

Merced College

2025-2028 Student Equity Plan

Executive Summary



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Message from the President

The 2025–2028 Merced College Student Equity Plan is a deliberate and focused commitment to improving outcomes for our most disproportionately impacted students. As we continue to build on the momentum of our previous equity efforts, this plan reaffirms our responsibility to reduce systemic barriers and ensure every student has access to the support, guidance, and resources they need to succeed.

At Merced College, we believe access and success for all students are achieved not by expecting students to navigate complex systems alone, but by redesigning those systems to meet students where they are. This plan reflects our belief that student success is shaped by how we serve—not just what we offer. We remain committed to removing obstacles related to basic needs, academic support, and a sense of belonging, so our students can focus on reaching their full potential.

As a proud Hispanic-Serving Institution, Merced College is dedicated to creating a campus where everyone belongs and has the opportunity to succeed. Guided by our Educational Master Plan, Strategic Implementation Plan, and Vision 2030 goals, we are aligning institutional practices to close equity gaps, advance culturally responsive teaching, and promote inclusive student engagement.

We are especially proud of the braided support system we’ve built—Success Teams, identity-based programs, embedded tutoring, bilingual services, and proactive interventions—all working together to increase persistence, completion, and transfer for our historically underserved students.

The 2025–2028 Student Equity Plan reflects both the progress we’ve made and the work that lies ahead. With a campus-wide commitment and a focus on outcomes, Merced College stands ready to continue transforming lives through education.

Sincerely,



Chris Vitelli, Ed.D.

Superintendent/President



About Merced College

Founded in 1962, Merced College is a public community college serving California's Central Valley, where education and workforce development are deeply rooted in the regional economy and community aspirations. We offer robust degree and certificate programs, fast track career and technical training, accelerated curricula, and nationally recognized workforce initiatives such as our Customer Service Academy and Emerging Leaders Institute.

We pride ourselves on being a college that centers students. Whether in person or online, we foster a culture of genuine caring, with the belief that "students are our focus and we are known by their success." In 2023 to 2024 we served 18,673 students across programs spanning associate degrees, transfer pathways, certificates, and workforce training. Our campuses, including the Merced main campus, Los Banos campus, and our downtown Business Resource Center, ensure regional accessibility and local responsiveness.

Merced College is committed to continuous improvement, equity, and rigorous accountability. We are accredited by the Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges. Through strong leadership and community partnerships, we aim to expand opportunities, reduce disparities, and uplift student success across all populations.

Mission

At Merced College, students are our focus, and we are known by their success. We transform lives through education and workforce development.

Vision

Enriching our community through educational experiences and support services:

- Degree/Certificate Programs
- Transfer
- Career Technical Education
- Workforce Training
- Lifelong Learning
- Basic Skills
- Community Engagement

Core Values

- Student Engagement & Support
Merced College prioritizes student access and success.
- Trust & Communication
Merced College promotes an atmosphere of trust where communication and teamwork cultivate an environment rich for teaching and learning.
- Innovation & Technology
Merced College utilizes agility, innovation, technology, and responsible risk-taking to anticipate the needs of the future.
- Collaboration
Merced College actively engages with the campus community and community partners to respond to cultural, educational, economic, and technological needs.
- Critical Thinking
Merced College strives for continuous improvement based on data-driven self-reflection, objective assessment, and dialogue to develop creative solutions for current and future challenges.
- Inclusivity
Merced College celebrates the diversity in our community by cultivating an inclusive and equitable college environment. We value the experiences of our diverse campus community and recognize that our collective identity is strengthened by all our lived experiences.
- Well-being & Happiness
Merced College fosters and values an environment supporting student and employee wellbeing, engagement, and happiness.

Motto

“Students are our focus and we are known by their success”

2022-2025 Student Equity Plan Reflection

Key Learnings

Merced College's 2022–2025 Student Equity Plan was built on the understanding that equity gaps stem from systemic barriers rather than student deficiencies. Through structured inquiry, disaggregated data, and campus feedback, we identified persistent challenges for Hispanic and Latino, first-generation, foster youth, English learners, and economically disadvantaged students. Barriers included gaps in navigation support, financial hardship, mental health needs, digital access, language barriers, and limited culturally responsive instruction.

Our response was comprehensive. Student Services expanded access through in-person and virtual appointments, while Instruction diversified course formats. Tutoring was embedded in every Canvas course, bilingual support expanded through Brainfuse's 24/7 platform, and Zero Textbook Cost/Open Educational Resource courses grew to reduce financial strain. Success Teams emerged as a major shift, uniting instruction, services, and research to examine equity data, coordinate outreach, and embed equity questions into program reviews.

Identity-based support was also strengthened. We launched Umoja and A²MEND, hired an Equity Counselor and Coordinator, and joined the CSU Young Men of Color Consortium. Faculty and staff liaisons provided focused support for Asian American, Pacific Islander, Native American, and LGBTQ+ students, while partnerships with the United Farm Workers Foundation expanded services for undocumented students. ESL faculty redesigned English pathways and increased outreach, boosting credit ESL enrollment.

Holistic well-being was prioritized through TimelyCare's 24/7 medical and mental health services, Wi-Fi expansion, accessibility upgrades, and a website redesign. Professional development in DEIA and UDL became central, supported by Flex Day sessions, symposiums, and curriculum updates that diversify content and align outcomes with equity goals.

Key practices from this cycle are Success Teams, Early Alert systems, embedded tutoring, ZTC/OER courses, and identity-based programs will form the foundation of the 2025–2028 plan. Rising Scholars will strengthen services for justice-impacted students, while equity questions embedded in reviews, curriculum, and hiring will sustain accountability.

Aligned with Vision 2030, Merced College will build on these gains, refining systems and ensuring that all students—regardless of background—have the support and opportunities to thrive.

Plan Continuity

Several key discoveries from the 2022 to 2025 Student Equity Plan will guide Merced College's continued equity work during the 2025 to 2028 planning cycle. These elements have demonstrated impact in reducing barriers for disproportionately impacted students and will serve as foundational strategies in our next phase of implementation.

1. **Success Teams as a Cross-Functional Equity Engine** The formation of Success Teams has proven to be one of the most effective structural innovations at Merced College. These teams bring together faculty, student services staff, and research professionals to examine disaggregated data, coordinate targeted interventions, and align institutional efforts. Their ability to bridge instructional and student support services allows for real-time adjustments and promotes a unified focus on student equity. This model will continue and expand as a central component of our equity infrastructure.
2. **Scaled Academic and Holistic Supports** The integration of early alert systems and embedded tutoring within Canvas, along with the expansion of bilingual and twenty-four-hour academic support through Brainfuse, has significantly improved student access to assistance. These strategies have increased student engagement, especially among English learners and first-generation students. Paired with the continued use of TimelyCare for mental and physical wellness, these supports address both academic and non-academic needs. Merced College will strengthen these services as core pillars of our equity-centered student success efforts.
3. **Inclusive Instruction and Identity-Based Programs** The work of Faculty Inquiry Groups and initiatives aligned with Assembly Bill 705 and Assembly Bill 1705 have fostered more inclusive and culturally responsive instruction. At the same time, identity-based programs like Umoja, A2MEND, Pride Scholars, ESL, and Rising Scholars have created essential spaces for student belonging and engagement. These programs have not only increased participation but also reinforced the importance of culturally relevant teaching and community support. Their continued development will ensure that our plan reflects the lived experiences and needs of our most impacted students.

