community colleges to maximize the probability that a student will enter and complete transfer-level coursework in English and math within a one-year timeframe. AB705 uses multiple measures vis-à-vis high school transcripts or self-guided placement, which research has shown are more effective of predicting course success than traditional assessment tests, in the placement of students into English and math courses.

Collectively, these efforts are guided by the core belief that colleges should simplify paths to educational goals and help students stay on those paths until completion.

Scholarship on Race and Equity

Implicit Bias

The Office of Equity explored a number of seminal theories to inform the equity framework, paying particular attention to a few that are valued at Foothill College. Implicit bias⁶ and the practice of recognizing when and how bias comes up can inform our equity practices greatly. The success of our students is impacted by the attitudes of faculty, staff, and administrators, towards students and one another, as is the association of stereotypes with certain individuals or groups without conscious knowledge. It has been proven that implementing exercises to actively lower bias⁷ and directly challenge stereotypes are successful strategies and are areas that the campus can explore. As such, our students led an implicit bias workshop at College Opening Day 2020 as a follow up to their open letter⁸ where they had requested college staff and faculty be regularly trained and educated on implicit bias.

⁶ Implicit bias refers to unconscious attitudes, reactions, stereotypes, and categories that affect behavior and understanding. In higher education, implicit bias often refers to unconscious racial or socioeconomic bias towards students.

⁷Eight tactics to identify and reduce your implicit biases.

https://www.aafp.org/journals/fpm/blogs/inpractice/entry/implicit_bias.html

⁸ Open Letter to Foothill College's Academic Senate. June 12, 2020. <https://foothill.edu/gov/academic-senate/2019-20/jun15/OpenLetterToFoothillCollegeAcademicSenate.pdf>. Open Letter to Foothill College's Governance Councils

Validation Theory and Stereotype Threat

As we proactively seek to be of service to the most disenfranchised student populations in our college community, it is critical that we are well informed on how to appropriately approach, engage, care for, and validate⁹ our students. This includes development of not only people but spaces. Creating spaces that eliminate stereotype threat¹⁰, a situation or action that puts students at risk of conforming to stereotypes about their culture or social group, and simultaneously forming a campus culture where the knowledge, skills, and experiences our students bring with them to college are continuously validated, and where they know they are valuable assets of our college learning community. Something as simple as learning a student's name and pronouncing it correctly, shifting curriculum to reflect students' backgrounds, or even engaging them in how the course develops over the term, can completely change the dynamic of a classroom. With these efforts, a student now knows they are seen and heard, and they can also then see themselves and their lived experiences in the learning.

Critical Race Theory

Colleges up and down the state have racial disparities across multiple metrics. Foothill is no different in that no matter the metric or population of study, racial inequities are present. Over time, they continue to exist. This persistent disproportionality points to a systemic issue. To

and Senates. October 8, 2020. <https://foothill.edu/gov/equity-and-education/2020-21/oct16/Open-Student-Letter-to-FC-Governance-Oct2020.pdf>.

⁹ Dr. Laura Rendon developed her theory of validation in 1994, referring to the “intentional, proactive affirmation of students using both in- and out-of-class agents with the intent to: 1) validate students as creators of knowledge and as valuable members of the college learning community and 2) foster personal development and social adjustment.” Dr. Rendon's lecture to the Foothill campus in April 2018 included strategies and recommendations for promoting an ethic of care, or *cariño*, for our students.

Dr. Rendon's visit to FHDA: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OGmklyKFzqY>

¹⁰ Dr. Claude Steele's visit to Foothill, known for his work on stereotype threat, prompted great energy and excitement, resulting in the work of many faculty examining their classroom practices to mitigate this threat.

focus on racial equity, the Office of Equity engaged Critical Race Theory¹¹, which uses the examination of race and racism across dominant culture as an approach to understanding structural racism to find justice-based solutions. If Foothill envisions our campus to be an equitable institution for higher education, we must be willing to upend our practices for vigorous examination of inequitable policy. In the development of this plan and an equity framework, many of the Critical Race Theory tenets felt especially relevant. In particular, the ubiquity of racism and how it undergirds many of our assumptions of how things operate within the status quo (Permanence of Racism), and the importance of elevating the voices and experiences of those most marginalized in our system (Counter Narratives). The incorporation of scholarly theory aids us in raising questions about things we may not have considered. It can also provide context to system and human behavior in this process, explaining how it can be that Foothill staff and faculty share similar values around the desire for equity, but work in an institution that has equity gaps. All the same, as a college we could not rely solely on state mandates nor scholarly theories in the development of this Strategic Equity Plan. We understood that actively engaging the Foothill community is critical.

Campus Feedback

One of the vital foundational elements of our Strategic Equity Plan stemmed from the campus community. The vision, structure, and goals came organically through inquiry and

¹¹ Critical race theory (CRT) is an intellectual movement that seeks to understand how white supremacy as a legal, cultural, and political condition is reproduced and maintained, primarily in the US context. While CRT is part of a much longer research tradition investigating race and racism, which includes such key figures as W. E. B. DuBois, Frantz Fanon, Angela Davis, Audre Lorde, Gloria Anzaldúa, Cherríe Moraga, and many more, CRT distinguishes itself as an approach that originated within legal studies (in part building from and responding to critical legal studies); aims to be a vehicle for social and political change; has been adopted interdisciplinary across many fields, including perhaps most notably education; and, in certain contexts, has come to be the umbrella term for studies of race and racism generally." De La Garza, Antonio & Ono, Kent. (2016). Critical Race Theory. 10.1002/9781118766804.wbiect260.

discussion with the college. In the evaluation of the state-mandated 2015-16 Student Equity Plan, the Office of Equity learned many proposed activities were technically implemented, but people did not feel the campus culture changed, nor did their equity work and efforts move the mark. Changes occurred in pockets but the changes were not systemic. As our college moves forward from the evaluation of previous plans, this Strategic Equity Plan is also an effort to acknowledge where we fell short as a campus in reaching previous goals or addressing concerns, building trust, communication, and collaboration. In crafting an updated plan, the Office of Equity intentionally engaged students, staff, faculty, and administrators in a variety of spaces.¹² The team led Opening Day workshops, conducted inquiry around professional development, held town halls, visited divisions and departments, engaged governance committees, conducted an online survey, held an equity retreat, and most importantly, listened to students.

In its early stages of the plan's development, students identified the need for academic resources and social support in particular. Issues of transportation and housing rose to the top as major student concerns¹³, and they spoke at length about their desire for space and community. Communication was also a theme that emerged, forcing the college to think differently about how it reaches out to students while keeping them engaged and connected to campus support and resources. As the Office of Equity continued to collect input from the campus, the world as we knew it experienced an abrupt change. A global pandemic forced us off campus and into our homes. As we adjusted to a world quickly changed by the COVID-19 virus, the college prioritized issues of access and learning in regards to online education. Transitioning to a virtual campus in March 2020 required quick-thinking, extensive yet urgent training, and the

¹² Engagement began in January 2019 and has continued through all iterations of the plan.

¹³ Based on student focus groups, Homelessness Summit, student-led public town halls, Board meeting presentations. Hope Center Report: https://foothill.edu/housing-insecurity/pdf/RealCollege_Survey2018.pdf

implementation of critical services and support. Further, it amplified a number of inequities in our system and forced the campus to take note of potentially overlooked concerns experienced by Foothill students in online learning. Sentiments that we were “all in this together” and that sheltering-in-place was an act of humanity blared through our media outlets, assuring us that our efforts to slow the spread and protect those most susceptible to the virus showed our unity and compassion as global citizens. Then, just as Foothill began to settle into a routine of our new normal, a few months later we received a stark reminder that humanity is relative, as the video of a man tragically murdered at the hands of police brutality went viral around the world. Not the first or last to suffer this tragic fate, George Floyd¹⁴ was one of too many in the Black community to fall victim to racial violence. An uprising of neighborhoods and cities, in proportions rarely seen in history, took to the streets to demand justice and plead for change. Racial violence had set the world afire and we saw communities come together through pain, from struggle, and in protest. While it did not take a world-changing event to prompt a commitment to equity from our college, the commitment was already there. In many ways however, it was these events that narrowed our focus and caused us to reflect deeper as a campus about what we considered to be our most significant equity issues, once again driven by student voice.