Together, these discoveries have laid a solid foundation that will drive deeper, more systemic transformation in the next phase of equity planning.

Student Populations Experiencing Disproportionate Impact

Our college has made important progress under the 2022–2025 Student Equity Plan, while also recognizing that gaps remain. Over the past cycle, disproportionate impact was reduced in several areas, including successful enrollment, completion of transfer-level math and English, degree attainment, and transfer. Black and Latino students experienced notable gains in course completion following the implementation of AB 705, and overall degree completion exceeded the prior goal by more than double. These outcomes show that strategies such as Guided Pathways, targeted outreach events like Extreme Registration, and course redesign can make a measurable difference for students.

New baseline data for 2025–2028 highlight the need for continued focus. In successful enrollment, Asian, Black or African American, White, and Non-Binary students remain below the reference group, with increases ranging from 0.3% to 17.5% needed to close equity gaps. Completion of transfer-level math and English in the first year remains a challenge for Black or African American students, first-generation males, Hispanic males, and male students overall. Persistence data show gaps for Black or African American students, first-generation males,

Hispanic males, LGBT males, and the broader male population, reinforcing the need for stronger support between the first and second terms.

Completion and transfer outcomes also point to continuing disparities. Hispanic students, economically disadvantaged males, first-generation students, Hispanic males, and male students overall show lower rates compared to their peers. For example, economically disadvantaged males need a 5.8% increase to eliminate DI in transfer and nearly 10% to fully close the gap. These findings reflect the ongoing impact of race, gender, and socioeconomic status on student achievement.

Looking ahead, the college will continue its work to eliminate disproportionate impact while raising overall success for all students. Annual reviews of both local and statewide data sources (including Data on Demand, DataVista, and program review metrics) will guide adjustments. Collaboration with students, faculty, staff, and community partners will remain central to refining strategies and ensuring that equity gaps are addressed in ways that are sustainable and student-centered.

Successful Enrollment:

Measurements:

	% of Students for 2022-23 (Baseline Year)	# of Students for 2022-23 (Baseline Year)	Goal 1: Eliminate Disproportionate Impact		Goal 2: Fully Close Equity Gap	
			% of Increase Needed to Eliminate DI	# of Students Needed to Eliminate DI*	% of Increase Needed to Fully Close Equity Gap	# of Students Needed to Fully Close Equity Gap*
Overall Student Population	26.50%	2132	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Asian	23.10%	134	0.30%	2	3.70%	22
Black or African American	19.50%	63	3%	10	7.30%	24
Non-Binary	9.20%	11	12.40%	15	17.50%	21
White	13.80%	302	15.50%	341	17.50%	385

Goals:

1. Eliminate Disproportionate Impact
2. Fully Close Equity Gap

Additional Goals for DI Impacted Student Population(s) and/or Overall Student Populations:

Merced College will expand innovative outreach to grow enrollment, targeting new and returning populations, and extend programs like Rising Scholars and CTE. We will simplify pathways to degrees/certificates, strengthen resource awareness, and support faculty with development and accountability. Efforts include dual enrollment, flexible modalities, noncredit-to-credit pipelines, stop-out reengagement, and faculty training in data use and equity-driven teaching.

Key Strategies to Advance Successful Enrollment Goals:

1. Expand dual enrollment and noncredit-to-credit pipelines in rural and underserved areas, including South Merced, with targeted outreach to American Indian and White (non-Hispanic) students.
 - a. Include early exposure through virtual campus tours and in-person events that demystify the college process
2. Increase outreach and engagement for adult and re-entry learners.
 - a. Offer flexible class modalities (evening, weekend, online).
 - b. Provide foundational skills courses such as computer literacy.
 - c. Bring registration and onboarding events directly into communities with high disproportionately impacted (DI) populations
3. Provide faculty with professional development on equity-minded teaching and use of disaggregated data.
 - a. Train faculty on how to use data to inform instruction and support disproportionately impacted groups
 - b. Build awareness of barriers affecting American Indian and White (non-Hispanic) students.

Completed Transfer Level Math & English:

Measurements:

	% of Students for 2022-23 (Baseline Year)	# of Students for 2022-23 (Baseline Year)	Goal 1: Eliminate Disproportionate Impact		Goal 2: Fully Close Equity Gap	
			% of Increase Needed to Eliminate DI	# of Students Needed to Eliminate DI*	% of Increase Needed to Fully Close Equity Gap	# of Students Needed to Fully Close Equity Gap*
Overall Student Population	15.20%	519	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Black or African American	9.70%	11	0.20%	1	5.60%	7
First Generation Male	12.30%	81	1%	7	3.50%	24
Hispanic Male	13.00%	142	1.20%	14	3.30%	36
Male	14.10%	232	0.10%	2	2.00%	34

Goals:

1. Eliminate Disproportionate Impact
2. Fully Close Equity Gap

Additional Goals for DI Impacted Student Population(s) and/or Overall Student Populations:

Merced College will strengthen student success by improving navigation to degree and certificate completion and expanding curricular modalities such as Credit for Prior Learning and Competency-Based Education to meet the needs of targeted populations. Faculty will receive professional development on equity data use, success data interpretation, and inclusive teaching strategies to better support disproportionately impacted students in transfer-level Math and English.

Key Strategies to Advance Successful Enrollment Goals:

1. Increase co-requisite course offerings and faculty support for implementing inclusive pedagogy in Math and English.
 - a. Expand availability of co-requisite support courses in transfer-level Math and English.
 - b. Provide faculty with training and resources on inclusive and equity-minded teaching strategies.
2. Provide targeted outreach and onboarding support for disproportionately impacted (DI) students enrolling in transfer-level courses.
 - a. Implement proactive communication and support services during registration and onboarding.
 - b. Focus outreach efforts on DI students to increase awareness and access to transfer-level coursework.
3. Use disaggregated data and success teams to monitor outcomes and adjust interventions.
 - a. Utilize teams to analyze and interpret equity data.
 - b. Adjust programs and support based on student outcome data to reduce equity gaps.

Persistence First Primary Term to Secondary Term:

Measurements:

			Goal 1: Eliminate Disproportionate Impact		Goal 2: Fully Close Equity Gap	
	% of Students for 2021-22 (Baseline Year)	# of Students for 2022-22 (Baseline Year)	% of Increase Needed to Eliminate DI	# of Students Needed to Eliminate DI*	% of Increase Needed to Fully Close Equity Gap	# of Students Needed to Fully Close Equity Gap*
Overall Student Population	62.70%	1839	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Black or African American	51.90%	41	0.10%	1	11.10%	9
First Generation Male	57.00%	312	3%	17	7.00%	39
Hispanic Male	59.00%	525	2.20%	20	5.40%	48
LGBT Male	47.70%	21	0.50%	1	15.20%	7
Male	59.30%	783	3.70%	50	6.30%	84

Goals:

1. Eliminate Disproportionate Impact
2. Fully Close Equity Gap

Additional Goals for DI Impacted Student Population(s) and/or Overall Student Populations:

Merced College will strengthen student success by expanding awareness and access to academic and support services, while providing faculty with professional development and accountability tools that improve success metrics. The college will deepen partnerships with community and industry to enhance learning and career pathways, extend programs like Rising Scholars and CTE for disproportionately impacted groups, and improve retention through tutoring, OER, and embedded Canvas resources.