Foothill students rose up called the college to action. In their open letter to Academic Senate and administration in June 2020, individual members of the Black Student Union (BSU), the Puente program, Associated Students of Foothill College (ASFC), and student Trustees, collectively outlined what they needed to feel seen and validated as members of this college community. A subsequent letter addressed to College Governance in October 2020 further

¹⁴ What We Know About the Death of George Floyd in Minneapolis. <https://www.nytimes.com/article/george-floyd.html>

elaborated on student needs including demands relating to: diversifying curriculum and faculty, professional development, outreach to communities of color, and basic needs, to name a few¹⁵.

While a review of relevant literature helped to ground this strategic plan in research and bridge the operational with the theoretical, it is the voice of the campus community that breathes life and purpose into this plan. Not surprisingly, much of what the Office of Equity heard as campus concerns with equity are echoed in the literature as long-standing challenges in higher education, and are part of larger areas of concern being addressed through state initiatives, revealing an organic connection and alignment of state initiatives, relevant scholarship, and campus feedback. However, the voice of the students has been the strongest impetus to move the campus toward its goal of racial equity.

A SYSTEMIC CHANGE FRAMEWORK FOR RACIAL EQUITY

One result of surveying our institution's equity efforts is that it surfaced the many strategies and interventions already in play at Foothill, and highlighted areas on our campus and within our organizational structure that are not being addressed. For instance, in conversations with faculty, staff and students about equity, people clearly connected Foothill's ability to offer resources and improve student outcomes as the institution's means and ways toward eliminating inequity. Yet, attempts to assess and revise structural policies, if needed, were infrequently mentioned. Furthermore, reflections on how the culture of our campus embodies an equity-mindset indicated an area of focus requiring more support and action.

¹⁵ Open Letter to Foothill College's Academic Senate. June 12, 2020. <https://foothill.edu/gov/academic-senate/2019-20/jun15/OpenLetterToFoothillCollegeAcademicSenate.pdf>. Open Letter to Foothill College's Governance Councils and Senates. October 8, 2020. <https://foothill.edu/gov/equity-and-education/2020-21/oct16/Open-Student-Letter-to-FC-Governance-Oct2020.pdf>.

It became clear that there was a need for an overarching framework as part of the plan to provide direction on how and where to move forward with our college's efforts. A framework could increase collaboration between people and areas on campus doing equity work, resulting in greater reach and impact on our student population. It also allows the college to move away from individual and/or localized "random acts of equity" to the systemic approach required to address systemic issues.

The Equity-Driven Systems Change model¹⁶ developed by California Tomorrow¹⁷, a public organization formed around creating in-roads to equity and inclusion in a number of sectors across the state, including education, inspired the framework presented in this plan. While in existence, it worked extensively with community colleges to design a model for equity-based organizational change germane to the specific needs of the community college system. The Office of Equity found the Equity-Driven Systems Change model's "dimensions of change" a fitting explanation for how the Foothill community identified the equity work they were doing. The notion of "levels of impact", referred to within this document as areas of impact, helped to conceptualize a more holistic approach to our college's equity efforts; one that avoided concentrating strategies in particular areas, like student outcomes. In its feedback, the campus community expressed frustration with an over-reliance on student outcome metrics as the only way to eradicate inequity, and there was agreement with the idea of employing comprehensive equity strategies to guide our work. The framework outlined in the next section sets the stage for strategic implementation of equitable, organizational change.

¹⁶ Gazmuri, S., Petty, S., Porter, E. (2010, December). The Equity-Driven Systems Change (ESC) Model: A Toolkit for Improving Institutional Practice and Student Outcomes. Retrieved from <https://skylinecollege.edu/seed/assets/resources/ESC-Toolkit.pdf>

¹⁷ <https://cainclusion.org/camap>

Dimensions of Change

In order to employ a shift toward racial equity, there are three dimensions of change our college must engage: structural, cultural, and individual. Structural change speaks to the type of change that (minimally) seeks to remove the college-wide barriers that uphold the disenfranchisement of low-income students of color, and speaks to the thorough investigation of Foothill's policies, procedures, roles and responsibilities that govern how our college runs. The Equity-Driven Systems Change model explains that the dimension of cultural change uncovers and confronts the reasoning behind the inequities in our institution. What attitudes and beliefs do we employ as staff, faculty, and administrators in our interactions with students and one another? What informal or unspoken rules do we perpetuate? Creating a culture of equity may be the most difficult area of change to enact, as it requires our campus to come together under a common philosophy and desired vision, specifically around how we embody a culturally responsive, appreciative and equity-centered institution. While it will be the community-wide effort that will create the change we want to see, the change won't occur without individual responsibility. This leads to the third type of change: individual. Though the Equity-Driven Systems Change model does not identify this as a dimension of change, the Office of Equity felt it was important to acknowledge the opportunity to affect positive change in those areas within the realm of our college's control, but also as a reminder that we all own the responsibility to do so. The act of ongoing, recursive self-reflection is imperative in our equity efforts. It is also important to note that all levels of change can impact and influence one another. Both individual and structural change will influence the culture of a campus. Individuals can enact structural change. Cultural change can inspire individual change. Structural change impacts individual efforts. So in addressing all levels, a more transformative change can occur.

Areas of Impact

The Office of Equity posits that our college's equity efforts must impact four areas: 1) Access, Supports and Opportunities; 2) Organizational Policies and Practices; 3) Campus Climate; and, 4) Student Outcomes. Access, supports and opportunities references how we bring students onto our campus, set them up with the resources they need to be successful, and continue to look out for them by connecting them to opportunities that encourage their educational growth. The impact area of organizational policies and practices is concerned with looking at substructures within the college organization as well as overarching policy. Leadership and governance, budget and resource allocation, instructional policies and human resources would be topics of consideration within this area. Campus climate references the values, norms and history of our college, how we communicate within the college and how we work to prioritize and engage students. Finally, student outcomes refers to positive and equitable change in metrics like course completion, degree attainment, transfer rates, etc. From a foundational perspective, the Office of Equity believes ensuring that the college engages in activities in all four of these areas will be important in discussion and practice as they represent a new approach to eliminating disparities that is intentionally comprehensive and does not ignore the systemic structures at play.

While this Strategic Equity Plan lays out the aforementioned framework in an ordered, sequential manner, in praxis, the framework does not adhere to the neatly confined categories of the three dimensions of change nor the four areas of impact. Some of our equity strategies will intermesh with more than one dimension of change; that is, some interventions will require individual, cultural and structural change. Some equity strategies will cross more than one area of impact. These realizations only amplify the interconnectedness of our institution. Where areas

of ambiguity may arise around who or what entity should be responsible for certain equity strategies, an opportunity presents itself to engage in conversation with other people and areas on campus to team up to get the work done. Those collaborative efforts produce the most effective change and the Office of Equity will help facilitate those conversations.

A Tool for Facilitating Discussion and Processing Change

A call for wide-sweeping assessment on how our college operates down to the very values we hold individually is a monumental ask. The process will be uncomfortable at times, and is likely to surface many feelings for all of us as we engage in this work. As the need for a framework to provide direction was identified, the campus community could also benefit from having tools to help process the change our institution is undergoing and to help keep difficult dialogues moving ahead in a productive way. Since 2014, Foothill has partnered with the Pacific Educational Group¹⁸ to provide racial literacy seminars, which have included training on the Courageous Conversation About Race[®] protocol. It prompts users to be conscious of their own mindset as they enter the work, outlines four agreements¹⁹ to use during discussions, and offers six conditions²⁰ to help individuals engage, sustain, and deepen conversation. The college's efforts to train colleagues in using the protocol are intended to help individuals enter conversations with shared understanding of common terminology and norms. At the same time, the Office of Equity fully acknowledges there may be other robust strategies to have effective dialogues about racial equity. What is most important to us is that individuals are able to engage in racial equity conversations in a sustained and productive way. As a community, we must understand that while the Equity-Driven Systems Change framework may help provide direction

¹⁸ Pacific Educational Group (PEG): <https://courageousconversation.com/>

¹⁹ Stay engaged, speak your truth, experience discomfort, and expect/accept non-closure

²⁰ Focus on personal, local, and immediate; isolate race; ensure multiple perspectives; use CCAR protocol with intentionality; establish a working definition of race; surface the presence and role of Whiteness

on where our change efforts should be focused and how to pursue them, it will ultimately fail if we cannot engage and sustain difficult conversations and do the affective work that is intertwined with the equity work.

ACCOUNTABILITY STATEMENT

With the tremendous efforts that must occur to provide more equitable student experiences, accountability becomes an important element in that process toward change. To be accountable is essentially taking initiative and ownership of the work to create equitable outcomes. This can be accomplished individually within one's day-to-day responsibilities, culturally within the practices of one's department and in collaboration with colleagues, and structurally through administrative procedures, policies, and strategic planning.

The Foothill community will establish their role in the plan toward equity by defining what actions they can take to address issues laid out in the plan – individually, culturally, and structurally. The Office of Equity will partner to brainstorm and refine ideas, bring in additional stakeholders who have power to concretize those ideas and ensure the college remains focused on students and continues to center race. The Office of Equity will be responsible for checking-in with the campus community to help them assess their implementation efforts, and provide support with further consultation and advocacy for resources needed. As implementation, assessment, and sharing of lessons learned occurs, so will opportunities for synergy and coordination of efforts.

We as a college commit to the Strategic Equity Plan as a living, ongoing vision. Planning, implementation, and evaluation are ongoing and dynamic, allowing the college to pivot and shift as we learn what works. As the campus moves from planning to action, it will be essential to

then create appropriate milestones that will guide the campus in determining the timeline for evaluation of proposed activities. Ideally, all milestones will be assessed and reported on annually. However, some assessments may be more appropriate to conduct with more or less frequency.

Communication will be key in moving the work forward as folks are all in different points in their efforts. Some, having already implemented a number of interventions over the years, may need less consultation or direction, while others will desire a more substantial partnership from the Office of Equity or other departments to get their activities off the ground. Wherever an individual or area may be in the work, it will be important that the campus community be kept abreast of what is occurring and any results that are being produced. Reporting could occur at events as large as Opening Day, or in more focused spaces such as division meetings or governance. Each department, as part of their own action plan development, will establish appropriate venues for providing updates on progress of work, along with timelines for assessment and reporting.

This plan will be a significant shift from the siloed work that has historically occurred. However, cross-campus engagement, assessment, and reporting can only improve our understanding of how students are served and help to prevent duplication of efforts. Given that the Strategic Equity Plan has come together, not as a state mandate but rather a college collaborative effort, constructed by the voice of the campus community, this plan provides a unique opportunity to hold ourselves accountable to our scope of equity work, demonstrated in our commitment and accountability to our values, our personal growth, and to results.

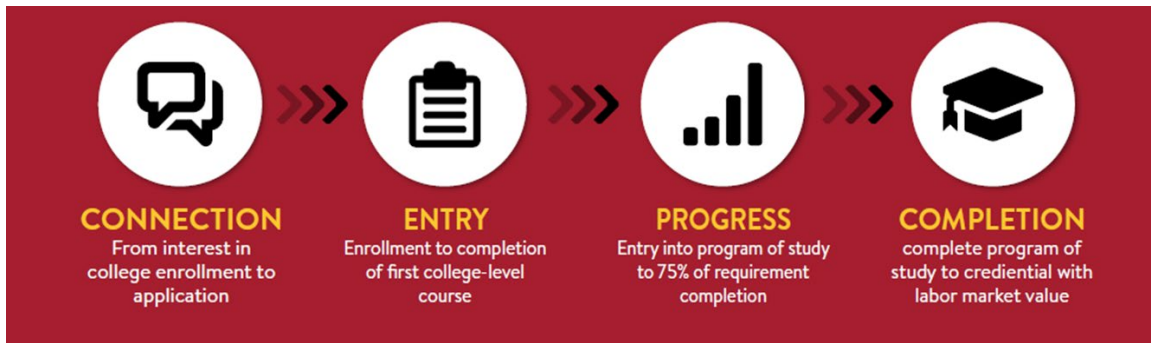
PART TWO: ISSUES AND GOALS

INTRODUCTION

The Office of Equity heard and reviewed campus feedback on the challenges experienced by students and approaches to equity to be considered in the construction of this Strategic Equity Plan. Additionally, past college equity plans were reviewed to help tell the history of thought and action at Foothill College. Feedback was consolidated with the asks from the various state initiatives and related theories on race and equity to help determine what issues to prioritize moving forward. Many of the suggested issues fell along a continuum of the student educational journey, which follows a similar framework employed by the California Community College Chancellor's Office Guided Pathways Initiative. This framework, referred to as the Loss/Momentum Framework²¹, categorizes the student journey from initial interest in attending Foothill College, to enrollment and completion of courses, to progress and completion of their educational goal. Along each step in the pathway, the framework discusses loss points and momentum strategies to guide the college. Moreover, conversations about how the college models its equity values and practices with its own employees elicited ideas that could be categorized similarly.

This section will lay out demonstrated issues and visionary goals, empowering campus community members to determine their own actions that align with that vision, rather than as directives coming from the top down. These issues and goals are organized within this plan along the Loss/Momentum pathway of Connection, Entry, Progress, and Completion.

²¹ Loss/Momentum Framework: <https://www.completionbydesign.org/s/cbd-lmf>



CONNECTION

This first step in the framework refers to a student’s initial interest in college enrollment to completion of their application. A substantial number of students who have an interest in college, and even apply, do not make it through the intake process to enroll in classes. The goal in this phase is to encourage new students to apply in a timely manner, secure financial aid if necessary, begin to develop an educational plan and a career goal, and enroll in coursework appropriate to their level of readiness and goals. Understanding what happens to students in this phase can help us as a college improve outreach, onboarding, and placement.

Our college enrollment data suggests a pertinent and sustained disproportionate impact on African American, Filipinx, Native American and Pacific Islander students during the “Connection” phase of their journey. Compared to their peers, these student applicants are less likely to enroll after applying to Foothill²². In our 2019 Student Equity Plan most recently submitted to the state, Latinx and African American students were prioritized as the groups most impacted by challenges with access. If Foothill College wants to position itself as a school of choice for these particular students, it will need to be more strategic in its marketing and

²² Source: FH IRP. 2017-18 to 2019-20 all applicants tracked to each term in which they applied to, excluding summer term. Enrollments are end of term and include credit and non-credit. Percentage point gap with margin of error was used to determine disproportionate impact. Three-year applicant counts and enrollment rates: African American = 5,438 (47%); Filipinx = 5,237 (50%); Native American = 550 (49%); Pacific Islander = 1,218 (48%); All Students = 101,851 (52%).

recruitment efforts, particularly building partnerships in communities in which those students reside, demonstrating an understanding of the community's needs, and connecting their educational goals to future jobs and career attainment.

Below are issues that surfaced in campus conversations around Connection, the time from a student's interest in college enrollment through completion of application, along with potential goals for the college to consider.

Issue 1. The onboarding process disproportionately impacts African American students.

Students and Foothill employees have described the experience of a student looking to attend Foothill College as difficult and complicated. From first interest to enrollment, a student could potentially interact with one or more of the following services at different points in the enrollment process: Outreach, Admissions, Financial Aid, Orientation, Counseling, and Assessment. Within this process, students report encountering barriers and inconsistencies that are described as complex and tedious that could discourage them from ultimately enrolling. In addition, there are lapses in time between onboarding steps where students are in a holding pattern waiting for the next steps in the enrollment process. This happens at points between priority registration, orientation, counseling, and when classes begin, leaving students with gaps in time where their circumstances may change. In assessing what happens from the moment of interest and awareness, all the way to application and enrollment, it is clear the onboarding process is not a simple one and can be lengthy and onerous for students. As previously mentioned, African Americans are not enrolling in our courses after applying to our college at a disproportionate rate. This observation is echoed in the Student Success Metrics²³, a public data

²³ <https://www.calpassplus.org/LaunchBoard/Student-Success-Metrics.aspx>

dashboard provided by the California Community College Chancellor's Office. In 2018-19, 56% of applicants who applied to Foothill College ultimately enrolled in our courses, whereas the enrollment rate was 50% for African American applicants. An overall evaluation of the application to course registration pipeline, as well as support services and their relevance to communities of color, is important to shed light on where challenges are prominent for students and where improvements can be made. Thus, the Office of Equity proposes the following goals as a guide to the actions that will need to take place.

Goal 1: The application to registration pipeline is transparent and intuitive to students.

Foothill retains students through the onboarding process, particularly those disproportionately impacted in the process (African American students).