Key Strategies to Advance Successful Enrollment Goals:

1. Expand Rising Scholars and foster youth support networks, including mentorship and basic needs interventions.
 - a. Build structured mentorship opportunities for Rising Scholars and foster youth.
 - b. Provide access to food, housing, and other essential resources to remove barriers to student success.
2. Provide proactive faculty development on early alert tools and culturally responsive practices.
 - a. Train faculty on using early alert systems to identify and support students in need.

- b. Promote culturally responsive teaching to better serve disproportionately impacted (DI) students.
3. Strengthen partnerships with local agencies to ensure wraparound support for DI students.
 - a. Collaborate with community-based organizations to address holistic student needs.
 - b. Develop referral pipelines for mental health, housing, and social service support.

Completion:

Measurements:

			Goal 1: Eliminate Disproportionate Impact		Goal 2: Fully Close Equity Gap	
	% of Students for 2019-20 (Baseline Year)	# of Students for 2019-20 (Baseline Year)	% of Increase Needed to Eliminate DI	# of Students Needed to Eliminate DI*	% of Increase Needed to Fully Close Equity Gap	# of Students Needed to Fully Close Equity Gap*
Overall Student Population	15.00%	463	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Hispanic	13.60%	230	1%	19	3.10%	53

Goals:

1. Eliminate Disproportionate Impact
2. Fully Close Equity Gap

Additional Goals for DI Impacted Student Population(s) and/or Overall Student Populations:

Merced College will improve navigation and promote awareness of support services to guide students to timely degree and certificate completion. Efforts include clear program maps, automated processes, and pathways for online and high school students. The college will expand lab-based and interdisciplinary learning, create a centralized Canvas resource hub, encourage OER adoption, and strengthen tutoring and academic support through targeted outreach.

Key Strategies to Advance Successful Enrollment Goals:

Root Cause Analysis of Transfer Gaps

Merced College analyzed disaggregated data and identified several root causes contributing to equity gaps in transfer:

- Advising and Planning Gaps: Some students, particularly first-generation and DI populations, lack timely or consistent counseling touchpoints, resulting in missed ADT, TAG, or CSU transfer milestones.
- Course Availability and Sequencing: Limited sections in gateway math, English, and major-prep courses delay transfer timelines.
- Application and Process Barriers: Students experience challenges with university application timing, transcript submissions, and financial aid alignment.
- Resource and Navigation Barriers: Transfer centers and advising are underutilized by some DI groups, especially African American, Hispanic, and male students.

Strategic Alignment to Address Root Causes

- Expand proactive advising and integrate the Navigate system to include intended transfer destinations and ADT/GE requirements in each Comprehensive Education Plan.
- Coordinate course scheduling and Guided Pathways maps to ensure availability of transfer-level math, English, and major-prep sequences.
- Align outreach campaigns with UC/CSU application timelines, and embed workshops on financial aid, transfer housing, and application processes.
- Strengthen partnerships with UC Merced, CSU Stanislaus, and HBCUs to ensure articulation agreements and joint programming are available to DI populations.
- Track outcomes annually in the SEA Annual Report, tying expenditures to measurable transfer improvements.

Transfer:

Measurements:

			Goal 1: Eliminate Disproportionate Impact		Goal 2: Fully Close Equity Gap	
	% of Students for 2018-19 (Baseline Year)	# of Students for 2018-19 (Baseline Year)	% of Increase Needed to Eliminate DI	# of Students Needed to Eliminate DI*	% of Increase Needed to Fully Close Equity Gap	# of Students Needed to Fully Close Equity Gap*
Overall Student Population	24.20%	300	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Econ Disadvantaged Male	18.10%	79	5.80%	26	9.40%	42
First Generation	22.20%	136	0.70%	5	4.00%	25
Hispanic Male	16.30%	34	4.50%	10	9.40%	20
Male	18.80%	107	6.70%	38	9.90%	57

Goals:

1. Eliminate Disproportionate Impact
2. Fully Close Equity Gap

Additional Goals for DI Impacted Student Population(s) and/or Overall Student Populations:

Merced College will extend and scale high-impact programs like Rising Scholars and CTE to improve access, persistence, and success for disproportionately impacted students. The college will expand CTE in construction, dental assisting, agribiotech, and advanced manufacturing, and build an Agriculture Innovation Center. Partnerships with employers and the community will align programs with labor needs, while new modalities and applied bachelor's degrees advance workforce readiness.

Key Strategies to Advance Successful Enrollment Goals:**Root Cause Analysis of Transfer Gaps**

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- Align outreach campaigns with UC/CSU application timelines, and embed workshops on financial aid, transfer housing, and application processes.
- Strengthen partnerships with UC Merced, CSU Stanislaus, and HBCUs to ensure articulation agreements and joint programming are available to DI populations.
- Track outcomes annually in the SEA Annual Report, tying expenditures to measurable transfer improvements.

Transfer Emphasis:

Merced College is deeply committed to improving transfer outcomes for both disproportionately impacted (DI) and overall student populations by removing barriers, addressing student needs, and establishing clear, equitable pathways. Through expanded use of data systems and the newly enhanced Career and Transfer Center, the college is implementing intentional strategies to support transfer success. This includes leveraging tools such as the CSU Transfer Success Pathway and the new CSU Transfer Portal to enhance data-informed in-reach and outreach efforts, especially with local CSU partners. The college will also prioritize UC Transfer Admission Guarantee (TAG) campaigns, with specific emphasis on increasing transfer volume to UC Merced, which serves as a key access point for many of our students.

To eliminate cost-related barriers that often impact DI students, Merced College is launching a dual transfer housing initiative in partnership with UC Merced. This innovative program will offer transfer-intent Merced College students' access to UC housing, helping to remove a major obstacle to educational attainment. In addition to reducing financial pressure, this initiative will immerse students, particularly those from first-generation and disproportionately impacted backgrounds, in a university environment early in their academic journey. The program is designed to support transfer-focused students as they complete their lower-division coursework, while fostering a strong sense of belonging and motivation to persist toward bachelor's degree attainment. This collaborative and equity-minded approach aims to significantly increase the number of successful transfers to UC campuses, especially UC Merced, in alignment with Vision 2030 goals.

DI Student Population: Black or African American

Current Challenges/Barriers

Merced College continues to make progress in advancing equity, but African American students still face persistent structural and cultural barriers that impact their success. Navigational complexity remains a significant issue, with students often struggling to understand enrollment, financial aid, and academic processes due to a lack of personalized guidance. Although programs such as Umoja, A2MEND, the Black Student Union, and The Hub have increased visibility and created supportive spaces, many students continue to express a need for deeper connections, more culturally affirming environments, and greater representation among faculty and staff.

Gaps in culturally responsive teaching remain, particularly in gateway courses like math and English. Not all faculty have adopted inclusive, equity-minded, or trauma-informed practices. In most disciplines, faculty and mentorship opportunities that reflect the lived experiences of African American students are limited. Inconsistent use of early alert systems and underpromotion of academic support services, such as tutoring and embedded assistance, prevent timely interventions. Stigma around help-seeking behavior, particularly related to academic support, remains a concern. Economic insecurity, housing instability, and food insecurity also significantly affect persistence and completion.