Goal 2: Explore further districtwide FHDA collaboration and the potential for a shared application.

Goal 3: The onboarding process will be inclusive and take into account new students who seek to enroll in hybrid and exclusively online courses; and therefore, may not yet have an inherent need to physically be on campus.

Goal 4: Orientation is accessible to all new students prior to their first day of instruction.

Orientation content is specific to Foothill's onboarding process, providing guidance on how to navigate instructional and student support services to help students become familiar with the campus and its offerings.

Goal 5: African American students are consistently supported throughout the Connection phase, perhaps via a case management model shown to be successful at the college.

Goal 6: There are no barriers in our enrollment and registration processes. Work with the Office of Online Learning, Committee of Online Learning (COOL), and other

stakeholders to identify additional barriers in our enrollment and registration processes that may arise when prospective students are not accessing the physical campus or where there is a reliance on in-person services.

While it can be hypothesized that the lower application-to-enrollment rate observed for African American students is related to the complex, tedious onboarding process that the campus has cited, we do not know whether it is the only reason why students do not enroll after applying. Consequently, all individual departments and divisions are encouraged to examine this issue within the context of their areas in order to surface the various reasons that may be contributing to the problem. As the first line of contact with the college, the onboarding and enrollment process is critical to the student experience and one that should be evaluated on a consistent basis in order to adjust to contemporary issues and unexpected challenges.

Issue 2. There are large numbers of students of color who are not accessing, are ineligible for, or fall out of eligibility for available financial aid programming. Paying for college is a significant barrier to educational attainment. The cost to attend Foothill College varies depending on students' individual circumstances as factors such as unit load and residency come into play. The tuition range for the 2019-20 academic year was \$4,776 to \$23,864. Inherent in the cost of attendance is the increasing expense of living in the Bay Area. In 2018, the median home price in the Bay Area was \$996,000 and \$1.2 million in Santa Clara County. The Bay Area continues to be the most expensive housing market in the United States.²⁴ College feedback frequently mentioned the competing demand students have juggling both school and work, often having to make a choice between the two.

²⁴ Metropolitan Transportation Commission: Vital Signs. "Home Prices". <https://www.vitalsigns.mtc.ca.gov/home-prices>. Accessed November 13, 2020.

Both federal- and state-funded financial programs have helped students in the financing of their education; yet all students are not eligible for assistance due to specific program requirements. *Foothill College Promise Grant*, launched in the 2018-19 academic year, provides two years of free tuition, fees, books and course materials to eligible first-time new, in-state/AB540 and full-time students. Therefore, other student groups such as our returning and continuing/existing college students, as well as part-time and non-resident students are omitted from consideration. This grant requires students to enroll consecutive terms and continue to carry full-time unit load. While headcount participation grew from one year to the next, among the 914 grant recipients who started at our college in fall 2019, only 50% of them were retained to spring 2020.²⁵ Enrollment data revealed that many students fell out of eligibility in winter quarter by either going to part-time status or stopping out completely. Students who cannot complete or provide the necessary financial documents required for the program are also shut out, though they may have qualified otherwise. So while *Foothill College Promise* serves a comparable or higher proportion of students of color in relation to the general student population, for example, 2019-20 grant recipients identified as African American (9%) and Latinx (41%), it remains an inaccessible program to many due to its restrictive eligibility requirements.

In addition to tuition fees, students especially noted the stress of financing their education is compounded by the costs of textbooks and printing fees on campus. Financial holds and drops for non-payment affect a student's ability to register for classes, creating an additional obstacle to educational goal attainment. It would be worthwhile to examine these additional incidental costs to determine if the college could alleviate some of the financial burden, and at the same

²⁵ Foothill IRP. "FH College Promise; Virtual Hub; Psychological Services; Learning Communities (Cabinet)," August 24, 2020, <https://foothill.edu/irp/2021/FH-2021-Q1-Presentation-CPHubPsychServLCCabinet.pdf>. PowerPoint Presentation.

time, evaluate our campus policies related to these fees to determine if any student groups are disproportionately impacted by its current practices.

The trend in community college education suggests a move toward a tuition free model as evidenced by the state legislature's \$42.6 million allocation to the community college system for the *California College Promise Grant* (formerly known as the Board of Governors Fee Waiver). Even though tuition-free education at Foothill is an aspirational goal, there may not be a better time than now to act on it. The Office of Equity so proposes the following goals.

Goal 1: Eliminate tuition costs for all students across the CCC system. Increase administrative advocacy at the state level.

Goal 2: Students are knowledgeable about the different financial aid programs and services available to them, and successfully apply for that assistance.

Goal 3: There are few to no incidental costs associated with being a student, including but not limited to textbooks, printing, and parking costs.

Goal 4: There is no demographically predictable disproportionate impact among students with financial holds and/or drops for non-payment.

As financial challenges continue to increase for our students, it will be important to consistently review our policies and procedures, and explore and expand opportunities for financial relief, especially for our low income and students of color.

Issue 3. More recent focused outreach with a specific intent to increase access and enrollment of Latinx and African American students doesn't readily connect back to a larger strategy to support and retain these populations. The 2015-16 Student Equity Plan highlighted the need to tailor marketing and outreach efforts so that they were inclusive of the

diverse population Foothill serves. Activities aligned with these efforts included developing brochures and other advertisements highlighting college programs for underserved populations. The activities also included multilingual translation in printed marketing materials for students and families where English is a second language. Foothill should continue its efforts to diversify its marketing approach. Nevertheless, the college operating without a coordinated outreach program during an enrollment decline resulted in mostly indirect marketing efforts without a real end goal in mind. That end goal of where and how to focus outreach efforts is typically informed by a strategic enrollment plan, which is currently not documented. Particularly, the college missed an opportunity to address the declining trend in African-American student enrollment²⁶ observed after the 2013-14 academic year. Now with a more coordinated and properly staffed outreach department, the college can begin to address some long overlooked challenges.

Dual enrollment (specifically, college classes taught at high schools) has been proposed as a strategy to address racial equity gaps. In the 2019-20 academic year, Foothill College's Equity and Education governance council discussed this topic at length across multiple meetings. It was recommended that the college should continue to build dual enrollment partnerships with area high schools, prioritizing those serving predominantly racially disproportionately impacted student groups²⁷. This recommendation aligns with AB288 and CCAP provisions²⁸. Both the college and the student benefit from translating high school work completed for college credit into future enrollment at Foothill, but the college needs to work to develop pipelines within these

²⁶ Foothill-De Anza Community College District IRP. "Fall End-of-Term Headcount by Ethnicity." http://research.fhda.edu/downloads/Ethnicity_FH.pdf.

²⁷ Draft Memo from E&E to President re: Dual Enrollment. <https://foothill.edu/gov/equity-and-education/2019-20/jun12/DualEnrollment%20Recommendation.pdf>

²⁸ https://www.cccco.edu/About-Us/Chancellors-Office/Divisions/General-Counsel/-/media/CCCCO-Website/Files/General-Counsel/x_legal-opinion-1602-dual-enrollment-and-ab-288-ccapada.ashx

partnerships that seamlessly connect those students to degree, certificate and transfer opportunities at Foothill.

Current partnerships, not limited to dual enrollment, were created as a result of Foothill staff doing the work of moving beyond the Foothill campus and venturing out into surrounding communities and seeking innovative ways to offer a college education to those that may not be able to access the opportunity otherwise. Foothill's Family Engagement Institute has long fostered successful partnerships in the community to service some of the most vulnerable populations of students in the community. It is worth exploring their approach to the work and their model of service in providing exceptional support to these populations.

Whether it is through a non-credit course, dual enrollment, adult education, summer academy, or career technical education pathways developed in concert with local non-profits, Foothill should work to not only understand the career and educational demands of those communities but demonstrate its ability to successfully meet those demands.

Goal 1: Foothill has a documented strategic enrollment plan that expands access to college programs for underrepresented student populations, outlining touch points from outreach through registration to provide support for potential and incoming students.

Goal 2: Foothill's CCAP dual enrollment partnerships have established pipelines from high school to Foothill College programs. Dual enrollment partnerships focus on expanding college access in the high schools for underrepresented student populations.

Goal 3: Foothill College has community-based partnerships in low-income and historically underrepresented communities, reflective of diverse and culturally relevant outreach models.

Foothill has already begun to see the beneficial results of a well-coordinated outreach and marketing team who holds a lens of equity in their efforts. Communication, recruitment, and partnership building will only improve as the campus further collaborates in its efforts to serve and reach its diverse community.

ENTRY

This phase represents the period from student enrollment to completion of their first college-level course. The objective here is to help students choose and enter a program of study as early as possible. Many students seeking degrees drop out after only one or two terms as evidenced by our most recent data. Similar to access data referenced above in the Connection phase, our course retention data also indicates African American, Latinx, Native American and Pacific Islander students are less likely than their peers to remain in their class(es)²⁹. Between 11% to 14% of these students withdraw from our courses, representing nearly 4,000 enrollments our college loses each year. In fall 2019, among students whose educational goal is a degree or transfer, 66% were still enrolled at our college in winter 2020.³⁰

Foothill, therefore, needs to understand how our students get from their initial enrollment at our college to the point of passing their first college-level courses in their chosen program of study. What are their experiences? What are some policies or processes we have put into practice that created hurdles in their educational journey? These reflection points helps us better

²⁹ Foothill IRP. 2017-18 to 2019-20 end-of-term credit enrollments. Retention reflect grades A, B, C, D, F, FW, I, P, NP and RD. Enrollments reflect all letter grades, including EW, MW and W. Percentage point gap with margin of error was used to determine disproportionate impact. Three-year enrollment counts and course retention rates: African American = 15,444 (86%); Latinx = 82,062 (89%); Native American = 1,504 (88%); Pacific Islander = 3,707 (87%); All Students = 320,305 (91%).

³⁰ CCCC Student Success Metrics Data Dashboard. Fall to winter retention reflect degree/transfer students who enrolled in a credit course in 2018-19 and did not earn a degree nor transfer to a four-year institution. <https://www.calpassplus.org/LaunchBoard/Student-Success-Metrics.aspx>.

understand our students' lived experiences as well as sheds light on why students stop out and leave our campus altogether.

In identifying challenges that affect enrollment and retention at Foothill, financing college, as well as possessing a living wage to meet basic needs like stable housing and food sources were included.

Issue 4. Lack of coordinated infrastructure for basic needs services at the college (psychological services, food pantry, transportation, homeless referrals) can make it prohibitive for students of color to access services. A Foothill basic needs survey was administered spring 2018³¹ to assess student experience with housing, food and transportation, and where applicable, compared Foothill results to other community colleges in the western region, as well nationwide. Nearly 800 Foothill students responded, and results indicated our students are more likely to report high/marginal affirmation with food insecurity (62%) than compared to their community college counterparts in the region (41%) or nation (44%). Our student respondents shared they could not afford to eat balanced meals (40%) and had to portion their meals or skip meals altogether because there was not enough money for food (33%). While it is not a majority, we have students who had to resort to staying in a vehicle or abandoned building not intended for housing and/or do not know where they were going to sleep even for one night. Over one-third (40%) of our students experience housing insecurity, i.e., frequent moves, crowded living space, poor housing quality or the inability to afford rent or bills, compared to a little over half of the region and nation. One in 10 of our students (11%) experience homelessness, compared to 14% to 15% of the region and nation. When it comes to

³¹ Foothill IRP Memo to Dean of Student Services & Activities, "Food, Housing and Transportation Security Survey, Spring 2018," August 29, 2018.

transportation, our students shared they spend two more hours per day commuting to and from Foothill (23%), miss class because of an issue with public transportation (19%) and have to decide between using money for gas or public transportation to get to work or to class (16%). When disaggregated by ethnicity, Pacific Islander and African American students reported the highest rates of food insecurity, housing insecurity, and homelessness across the board.³² It will be important to center race as the college explores solutions.

Research and efforts around food and housing insecurity in particular have become more prominent in recent years, most notably through national organizations such as the Hope Center for College, Community, and Justice³³ and their #RealCollege movement. In line with this trend, more recent on-campus activities at our college are responding to meet the basic needs of our students. Foothill's food pantry was initially created by EOPS with non-perishable food items, eventually transitioning as a broader service to include fresh food items through the Office of Student Affairs and Activities. Support for housing insecurity is not as far along institutionally, but Foothill has made an attempt to address these challenges by incorporating leadership efforts into the revised EOPS Director position, with oversight of EOPS, CARE, Foster Youth, and Housing Student Programs. Additionally, a feasibility study for student housing was proposed in the Facilities Master Plan 2019-20.

As the college proceeds to think about the best way to organize and coordinate these efforts, we propose the following goals to assist in that alignment.

Goal 1: Foothill students seeking basic needs resources experience a streamlined referral process, providing coordinated assistance for all aid they are eligible for.

³² #RealCollege Survey Foothill College Report, 2019. https://foothill.edu/housing-insecurity/pdf/RealCollege_Survey2018.pdf. Page 8.

³³ <https://hope4college.com/>

Goal 2: Students' housing needs are met. Long- and short-term housing solutions will be explored, including homelessness initiatives in the county and transitional housing programs and student housing.

Goal 3: Students' transportation needs are met. Uncover the specific concerns around transportation; determine what is actionable, what may need to be revisited, and what actions are out of the college's control.

Goal 4: Students' psychological needs are met. Creative solutions on how to expand racial trauma-informed psychological services for students will be investigated and employed.

Providing basic needs services to students always has been and will continue to be a critical service that community colleges provide. The better we can be at minimizing the burden of accessing these services for students, the healthier and more engaged our students will be.

Issue 5. Lack of a sense of belonging, safety, and space allocation for students of color. This plan is being written at a time when our nation is in upheaval over police brutality tipped by the murder of George Floyd in Minneapolis, Minnesota. As a country, we are openly talking about our criminal justice systems and how they continue to disproportionately disadvantage people of color. Over time, Foothill students and employees have reported feeling threatened or profiled by campus police officers, propelling students to request additional resources for mental health and trauma support around police interactions. As our nation examines its policies and procedures for law enforcement officer training and relationship-building between law enforcement officers and their local communities, it's imperative for us to engage in this work on our campus as well. This

includes a review of student conduct reporting and protocols, especially those that require involving campus police.

As the campus revisits and revises its Facility Master Plan and looks to understand how space and environment influences the student experience, it will be vitally important to learn from and include students in the process. Sense of belonging and shared community have shown to positively impact the academic progress of community college students, particularly students of color. Research highlights multicultural spaces and student-centered places for students to gather are ways to build community and connection to campus. Foothill learning community students emphasized the need for a multicultural center distinct from The Village (a student space that is managed by Puente and Umoja students), but one that is similar in the aim of creating community.

With new California legislation in place in the form of AB1645, the state is requiring the designation of Dreamer Resource Liaisons and is encouraging the creation of Dream Resource Centers at all public institutions of higher education, with the intent to increase enrollment and graduation rates among Undocumented students. While initial legislation did not provide funding for this new requirement, with the passing of SB74, there will soon be local assistance funds available to campuses for Dream Resource Liaisons to support immigrant and Undocumented students. While funds cannot fully support all of the campus' intended efforts, it seems to be a timely opportunity to explore ways to meet the spirit and intent of the law as a whole. The creation of a Dream Resource Center will be important to consider as part of the Facility Master Plan and in connection with Foothill's recent selection by the state Chancellor's Office to house a legal service provider on campus.

Student feedback also indicated a desire for clarity on the policy for the allocation of space, and engagement in decision-making and planning around student space and design. Testimonies of previous experience in requesting space mentioned delays and arduous processes, or creation of spaces/centers without student input or knowledge. As we move toward a better visualization of students' space needs, it will be critical to understand how our current spaces serve students of color, where students of color congregate on campus, and where services that the students need are primarily located.

Last but certainly not least, equity-minded curriculum and instruction are integral to student's sense of belonging and classroom community. Classroom environments should be welcoming and safe for students, particularly students of color, in order to foster learning and growth. And it is with those aspirations that we propose the following goals.

Goal 1: Police interact with students in a racially and culturally affirming manner.

Goal 2: There is no disproportionate impact in student conduct data such as reporting or sanctions.

Goal 3: Students of color have broad access to diverse mental health professionals, especially around trauma related to police interactions.

Goal 4: Existing classroom and campus (physical) spaces encourage student engagement and reflect an appreciation of multicultural and multi-ethnic backgrounds.

Goal 5: Students have access to multicultural, LGBTQ, and Dream centers

Goal 6: Space allocation processes ensure that design and usage of space is student informed.