Students have shared experiences of microaggressions in classroom and campus interactions, which impact psychological safety and discourage engagement. There is an ongoing need for anti-racism training and efforts to build a more inclusive campus climate. Additionally, the Career and Transfer Center, though an open-access resource, is underutilized by African American students, and stronger connections between that center and culturally based programs are needed. A lack of formal student voice in governance, limited leadership development opportunities, and an absence of structured wellness programming continue to present challenges to full and equitable participation in campus life.

Action Plan for Ideal Institution

Merced College envisions an institution where African American students thrive academically, socially, and personally. Acknowledging systemic inequities, the college seeks to create a campus experience that prioritizes visibility, belonging, voice, and success. This action plan outlines strategies to close equity gaps by building inclusive culture, expanding support services, fostering culturally relevant academic experiences, and embedding equity into institutional infrastructure.

Efforts will emphasize early and ongoing support systems, widespread adoption of culturally responsive teaching, strengthening of Umoja, A2MEND, and BSU, and increased integration of African American student voice into institutional planning. Academic and student affairs will partner to normalize use of support services, address basic needs, and affirm student identity. Faculty and staff will participate in professional development centered on equity, anti-racism, and relationship-rich teaching.

Academic Strategies

- Integrate disaggregated equity data into program reviews and curriculum planning.
- Expand culturally responsive teaching through Faculty Inquiry Groups and equity-minded grading.
- Embed reflection prompts into academic reviews to support continuous improvement.
- Increase adoption of Open Educational Resources and Zero Textbook Cost courses.
- Strengthen career and transfer pathways within Rising Scholars, Umoja, and A2MEND.
- Conduct curriculum audits to ensure African American voices and scholarship are represented.
- Invite Black scholars, artists, and community leaders to engage with classrooms and events.
- Diversify faculty through expanded recruitment and equity-focused hiring practices.
- Develop mentorship programs pairing new African American faculty with senior colleagues.

- Expand articulation and transfer agreements with Historically Black Colleges and Universities.

Student Services Strategies

- Formalize the Black Alliance as a hub connecting Umoja, A2MEND, BSU, and equity staff.
- Offer culturally tailored onboarding, registration, and orientation events for students and families.
- Launch career and transfer workshops highlighting HBCUs, CSU, and UC pathways.
- Expand mental health and wellness outreach through TimelyCare and community partners.
- Normalize academic support by embedding tutoring into class syllabi and faculty discussions.
- Enhance food and housing security through expanded outreach, partnerships, and the Basic Needs Center.
- Establish peer mentorship and leadership programs emphasizing coaching and public speaking.
- Create a student advisory group to inform campus programming and planning.
- Host culturally affirming events such as Black History Month, community forums, and symposiums.
- Promote civic engagement through identity-based student organizations.

Institutional Infrastructure and Resource Strategies

- Sustain Umoja, A2MEND, BSU, and Black Alliance through SEA and equity funding.
- Activate Success Teams including faculty, counselors, and researchers to monitor outcomes.
- Strengthen coordination between instruction and services to eliminate duplication and gaps.
- Expand data dashboards to track engagement, milestones, and equity indicators.
- Build partnerships with community agencies to provide housing, food, transportation, and wellness support.
- Establish a Center for Professional Development and Engagement offering equity-focused training.
- Embed equity into hiring, curriculum design, and program planning processes.
- Create paid leadership roles for students to mentor peers, plan programming, and join governance.

Success Indicators

- Higher successful enrollment through improved outreach and onboarding.
- Increased fall-to-spring persistence supported by early alerts and interventions.
- Greater completion of transfer-level English and math in year one.
- Improved degree, certificate, and transfer outcomes aligned with Vision 2030.
- Expanded use of tutoring, writing centers, and online learning platforms.
- Increased confidence using Canvas and online tools.
- Stronger sense of belonging as reflected in campus climate surveys.
- Growth in student leadership and civic participation.
- Increased representation of African American students in governance.
- Higher satisfaction with counseling, mental health, and basic needs services.
- Closing of equity gaps across all five student success metrics.
- Greater alumni engagement through mentorship and philanthropy.
- Cultural identity and community ties strengthened through education.

DI Student Population: Hispanic

Current Challenges/Barriers

Merced College is proud to serve a majority Hispanic student population as a Hispanic-Serving Institution, yet many students continue to face barriers that affect their educational journey. Navigational complexity remains a challenge, especially for first-generation students who struggle with financial aid, registration, and educational planning due to limited guidance and inconsistent bilingual services across departments.

Economic insecurity compounds these barriers. Many balance school, work, and family while facing food and housing instability. Cultural expectations, such as traditional gender roles or prioritizing family income, can further restrict opportunities, particularly for women in non-traditional fields. Some hesitate to ask for help or advocate for themselves because of cultural respect for authority, fear of exposing mixed-status families, or uncertainty about systems. These concerns are heightened when campuses lack culturally informed support for undocumented students.

Representation is another concern. While Puente, MESA, and Latinx Studies provide affirming spaces, many Hispanic students do not see themselves reflected in faculty or curriculum. Culturally responsive instruction is not universal, especially in gateway math and English. Faculty mentors are underrepresented in key fields, and collaboration among mentorship efforts is still developing. English learners face added challenges as many feeder high schools

remain unaware of Merced College's ESL credit pathways or supports, leaving some disconnected from resources.

Digital inequities persist. Reliable internet, computer access, and digital literacy are not guaranteed, and the absence of Spanish-language tech support widens the gap. Transportation, childcare responsibilities, and limited evening and weekend courses restrict engagement for many. Mental health remains a critical need, with too few bilingual counselors and culturally competent services, and stigma or lack of coverage deterring students from seeking help.

These challenges highlight the need for intentional action. To ensure equity for Hispanic students, Merced College must expand culturally responsive practices, increase faculty representation, strengthen bilingual and undocumented student support, and remove systemic barriers to access, persistence, and completion.

Action Plan for Ideal Institution

Merced College is committed to becoming an institution where Hispanic students thrive academically, socially, and personally. As a Hispanic-Serving Institution, we understand that our students bring rich cultural and linguistic assets, navigate multiple roles, and balance significant family responsibilities. This action plan is designed to honor those strengths while addressing systemic barriers, ensuring equity across all five Vision 2030 metrics. Our approach centers on bilingual and bicultural services, culturally responsive instruction, simplified processes, and strong family and community engagement. Academic and student affairs will coordinate closely, connecting support through warm hand-offs and unified systems. Faculty and staff will participate in sustained professional development that emphasizes inclusive, trauma-informed, and culturally sustaining practices.

Academic Strategies

- Expand Open Educational Resources and Zero Textbook Cost offerings to ease financial pressures.
- Scale Latinx Studies curriculum, faculty inquiry groups, and culturally responsive course design.
- Collaborate across disciplines to embed Hispanic cultural knowledge into instruction.
- Create academic familia cohorts linking courses with peer and faculty mentoring.
- Promote STEM and CTE pathways through programs like MESA.
- Implement competency-based assessments that value prior knowledge and diverse learning pathways.
- Recruit and retain Hispanic faculty through graduate program partnerships and professional networks.
- Establish mentorship programs pairing new Hispanic faculty with experienced colleagues.