Goal 7: Curriculum and instruction norm multi-cultural and multi-ethnic perspectives.

There must be a greater effort to create safe and welcoming spaces for our students at Foothill. It is largely through connection and belonging that students will see themselves as part of the campus community and that we as educators are invested in their success.

PROGRESS

The progress phase follows the students from entry into their program of study through approximately 75% of requirements, or near completion. During this phase, the aim is to help students get to the point where the end is in sight. As students progress, many encounter required courses that they cannot pass and life events create interruptions and financial challenges. Foothill needs to ensure that programs are focused, streamlined, and that options for more flexibility and accelerated programs are available for students as well.

As this stage includes the bulk of the student's journey at the college, there are more issues and goals to explore, as well as a much larger focus around the classroom environment, curriculum, and pedagogy.

Issue 6. Many disciplines perpetuate the myth that they are objective and race-neutral³⁴.

Racism exists in every field, career path, and industry and all our students are and will be immersed in these racialized environments when they leave us. While Foothill students recently called out STEM in their open letter to the college, the myth of objectivity can manifest in every discipline. This typically leads our college to offer only siloed academic opportunities for

³⁴ For example, see: Mathematics as a Racialized Space: An Analysis of Secondary Teachers' Beliefs of Teaching Mathematics to Latinx Students Franzak, Mark David. New Mexico State University, ProQuest Dissertations Publishing, 2019, <https://medium.com/q-e-d/math-was-never-neutral-173b52e9bf4a>, <https://www.uclalawreview.org/race-matters-physics-class/>, <https://medium.com/age-of-awareness/dearwhiteteacher-race-neutral-is-not-a-thing-3e6223ba3abc>

students to openly explore and understand systemic racism, and typically only within particular disciplines that focus on social and human behavior. Choosing not to address issues of race in disciplines thought to be “objective” leaves students ill-prepared to understand how systemic racism is upheld in each discipline and be leaders in disrupting it, and could lead to cognitive dissonance and increased stress when students do experience racism in fields that they were taught are not affected by race.

In their most recent letter to the campus, students asked that diverse authors, curriculum and pedagogy be integrated into all courses, emphasizing that instructors must also address topics such as systemic racism, social activism, financial literacy, and service leadership in classrooms, regardless of the discipline. Students asserted that these discussions should be addressed not only in classes with a more obvious association to racial injustice but also in disciplines such as STEM, as students in these courses may eventually go into health and STEM careers and thus need to be prepared to uphold equity in their fields.

Any resistance to interrogating the myth of discipline objectivity is problematic. It speaks to the power dynamics that can discourage faculty, especially untenured faculty, from explicitly or implicitly discussing and addressing racism in their fields, by other faculty and administrator colleagues, and/or by curriculum systems that center policy and procedure at the expense of enacting equity in the classroom.

Given that we exist in a system of education that contemporarily gives access to all that want it, but that was not foundationally created to serve minoritized students, it is on us as equity leaders to examine and reimagine what a quality education looks like. If we desire to serve students of color well in our classrooms, we need to write the curriculum and design pedagogy with this in mind from the start. We also recognize that current faculty workloads create barriers

to learning and effectively implementing culturally responsive pedagogy. In that spirit, we offer the following goals to consider.

Goal 1: Pedagogy and curriculum is race conscious.

A - Faculty are knowledgeable about the epistemology of their disciplines, especially of the contributions of racially diverse scholars, and curriculum includes this epistemology.

B - Faculty are knowledgeable about historical and contemporary racial equity issues in their disciplines and include these issues in their course curricula

C- Faculty are aware of approaches for using their discipline to prepare students to be racially conscious, community, and global leaders through opportunities such as service leadership.

D- Faculty use culturally responsive pedagogy and engage in ongoing professional development around their teaching practices

Goal 2: Faculty are supported in their efforts to continually learn about the origins of their disciplines and iteratively refine their teaching.

Goal 3: Administration collaborates with Academic Senate and the Faculty Association to support practitioner efforts to achieve goals 1 and 2, by removing structural barriers embedded in tenure and evaluation processes.

A-Tenure processes support tenure-track faculty, tenure review committee members, and mentors in normalizing the practice of being race conscious while being supportive of continuous learning around this issue.

B-Faculty evaluations are seen as an opportunity to continuously build on the quality of our teaching, replacing the current aim of perfectionism, assimilation, and weeding-out, for one that values growth and improvement.

C- ³⁵ Curriculum policies and processes are race conscious. Where disproportionate impact is the outcome of policy implementation or compliance, the college takes local action to mitigate it and when necessary, works in conjunction with administration to advocate for change at the board and/or state level.

Goal 4: Faculty workload realistically positions faculty to implement culturally responsive pedagogy effectively.

Issue 7. Microaggressions and unconscious bias negatively affect experience and learning

for students of color. As we aim to improve the culture of Foothill College to a more welcoming and safe space for students, we must consider how students experience the racial climate of our college. Racial microaggressions are daily verbal, behavioral, or environmental messages that communicate harmful slights and insults about people of color. Whether intentional or unintentional, racial microaggressions shame racial/ethnic minorities and are ingrained in systems that perpetuate racism.³⁶ Making assumptions about a student's knowledge or interest in something based on their ethnicity is extremely problematic. Asking a student what sport they play because you assume they are an athlete, or asking their opinion about a certain dish, assuming they are familiar with or enjoy all traditional foods from their country of heritage, are both examples of racial microaggressions that can make for an unwelcoming space. Beyond

³⁵ Need collaboration and input with academic senate/CCC on this goal, as well as with FA. May need change at the district-level

³⁶ <https://www.kickboardforschools.com/blog/post/diversity-equity/what-are-racial-microaggressions-in-schools/>

slights and shaming, we as educators must also be mindful to not dismiss or ignore cultural behaviors, especially when entering community-identified spaces. In such spaces, walking into a room without greeting others, or dismissing someone who greets you, is a microaggression and can be considered disrespectful. Policing or surveilling ethnically minoritized students in community spaces can result in feelings of fear and lack of safety for our students.

As part of the open letter from student leaders in June 2020, students felt that the faculty and staff of Foothill should be adequately trained and educated in regards to implicit and unconscious bias, systemic racism, white supremacy, white privilege, and social activism, to help minimize the incidents of microaggressions that our students experience.³⁷ With that in mind we offer the following goals.

Goal 1: Foothill will reduce or decrease the climate of racial microaggressions.

Goal 2: Campus culture supports explicit checking³⁸ of unconscious bias.

Goal 3: Professional development opportunities informed by or in partnership with students will be available to employees.

With these efforts we hope to shift the culture of Foothill to one that is more welcoming and aware of how racial climate impacts our students.

Issue 8. Lack of a college-wide retention plan for students of color to progress through their academic career at Foothill. In our efforts to understand retention data and trends that are occurring, it is important to focus on who is not being retained, as well as why those students are leaving. Interrogating both of those things encompasses a wider scope of the story and provides a

³⁷ Open Letter to Foothill College's Academic Senate, student presented June 12, 2020.

³⁸ Feeling supported in identifying when bias occurs and willingness to have the difficult conversation that may result.

deeper understanding of our students' lived realities, which can only improve our efforts as we propose interventions and implement campus-wide retention strategies.

The 2019-2022 Foothill College Student Equity Plan identified a disproportionate gap in college retention for African-American and Latinx female students.³⁹ The CCCCO identifies retention as continued enrollment from fall to winter quarter. While Foothill's 2015-16 Student Equity Plan did not have a metric that directly identified college retention as an overarching issue, there were many activities such as development of mentoring, early alert and expansion of and support to learning communities, which suggested a desired focus on successfully retaining students through the end of a term. Furthermore, the same plan suggested the need for a Student Success and Retention Team to oversee the implementation and progress of the 36 activities listed within that plan. While the retention team was never formed due to competing demands and scheduling conflicts, the idea still holds value and should be revisited.

While the college currently has state funded retention programs for students (EOPS/CalWORKS), resource centers (Disability Support Programs and Services/Veterans Resource Center) and learning communities to help students successfully complete courses and remain enrolled, these programs are often limited by capacity, funding, and qualifications students must meet to access those services. There are still a significant number of students outside these programs who are not being served where the need still exists.

In an effort to coordinate and broaden our retention efforts, we suggest the following goals.

³⁹ 2019-22 State Equity Plan:
https://foothill.edu/equity/documents/FH%20Equity%20Plan%20and%20Executive%20Summary%202019_publish.pdf

Goal 1: The college has a coordinated plan with a set of successful, culturally relevant interventions in play that retains students through three important milestones in a term: 1) course registration through to census, 2) from census through the end of the quarter with successful course completion, and 3) successful enrollment in the subsequent term. Specifically, this plan would consist of strategies that not only are proven effective for Foothill's most vulnerable student populations (in this case, African-American and Latinx women), but can be inclusive and encompassing of other populations' needs.

Goal 2: The promising practices of existing retention programs and learning communities are incorporated into the rest of the campus.

Goal 3: The college addresses the retention challenges that arise when students, staff and faculty do not have access to the physical campus and cannot meet with students in a traditional face-to-face environment. Challenges include privacy for confidential conversations, dedicated studying spaces with easy access to academic materials, resources and employee support, and connection to a college community that counteracts student isolation in higher education.

As we focus on outreach and access in order to diversify our student population, prioritizing retention of these diverse communities must occur in conjunction with those efforts so that the work of diversity does not fall to merely a performative effort.

Issue 9. Lack, or underutilization of campus support resources (tutoring, career center, transfer center, etc.). When discussing resources, conversations tend to center around the absence of resources available to students, often attributed either to budget concerns and

restrictions, or the underutilization of existing resources which could be due to several reasons including lack of awareness or a perceived lack of need.

It will be important to continue to monitor the groups of students who take advantage of tutoring, what subjects are most requested, and the environment in which tutoring sessions take place. While tutoring has largely moved to a peer-to-peer model, the focus of tutoring content has also shifted more deliberately to align with AB705, increasing availability of support in math and English in particular. Given the equity lens that is implied with this new legislation, it will be important to disaggregate data by race and monitor how students of color are engaging in this service.

An established career center could provide students with the opportunity to connect careers and majors to their educational plan. Having done some exploration around interest in potential careers can help to inform what major a student may enter, and series of courses to take. This is also an area that can align with campus Guided Pathways efforts in order to ensure wider reach and support of students.

Student feedback indicates a certain level of comfort and encouragement is felt with peer-to-peer interactions. Programs like Pass the Torch, a tutoring program serving primarily students of color, employ this peer model and have seen academic success for their students.⁴⁰ Exploration of this model for services outside of tutoring, such as mentoring, technical assistance, and service leadership, could increase student engagement with available services. With the intent to increase that engagement, we offer the following goals.

Goal 1: Tutoring models lead with equity to enhance access and utilization of their services.

Ample support is provided to ensure the success of AB705 implementation.

⁴⁰ Pass the Torch Program: <https://foothill.edu/torch/>

Goal 2: Career exploration support is offered at the onset of students' educational journey with special focus on early intervention for Latinx and African-American students, careful to avoid implicit bias of channeling low-income and students of color into lower wage programs.

Goal 3: Service leadership activities promote peer-to-peer connections, emphasize college navigation, social support, and the building of cultural capital.

Goal 4: The college is able to identify and address the challenges in accessing resources and support that are unique to students who engage with our campus exclusively online.

As the needs of our students change over time, it will be important to continue to evaluate the services we as a college provide to keep up with contemporary issues. The absence or underutilization of services can speak to many things and reasons, but only through student inquiry can we best meet the needs of the community.

Issue 10. Insufficient culturally responsive, relevant and sustaining pedagogy and other asset-based approaches in teaching and serving our students of color. There are numerous benefits to hiring and retaining diverse faculty. Minoritized students experience higher rates of success⁴¹, diversity increases student and employee retention, the likelihood of implicit bias is reduced, and increasing faculty diversity helps all faculty better integrate multicultural and culturally responsive pedagogy.⁴²

As important as who is teaching a course is how and what is taught. Gloria Ladson-Billings, a renowned scholar and pedagogical theorist, has done extensive work in the areas of

⁴¹ Fairlie, R.W., Hoffmann, F., & Oreopoulos, P. (2011). A Community College Instructor Like Me: Race and Ethnicity Interactions in the Classroom. NBER Working Paper No. 17381. *National Bureau of Economic Research*.

⁴² [Vision for Success Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Task Force 2020 Report](#)

culturally relevant pedagogy and critical race theory. She argues that by focusing on student learning and academic achievement versus classroom and behavior management and cultural competence versus cultural assimilation, students will take both a responsibility for and a deep interest in their education. She affirms that this is the secret behind culturally relevant pedagogy, the ability to link principles of learning with deep understanding of and appreciation for culture. This is the place, she says, where the concept of pedagogy “shifts, changes, adapts, recycles, and recreates” the classroom, shifting marginalized students into a place where they become subjects in the instructional process, not mere objects.⁴³ This places students and their lived experiences at the center of the learning, not the periphery.

Students have expressed a need for the establishment of an Ethnic Studies division, whose curriculum and pedagogy aligns with much of what Dr. Ladson-Billings advocates for in her scholarship. Students also desire a more diverse faculty. Similar to prior years, in fall 2019, the majority of Foothill faculty, both full- and part-time instructors, identified as White.⁴⁴ In their October 2020 letter, students explicitly stated their desire for Foothill to hire “full-time, tenure track faculty of color, with a priority given to Black and Indigenous applicants.” So with the alignment of student requests, data, and scholarship, we offer the following goals.

Goal 1: Planning and decision-making is informed by regular review of quantitative and qualitative data.

Goal 2: Foothill College faculty, staff, and administrators are racially diverse.

Goal 3: Retain racially diverse employees.

⁴³ Ladson-Billings, G. (2014). Culturally relevant pedagogy 2.0: a.k.a. the remix. *Harvard Educational Review*, 84(1), 74-84.).

⁴⁴ Foothill-De Anza Community College District IRP. Foothill-De Anza Community College District: Employees by Campus, Employee Group and Ethnicity, Fall 2019. http://research.fhda.edu/_downloads/Fall%202019%20Employees%20by%20Profession%20and%20Ethnicity.pdf

Goal 4: Faculty are supported in their efforts to iteratively self-evaluate their proficiency with culturally responsive pedagogy.

Goal 5: Ensure content and pedagogy are inclusive of and created with communities of color in mind.

Goal 6: Collaboration across faculty, staff, administrators, and students to support the request and explore the plausibility of an Ethnic Studies division, and hiring of appropriate faculty.

Representation, diversity, and cultural relevancy in education matters. For students of color, having diverse faculty teaching and centering their stories allows for a reflection of themselves not only in the learning, but in the leadership, and to highlight how their communities have historically contributed to all fields of study.

Issue 11. Online education and the provision of comparable spaces, resources and services.

Prior to COVID-19 forcing the college to become a virtual campus in March 2020, online share of enrollments grew from 35% in 2015-16 to nearly 50% in 2019-20⁴⁵. Furthermore, while nearly half of all students continued to enroll in face-to-face and/or hybrid sections, the share of students who enroll exclusively online grew from about 25% to 36% over the same time period. As a college, we still have a long way to go in understanding the needs of students who do not come onto campus for instructional learning. As Foothill prepares to eventually return to campus, we cannot continue to define online students as if it is a *student* characteristic that does not change. Instead, online enrollment characterizes the learning modality at a given term. We need to learn more about the demographics and enrollment patterns of students who take online

⁴⁵ Foothill IRP. 2015-16 to 2019-20 credit enrollments. Omits spring 2020. Non-credit enrollments, prior to spring 2020, were 100% face-to-face.

courses, and what resources they may need to successfully fulfill their educational goals. It will be important to look at the number of courses taken, and the purpose that online enrollment serves for students. Are they a concurrent four-year student taking only one course at our campus? Would students prefer to take some face-to-face classes but our scheduling does not permit? Are they a student who may not even reside in the Bay Area? Would strictly online resources and tools best suit the needs of these students or would they prefer a combination of in-person and online support services? Our college has an opportunity to explore the racial breakdown of different online-identified groups, whether they be fully online or hybrid, to reveal any nuanced experiences, trends, or gaps experienced in the online realm.