- Conduct curriculum audits to ensure representation of diverse Hispanic voices.
- Integrate student cultural wealth through Funds of Knowledge practices.
- Build interdisciplinary models connecting STEM, humanities, and Hispanic cultural contexts.
- Develop heritage language programs awarding credit for Spanish literacy and fluency.

Student Services Strategies

- Offer bilingual and family-focused onboarding, orientation, and registration events.
- Expand transfer support through ADT pathways, bilingual workshops, and HSI partner collaborations.
- Create One Stop service centers with bilingual staff for financial aid, registration, and counseling.
- Launch peer and near-peer mentorship programs matching experienced Hispanic students with new students.
- Promote awareness of legal aid, basic needs, and mental health resources with cultural sensitivity.
- Hire multilingual tutors and ensure marketing materials reflect student identities.
- Provide outreach to English Learners and immigrant communities with clear ESL pathways.
- Celebrate Hispanic diversity with year-round programming, cultural events, and civic engagement.
- Establish Hispanic student success coordinators as advocates, liaisons, and navigators.
- Create safe spaces for undocumented students with trained staff familiar with legal protections.
- Engage families as partners through workshops, orientations, and materials in Spanish and other home languages.
- Support student clubs and organizations that combine cultural, social, and academic development.

Institutional Infrastructure and Resource Strategies

- Sustain Puente, EOPS, MESA, Latinx Studies, Latinx Club, and The Hub with equity funding.
- Strengthen collaboration through Success Teams aligning instruction, support, and outreach.

- Integrate Hispanic-serving programs under a unified framework to reduce fragmentation.
- Develop bilingual, mobile-friendly platforms for services and communication.
- Create paid student navigator roles to mentor peers.
- Fund professional development and conference opportunities in Hispanic cultural competence.
- Pursue federal HSI, TRIO, USDA, and other targeted grants.
- Partner with community organizations for legal aid, basic needs, and workforce opportunities.
- Collaborate with UC Merced and WeWill to expand regional pathways.
- Advocate for equitable funding models that support inclusive programs.

Success Indicators

- Higher enrollment through improved applicant conversion and onboarding.
- Increased fall-to-spring persistence supported by culturally responsive interventions.
- Growth in first-year completion of transfer-level English and math.
- More degrees, certificates, and transfers aligned with Vision 2030 goals.
- Improved digital literacy and Canvas skills through bilingual support and peer coaching.
- Students sustain cultural identity while building academic and professional confidence.
- Expanded student leadership and civic engagement on campus and in the community.
- Stronger alumni involvement as speakers, mentors, and donors.
- Closing of equity gaps between Hispanic students and the general population.
- Improved campus climate scores on belonging, affirmation, and satisfaction.
- Hispanic serving supports embedded into core operations with dedicated resources.
- Greater visibility of Hispanic cultures in curriculum, staffing, events, and policy.
- Graduates return as educators, professionals, leaders, and community advocates.

DI Student Population: Male

Current Challenges/Barriers

At Merced College, male students continue to experience disproportionate impact across key student success metrics, particularly in persistence, completion, and engagement during the

first year. One of the most pressing challenges is navigating college systems. Complex onboarding processes, unclear pathways, and limited proactive support make it difficult for male students to access financial aid, registration, and academic planning. Many male students also balance school with significant work or family responsibilities, leading them to prioritize employment or stop out before reaching educational milestones.

There is a consistent pattern of under-engagement with academic and student support services such as tutoring, counseling, or early alert interventions. Some male students may hesitate to seek help through traditional structures due to stigma, lack of familiarity, or perceptions that these services are not designed with them in mind. This contributes to missed opportunities for support and intervention, particularly during critical early moments in the semester.

A number of male students, especially those from underrepresented racial or socioeconomic backgrounds, report a lack of connection to campus. The absence of visible role models, intrusive mentoring, or inclusive classroom environments can limit their sense of belonging and engagement. Faculty adoption of equity-minded and culturally responsive practices remains inconsistent. Too often, mentorship and outreach are extended only to students who are already seeking help, which can exclude male students who may not initiate those connections.

There are also broader systemic challenges that compound these issues. Economic insecurity forces some students to make short-term financial decisions that conflict with long-term academic goals. Lack of faculty mentorship, particularly in high-impact areas like math, English, and career technical education, limits relationship-building opportunities that could improve persistence. These barriers underscore the need for an intentional, culturally informed, and coordinated institutional response.

Action Plan for Ideal Institution

Merced College will implement an equity-centered action plan to remove barriers and increase success for male students across all five Vision 2030 metrics. The plan prioritizes culturally responsive teaching, intrusive support systems, visible student leadership pathways, and targeted engagement strategies designed to meet students where they are.

We will build a stronger sense of community by expanding leadership and mentorship opportunities through programs such as A2MEND, Umoja, Puente, MESA, and Rising Scholars. In alignment with the CSU Young Men of Color MOU, we will create intentional pathways for male students to engage in joint mentoring, campus visits, leadership workshops, and transfer-focused programming in collaboration with CSU partners. This partnership reinforces the connection between academic success, transfer readiness, and career opportunities for male students of color.

We will also reimagine the ways male students are engaged in academic and non-academic support by creating more proactive outreach strategies, flexible course options, and increased use of digital storytelling and student voice to highlight success and build a culture of belonging.

Academic Strategies

- Use disaggregated data in program review and course design to address equity gaps for male students.
- Promote male participation in Faculty Inquiry Group-informed courses centered on culturally responsive teaching and grading for equity.
- Provide training to faculty on intrusive mentoring and connecting course content with career and economic goals.
- Strengthen pathways from CTE, MESA, and Rising Scholars into transfer and employment with intentional advising and applied learning.
- Integrate CSU Young Men of Color MOU activities into academic planning, including guest speakers and collaborative workshops.
- Highlight culturally relevant course materials that reflect male students lived experiences.
- Build informal academic engagement opportunities that connect coursework with personal interests, such as career simulations or project-based learning.

Student Services Strategies

- Implement early and targeted registration, orientation, and mentoring for male students.
- Expand proactive early alert systems with timely follow-up for students reluctant to ask for help.
- Strengthening partnerships with community organizations that provide housing, legal aid, food access, and mental health services.
- Leverage the CSU Young Men of Color MOU to connect students with peer mentors, leadership summits, and transfer-focused campus visits.
- Promote student voice through media campaigns, storytelling, and ambassador programs.
- Support involvement in campus leadership, clubs, and organizations that foster identity and persistence.
- Create informal spaces where faculty and students can build authentic mentoring relationships outside the classroom.

Institutional Infrastructure and Resource Strategies

- Sustain A2MEND, Umoja, Puente, MESA, Rising Scholars, and CTE through SEA and equity funding.
- Promote collaboration through Success Teams to coordinate support and monitor male student progress.

- Use The Hub and Basic Needs Center as integrated access points for academic and non-academic support.
- Formalize CSU Young Men of Color MOU activities in institutional planning, including budgeting for travel, stipends, and joint events.
- Strengthen professional development for faculty and staff to engage male students and build culturally affirming spaces.
- Create student leader and peer navigator roles for male students to support incoming peers and promote connection.
- Embed equity planning and accountability for male student outcomes into program review, hiring, and budgeting.