What became abundantly clear in our college's move toward becoming fully virtual in late winter 2020, is that many of the equity issues present on campus also surfaced in a fully virtual/online environment. Paramount to creating an equitable learning experience for our students are some core tenets around providing an ethic of care to our students; centering our actions from the perspective of our most vulnerable students—which necessitates that our students not only provide input on how they envision our campus functioning, but they are empowered to see their feedback to fruition; and with this, an acknowledgement of the variation of faculty, staff and student needs in a virtual environment. Our ability to provide an ethic of care is not limited to the face-to-face interactions we have with our students. An ethic of care can be as simple as clear and direct communication with our students. That is, a commitment to follow up and follow through with our students to make sure they have their questions answered and they are getting what they need. It also means empathy from the institution for our students as they seek out answers to questions that, unbeknownst to us, could mean the difference between them remaining enrolled and withdrawing; particularly in a crisis in which we saw many of our

students struggle to meet their basic needs of food and shelter. Explicit communication from the college that goes out to all students in all relevant ways, timely responsiveness, and following through to close the loop with our students demonstrates that ethic of care for our students.⁴⁶ As we focus on the challenges experienced by students when we moved to virtual campus, we also need to address the challenges experienced by faculty and staff. They must be supported if our college is to be student-ready and online teaching and learning-ready.

Having to transition fully online exposed a number of ways that our students were mitigating challenges inherent to their educational journey, and even some of the ways that our institution has helped alleviate those challenges, as well as exacerbated them. Technological knowledge and access to that resource became a profound issue for students, faculty, and staff alike. However, issues related to technology were not the only problems to surface during this time, as our college began to learn more about how place and space impacted our students' ability to remain present and engaged in their learning.

Our move to a fully online environment also showcased how easy it is to slip back into a pattern of doing what is easiest or most efficient, or most comfortable in moments of instability and unease. Defaulting to what we know to help manage that stability may only serve to protect our status quo way of operating. This includes focusing our efforts and attention on how to best serve our most vulnerable students and making sure that ideas on how to do this are generated from the students, themselves. Processes developed to assist our students changed from their initial iteration as our student workers provided insight that countered some of the college's

⁴⁶ Ethic of care: Umoja Practices are used in an effort to support our students of color in a way that is authentic and respects their culture. Learn more here: <https://umojacommunity.org/umoja-practices>. Angela Valenzuela is known for her concept of *carino*, or authentic care, and the subtractive schooling process. <https://rethinkingschools.org/articles/subtractive-schooling/>

assumptions about the best way to serve them. For example, the assumption that Zoom would be the best platform to engage students in the virtual hub⁴⁷, and the reality that the space could be intimidating for those new to the online realm, and how a chat function could serve the needs of students better. Bringing students in on the ground floor to help create and design some of our processes is another way of engaging equity. As a college we were able to offer services we never thought could be online.

What was specifically uncovered is that many of our students struggled with some major necessities for online learning including strong and reliable internet connection. Additionally, our college did not have a way to assist our students with their more complex needs around updating operating systems, installing software, and other technology related troubleshooting. The formation of the Student Technology Support Hub was a step in the correct direction, but the fact that it did not exist prior to our campus being fully online says something about the college's assumptions about its online students. Similarly, trying to meet the technology needs of our students without a clear understanding of what those needs are can present some equity challenges. One of those most basic needs is training on how to use some of these tools, including things like laptops. For example, our operating assumption that students understand how to turn on these tools and navigate them meant we were not fully prepared to adequately answer questions or provide assistance to our students.

All the while, there were a number of challenges to the fully online environment that were not related to technology. Concerns of students having an adequate learning environment arose as students navigated things like 24-7 caregiving for dependents, not having a desk/table for workspace so they sat on floors, not having access to quiet or distraction-free spaces so they

⁴⁷ Student Technology Support Hub provides and assist students in finding support for technology questions related to online learning. <https://foothill.edu/virtualcampus/tech-hub>

hid in closets, sharing internet bandwidth with others in the household, and the tasking impact (on all, really) of being on a computer for the better part of the day. It also raised debate around synchronous and asynchronous online classes in trying to understand the best way to meet the needs of our most vulnerable students. These issues did not just arise for students. Faculty and staff experienced them as well. What will be important to remember, though, is that once the college is able to offer on-campus instruction again, these issues will continue to remain for those students that will only have online as an option and students who may have face-to-face/hybrid instruction but need student support services online. It will be important to remain cognizant that these challenges remain for some, as they become sorted for others.

Goal 1: The college understands the challenges students who access Foothill exclusively online face.

Goal 2: Assessment of online services is sustained by the college because there will always be online students. The college will maintain capacity of services comparable to level of enrollment.

Goal 3: All online classes are using the Online Equity Affirmation as a foundational lens for online course design.⁴⁸

Goal 4: Technology and resources offered, at minimum, provide a comparable student experience as face-to-face.

Goal 5: Faculty are fully equipped and prepared to teach effectively in the online/virtual environment

⁴⁸ Online Equity Affirmation: <https://foothill.edu/onlinelearning/>

COMPLETION

In this phase, we monitor students' rates of completion by program, and determine whether our students are able to move successfully to the next level of education: a higher level degree program for certificate recipients, or transferring with junior standing in the desired major field for associate recipients, and advance in the labor market. This information is critical to ensure that our college's programs are aligned with the requirements for success in further education and careers.

Issue 12: Program and Service Area assessments did not invoke meaningful discussion and action around equity efforts. Equity prompts in previous program review templates fell short in walking reviewers through how to assess for disproportionate impact, encourage investigation into why disproportionate impact existed, and did not help people come up with effective interventions to disrupt disproportionate impact. In its previous form, the college was not set up to have thoughtful discussions about the answers and outcomes to these equity questions. Additionally, software systems within Student Service areas do not always have the reporting functionality necessary to allow them to assess for disproportionate impact. Data may be localized, coming from multiple systems, or not synced to Banner, thus making it a difficult and time-consuming process.

Goal 1: Equity is central to the program review process. Practitioners are well supported with quantitative and qualitative information (data) and resources to analyze their equity trends and efforts.

Goal 2: The college identifies equity trends in programs and service areas and seeks to meaningfully engage others in college-wide discussions about what to do.

Issue 13: Making sure students from all backgrounds succeed in reaching their goals and improving their families and communities, eliminating equity gaps⁴⁹. Very recently, the CCCCCO has outlined bold goals to improve student outcomes, including closing achievement gaps, increasing degree and certificate attainment and transfers to four-year institutions, reducing excess unit accumulation by students, and securing gainful employment. As highlighted on their Vision for Success site, the Chancellor’s Office is guided by the core belief that colleges should simplify paths to educational goals and help students stay on those paths until completion. As such, in 2019, the statewide Chancellor’s office required that all colleges set local Vision Goals in an attempt to improve student outcomes. Although the Vision for Success goals are formulated differently than the goals in this document, the Office of Equity felt it was important to highlight and incorporate them as part of our overall Strategic Equity Plan. Below are the Vision for Success goals that Foothill College set to reach for all students by 2021-2022, with subset equity goals in areas that identified disproportionate impact.

Goal 1: Completion

- A – Increase all students who earned an associate degree (including ADTs) by 20%.
- B – Increase all students who earned a Chancellor’s Office approved certificate by 50%.
- C – Increase all students who attained one or more of the following: Chancellor’s Office approved certificate, associate degree, and/or CCC baccalaureate degree, by 25%.

Goal 2: Transfer

- A – Increase all students who earned an associate degree for transfer by 20%.
- B – Increase all students who transferred to a CSU or UC institution by 25%

⁴⁹ California Community College Vision for Success Goal: <https://www.cccco.edu/About-Us/Vision-for-Success>

1. Increase transfer of African American students to a CSU or UC by 51%
2. Increase transfer of Latinx students to a CSU or UC by 50%
3. Increase transfer of Pacific Islander to CSU or UC by 83%

Goal 3: Unit Accumulation

A – Decrease average number of units accumulated by all associate degree earners by 10%.

Goal 4: Workforce

A – Increase median annual earnings of all students by 9%.

B – Increase all students who attained the living wage by 9%

1. Increase African American students who attained the living wage by 27%
2. Increase Latinx students who attained the living wage by 23%
3. Increase Pacific Islander students who attained the living wage by 38%

C – Increase all student with a job closely related to their field of study by 2%

The Chancellor’s Vision for Success goals are no doubt ambitious. Setting metrics locally gave the Foothill an opportunity to think about how individual colleges can enact change that will ultimately make impacts statewide. Similarly, setting individual and department goals can help us collectively achieve equity as a college.