Success Indicators

- Increased enrollment and onboarding completion among male students.
- Higher fall-to-spring persistence is supported by proactive mentoring.
- Greater first-year completion of transfer-level English and math.
- Higher degree, certificate, and transfer rates, with reduced equity gaps.
- Growth in use of student services, leadership, and academic support.
- Improved sense of belonging and satisfaction in campus climate surveys.
- More visible student leadership, peer mentoring, and storytelling.
- Stronger alignment between academic goals and transfer or career outcomes.

Student Education Plans

Comprehensive Student Education Plans (Local College Data)					
Academic Year Cohort (include summer and winter sessions if applicable)	Total Number of Enrolled Students in Cohort	# of Students Who Received a Comprehensive Ed Plan by End of First Primary Term	% of Students Who Received a Comprehensive Ed Plan by End of First Primary Term	# of Students Who Received a Comprehensive Ed Plan by End of First Academic Year	% of Students Who Received a Comprehensive Ed Plan by End of First Academic Year
Fall 2022 Cohort (Comprehensive Ed Plan by 6/30/2023)	2,353	658	28%	895	38%
Spring 2023 Cohort (Comprehensive Ed Plan by 12/31/2023)	878	122	14%	152	17%
Fall 2023 Cohort (Comprehensive Ed Plan by 6/30/2024)	3,040	934	31%	1,191	39%
Spring 2024 Cohort (Comprehensive Ed Plan by 12/30/2024)	981	177	18%	218	22%

Identify Student Populations Experiencing DI in Receiving a Comprehensive Ed Plan

The following groups experienced disproportionate impact (DI) in receiving a Comprehensive Educational Plan (CEP) by their first term, using the PPG-1:

- African American students
- Filipinx students
- White, non-Hispanic students
- Students age 20+
- Male students

The following groups experienced disproportionate impact (DI) in receiving a CEP by the end of the academic year, using the PPG-1:

- African American students
- White, non-Hispanic students
- Students age 20+
- Male students

Comprehensive Education Plan Implementation for DI Student Populations

To close equity gaps and ensure disproportionately impacted (DI) students receive timely support, Merced College will implement a proactive, equity centered approach to Comprehensive Education Plan (CEP) development.

- Early Identification and Case Management: DI students will be flagged during onboarding through application, placement, and financial aid data. Assigned success team members such as counselors, advisors, and peer mentors will conduct outreach and schedule CEPs within the first semester.
- Embedded Counseling in DI Programs: Dedicated counselors will be placed in EOPS, DSPS, CalWORKs, Puente, Umoja, Veterans Services, and Athletics. CEP completion will be integrated into program milestones, reducing duplication of services.
- Technology Enhanced Onboarding: Staff will use the new Navigate Academic Planner, connected to Program Pathways Mapper. This tool allows DI students to generate a prepopulated education plan template for any major instantly.
- Assisted Plan Creation During Enrollment: Outreach staff will help DI students build education plan templates while planning and enrolling for their first semester. Many will complete this step through high school outreach during senior year, ensuring a strong start.
- Customization with Counselors: Templates will provide a foundation, but DI students will meet with counselors to personalize CEPs based on career interests, transfer goals, support needs, and life circumstances.
- Access and Engagement: Students not reached during onboarding will receive email instructions and hands on guidance to create CEPs using Navigate. Plans remain visible in the portal and app, ensuring continuous access and accountability.
- Collaborative Supports: The Early Alert process in Navigate will integrate referrals and student-initiated requests for tutoring, financial literacy, and mental health resources.
- Accountability and Tracking: CEP completion rates will be tracked by DI group, with counselors monitoring interventions to ensure equitable first year completion.

Through integrated outreach, embedded supports, technology, and counselor guided customization, DI students will receive timely, personalized CEPs aligned with their academic and career goals.

Comprehensive Education Plan Implementation for ALL Students

Merced College recognizes that timely educational planning is an institutional responsibility. All non-exempt students will receive a Comprehensive Education Plan (CEP) by the end of their first academic year, with completion targeted in the first semester. Expanding upon strategies designed for disproportionately impacted populations, the college will scale CEP

implementation through the Guided Pathways framework, embedding accountability for timely planning within institutional structures and processes.

Key commitments include:

- **Electronic and Mobile Access:** All CEPs are created and stored electronically in Navigate Academic Planner and are fully mobile-accessible. Students and counselors can view, edit, and update plans at any time.
- **Transfer Destination Integration:** Each CEP specifies intended transfer institutions, ADT/GE patterns, and major-prep requirements, updated with live ASSIST alignment.
- **Institutional Ownership:** Counselors and success teams are responsible for ensuring CEP completion; students are not expected to initiate or request CEPs.
- **Ongoing Updates:** CEPs are reviewed and updated at least once per term or whenever a student changes goals, majors, or transfer destinations. Timestamped updates ensure accuracy.
- **Early Identification:** Students without current CEPs are flagged in Navigate, and automated outreach plus advisor alerts ensure timely interventions.
- **Embedded Referrals:** CEPs include direct referrals to tutoring, financial aid, basic needs, DSPS, EOPS, and other supports.

By embedding these practices, Merced College positions CEPs as the foundation of equity centered advising and transfer preparation. This integrated model driven by technology, strengthened through outreach, and guided by counselors ensures that every student receives a timely, individualized plan that supports persistence, completion, and sustained success.

Vision 2030 Alignment/Coordination

Guided Pathways

Merced College continues to embed the Guided Pathways framework by aligning Student Equity and Achievement efforts with redesigned structures, services, and supports. Our focus is on equitable access and completion, particularly for students who have been historically underserved. All programs have been mapped with course sequences, milestones, and career or transfer outcomes. These maps are integrated into the Program Pathways Mapper tool, giving students a clear way to explore academic and career options.

Pathway Counseling and Success Teams

Each student is paired with a counselor assigned to their pathway, fostering proactive advising and early intervention. Student Success Teams of faculty, counselors, and staff coordinate outreach, use early alert systems, and provide personalized support to address barriers to persistence.

K12 Partnerships and Early Outreach

Merced College has expanded dual enrollment and Pathway to College initiatives with local districts. A recent pilot with Merced Union High School District enrolled 350 ninth grade students in a wellness course, which informed the creation of the Blueprint Canvas Course, an equity centered modular curriculum. SEA funds also support embedded counselors on high school campuses to streamline application, orientation, and registration.

Holistic and Culturally Responsive Supports

Programs such as Puente, Umoja, EOPS, CalWORKs, and NextUp provide wraparound services including counseling, mentoring, and access to resources. Basic Needs support includes the Campus Cupboard pantry, housing referrals, and mental health services. First year students are encouraged to take Guidance courses that emphasize career exploration, financial literacy, and personal development.

Continuous Improvement and Equity Focus

Merced College will monitor outcomes annually using disaggregated data from Data on Demand, DataVista, and COMIS submissions. In compliance with ESS 25-61, transfer will be a central outcome metric.

The SEA Annual Report will:

- Disaggregate transfer rates by race/ethnicity, gender, age, income, and first-generation status.
- Diagnose root causes of transfer gaps and evaluate the effectiveness of interventions.
- Tie SEA Program activities and expenditures directly to transfer outcomes, ensuring fiscal accountability.
- Document progress on early and comprehensive CEP completion as a leading indicator for transfer readiness.

This disciplined, equity-first improvement cycle ensures that resources are directly linked to closing disproportionate impact in transfer while raising overall student success.

Student Financial Aid Administration

The Financial Aid Department at Merced College advances equity by maximizing access to federal, state, and institutional aid through a holistic, student-centered approach. Our goal is to increase application and completion rates, especially among disproportionately impacted students, by reducing barriers and embedding support throughout the student journey.

Outreach begins with a strong focus on local high schools. Staff provide in-person support with FAFSA and CADAA applications and guide students and families through

the process. In partnership with community organizations, workshops are offered for high school, new, and returning students to ensure broad access to timely information. Sessions are provided in both one-on-one and group formats.

On-campus in-reach efforts are coordinated with faculty and staff across instructional and student services. The annual Financial Aid Night engages current students and the community in preparing for the aid cycle, while information is shared year-round across programs serving low-income, undocumented, foster youth, veterans, and student athletes.

To further reduce barriers, Merced College established a dedicated Financial Aid Lab. Staffed by knowledgeable professionals, it provides a welcoming space where students can apply online, ask questions, and receive individualized guidance. This support is especially critical during peak application periods.

Designated staff contacts are also available for students with complex needs, including those experiencing homelessness, foster youth, and undocumented students. These staff serve as trusted resources to guide students through sensitive and complicated processes.

The department continues to refine financial aid processes, technologies, and policies to remain student-centered, and equity driven. By embedding outreach and support across the institution, Merced College works to increase FAFSA and CADAA completion rates, maximize Pell and Cal Grant eligibility, and help students access emergencies and campus-based financial support. These efforts are central to persistence, completion, and long-term student success.

Students with Disabilities (DSPS)

Merced College's DSPS program is committed to eliminating disproportionate impact and advancing the goals outlined in the Student Equity Plan through intentional outreach, cross-departmental collaboration, and proactive student support. In alignment with Vision 2030, DSPS prioritizes access, inclusion, and equity for students with disabilities across the institution.

Targeted outreach efforts are underway with the Rising Scholars population, with a goal of engaging at least 150 students across four events within a six-month period. These events are designed to increase awareness and utilization of DSPS services. Effectiveness will be assessed through pre- and post-event surveys to gauge impact on student understanding and engagement.

To promote persistence and degree completion, the DSPS team conducts regular progress check-ins each semester with at least 80 percent of enrolled students. These check-ins ensure that students receive timely support, address barriers early, and remain on track toward their educational goals. Follow-up surveys will be used to evaluate the effectiveness of these interventions.

DSPS also maintains strong community partnerships, including collaboration with the Department of Rehabilitation. Through this partnership, students are offered targeted workshops on resume writing, interview skills, and their rights as students with disabilities. Each workshop series aims to engage at least 30 students and provides career readiness and empowerment in a supportive setting.

In support of academic equity, DSPS collaborates closely with Allied Health faculty and staff to enhance accommodation practices in high-impact instructional settings. Regular interdisciplinary meetings have been established to identify barriers and align practices. By the end of the academic year, the college will develop and disseminate best practice guidelines for accommodating students in Allied Health programs, ensuring compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act and improving student access and success.

Progress and effectiveness are measured through workshop participation, meeting attendance, and feedback surveys. These efforts are part of a broader institutional commitment to ensuring that students with disabilities experience equitable access, holistic support, and meaningful educational outcomes.

Extended Opportunity Programs and Services (EOPS)/CalWORKs

Merced College's Extended Opportunity Programs and Services (EOPS), CARE, and CalWORKs advance equity by expanding access, providing wraparound support, and empowering disproportionately impacted students to succeed. Through targeted services, strategic partnerships, and data-informed outreach, these programs play a vital role in closing equity gaps identified in the Student Equity Plan.

Targeted Services and Holistic Support

Students complete a single application that connects them to multiple programs. Cross-department workshops with Financial Aid and community partners address budgeting, mental wellness, and time management. In Fall 2025, CARE and CalWORKs will focus on financial literacy, while EOPS emphasizes foundational college knowledge. Staff stay current on policies, including SNAP exemptions for foster youth, to strengthen advocacy. Outreach begins early, with presentations at feeder schools to foster a college-going mindset.

Strategic Collaborations

These programs work closely with NextUp, Basic Needs, Counseling, Umoja, and The Hub to provide seamless services. Partnerships with the Student Success and Tutorial Center support academic success through tutoring and peer mentorship. Collaboration with Financial Aid enables real-time eligibility verification, resulting in 8–10% of applicants gaining immediate EOPS admission during 2023–2024.

Outreach and Holistic Case Management

Proactive outreach extends to feeder schools, while staff share best practices at regional events. A case management model uses platforms like Pronto to deliver updates about scholarships, events, and resources. Peer mentorship is prioritized through events such as the CARE Back to School Mingle and EOPS Summer SOAR program, where alumni encourage new students.

Innovative Programs and Data-Informed Practices

Partnerships with Merced Union High School District expand dual enrollment and College and Career Access Pathways, while rural outreach ensures students in remote areas are served. Internal data identifies students who may qualify but are not yet enrolled, particularly foster youth, prompting targeted follow-up. Hosting CSU and UC representatives connects students early to transfer opportunities.

Through these strategies, EOPS, CARE, and CalWORKs provide equity-centered support that empowers students to persist, complete, and thrive.

NextUp/Foster Youth

Merced College's NextUp and Foster Youth support programs are committed to advancing equity for current and former foster youth. These efforts align with Vision 2030 goals of equitable access, comprehensive support, and student success.

Targeted Services and Wraparound Strategies

Our programs provide trauma-informed services tailored to foster youth. The NextUp Center serves as a home base where students access counseling, financial aid, and basic needs. A single intake process connects students to multiple programs. We also deliver life skills and personal development workshops with Financial Aid, the Transfer Center, and the Relationship and Sexual Violence Program.

Staff are trained in trauma-informed care and stay current on policies such as SNAP exemptions. Partnerships with county agencies—including Independent Living Programs and Court Appointed Special Advocates—allow quick foster status verification and individualized resources.

Strategic Collaborations

We collaborate with EOPS, CARE, CalWORKs, Counseling, Basic Needs, and Financial Aid to ensure holistic support. Externally, partnerships with child welfare agencies provide stipends for foster youth completing Counseling and Guidance courses, promoting engagement and growth.

Outreach and Holistic Case Management

Outreach includes attending foster youth-related events and sharing best practices at regional meetings. Our case management model emphasizes relationships and frequent

communication, using Pronto to share updates on jobs, scholarships, and resources. Alumni mentor new cohorts and join events, creating continuity and motivation.

Innovative Programs and Data-Informed Practices

We expand early access through dual enrollment and College and Career Access Pathways with Merced Union High School District, along with rural outreach. Internally, data identifies foster youth not yet connected to services, prompting targeted outreach. To support transfer, we host panels and visits with UC and CSU foster youth programs, building bridges to four-year institutions.

Through these strategies, NextUp and Foster Youth programs reduce barriers, expand opportunity, and support strong outcomes for one of our most resilient student populations.

Programs for Veterans (Veterans Resource Center)

The Veterans Resource Center (VRC) at Merced College is committed to addressing disproportionate impact and advancing equity for student veterans in alignment with the goals of Vision 2030. Through a series of intentional strategies, the VRC promotes access, success, and personalized support for this important student population.

The VRC strengthens community partnerships by collaborating with regional military organizations to deliver outreach presentations and increase awareness of educational opportunities at Merced College. These outreach efforts aim to expand enrollment and ensure veterans are connected early to college resources.

To support persistence and degree completion, the VRC conducts regular progress check-ins with at least 80 percent of enrolled veteran students. These meetings allow for timely, individualized support and referrals to campus services as needed.

In collaboration with the California Transition Assistance Program (CaTAP), the VRC hosts career readiness workshops focused on job research, resume development, and skills translation. The goal is for at least 85 percent of participants to report feeling more confident and prepared to transition into civilian employment.

To maximize credit for prior learning, the VRC partners with the Office of Institutional Effectiveness to assess and translate military coursework into college credit. Annual reviews of articulation policies are conducted to ensure alignment with current best practices and veteran needs.

Finally, service member feedback sessions are held regularly to inform continuous improvement and strengthen internal collaboration across departments. This inclusive approach ensures that the evolving needs of veteran students are heard and addressed.

Through these integrated and student-centered strategies, the Veterans Resource Center supports equitable access, enhances the student experience, and promotes success for veterans throughout their educational journey at Merced College.

Justice-Involved and Justice-Impacted Students

Merced College's Rising Scholars program is committed to removing systemic barriers and expanding access to higher education for justice-involved and justice-impacted students. The program provides tailored outreach, academic and social support, and strong coordination with campus departments, correctional facilities, and community partners.

Outreach and Access

To reach prospective students, Rising Scholars distributes consistent materials in digital and print formats. Printed resources are especially important for incarcerated or recently released individuals with limited access to technology, helping build trust and provide clear guidance on starting college.

Dedicated Support

The program is staffed by a director, professional staff, and trained student workers with lived experience who offer peer check-ins and mentorship. A simple referral form streamlines intake, and students can connect via email, phone, Pronto, or in person. Regardless of incarceration status, students receive individualized enrollment and success support.

Counseling and Coordination

Two dedicated counselors serve the population: one onsite at correctional facilities and one on campus for formerly incarcerated and juvenile justice-impacted students. Rising Scholars partners with EOPS, Veterans Services, and DSPS to ensure wraparound support and timely referrals.

Academic Pathways

The program offers eight associate degrees for transfer pathways in correctional facilities, supported by tutoring and instructional services. Rising Scholars also hosts workshops on transfer, university research, applications, and financial aid, supplemented with one-on-one support. In-person university tours build motivation and clarify academic goals.

Engagement and Persistence

Activities like Passport to Success connect students with campus resources, while a Career Passport links them to employment opportunities. The program reduces non-academic barriers with loaner laptops, textbook assistance, snacks, meal cards, and remote support for those with transportation challenges. CDCR Canvas resource shells provide incarcerated students with access to academic and support information. Regular surveys and check-ins ensure services remain responsive.

Collaboration and Impact

Through coordination with campus departments and community partners, Rising Scholars provides holistic support from enrollment through reentry, helping justice-involved and justice-impacted students persist, graduate, and thrive.

Low-Income Adults

Merced College is committed to removing barriers and creating opportunity for low-income adult learners through equity focused strategies that address academic, financial, and personal challenges. Our work centers on improving access, persistence, and completion for disproportionately impacted students.

Structural Changes and Initiatives

The college has expanded flexible modalities including in person, hybrid, and online to meet the needs of working adults and caregivers. Success Teams unite faculty, student services, and research to coordinate interventions, guided by disaggregated data. Administrative Procedure 4235 is being revised to expand Credit for Prior Learning opportunities and remove barriers such as fees and unit limits. The Mapping Articulated Pathways platform will increase CPL transparency, while partnerships with MCOE and public safety agencies align real world experience with academic credit.

Support Services and Access to Resources

The Financial Aid Office provides one on one support to maximize aid. EOPS offers counseling, book vouchers, mentoring, and priority registration for low-income, first-generation students. CalWORKs and CARE provide services for student parents. Well-being is supported through TimelyCare, campus Wi-Fi, and technology loans that help close digital gaps.

Academic Support and Flexibility

Brainfuse tutoring is embedded in every Canvas course, offering 24-hour English and Spanish support. Bilingual staffing has expanded, while Faculty Inquiry Groups promote inclusive instruction.

Basic Needs and Mental Health

The Basic Needs Center connects students with food, housing, transportation, clothing, hygiene products, and emergency aid. Counseling is available through Student Health Services, with added support from workshops, peer networks, and Valley Crisis Center.

Community and Cultural Connection

Programs such as Umoja, A2MEND, ESL, Rising Scholars, and Pride Scholars foster belonging through counseling, mentoring, and leadership. Affinity groups including the Black Student Union, HEARTS Club, Latinx Club, and LGBTQIA networks provide cultural

affirmation. A partnership with the United Farm Workers Foundation offers free immigration legal services and workshops.

Pathways to Leadership and Voice

Adult learners engage in leadership through ASMC, representation on the Board of Trustees, and participation in governance committees, ensuring their perspectives shape institutional decision making.

Credit for Prior Learning

Merced College is committed to expanding equitable access to Credit for Prior Learning by improving transparency, removing barriers, and raising awareness, particularly among disproportionately impacted and nontraditional student populations. These efforts align with Vision 2030 goals of supporting adult learners, veterans, working adults, and students with prior workforce training or military experience.

Structural Changes and Procedures

The college is implementing the Mapping Articulated Pathways platform to streamline CPL approval and articulation, increasing transparency and access for students, counselors, and faculty. Administrative Procedure 4235 is undergoing full revision, with updates designed to guide a more student centered and accessible CPL experience.

Outreach and Awareness Efforts

To expand awareness, Merced College will launch a marketing campaign in Fall 2025 that includes social media, radio, geofencing, tabling at events, and outreach through public safety programs. Internally, a CPL roadshow and informational forums will ensure consistent communication across departments and student services.

Equity Focused Practices

Proposed revisions to AP 4235 include eliminating the fee for Credit by Exam and removing the maximum unit cap, allowing students to receive credit for all qualifying experiences. These changes are designed to ensure CPL is fully accessible to underserved and underrepresented students.

Collaborative Partnerships

Merced College is partnering with the Merced County Office of Education on CPL articulation in the child development program, with additional outreach underway to expand into other academic and career education areas.

Support for Veterans and Adult Learners

To better serve veterans, the college is committed to reviewing every Joint Services Transcript for CPL opportunities, ensuring military experience is recognized and valued as part of a streamlined path toward degree and certificate completion.

Through these strategies, Merced College is creating an inclusive Credit for Prior Learning framework that honors diverse experiences and empowers students to achieve their academic and career goals.

Dual Enrollment

In alignment with Vision 2030, Merced College is committed to expanding equitable access to dual enrollment and building structured pathways that enable high school students, particularly those from disproportionately impacted groups, to complete at least 12 college units by graduation. Our strategies focus on removing barriers, fostering early college readiness, and improving student success.

Structural Changes and Process Improvements

The college continues to strengthen its infrastructure to support expansion. Admissions and registration have been simplified, access to online orientation tools expanded, and dedicated Dual Enrollment and Retention Specialists now serve as liaisons with K12 partners, ensuring smoother onboarding for students and families.

Targeted Outreach Strategies

Outreach prioritizes underserved high schools, especially in rural regions and those with many low-income, first generation, and English learner students. Working with K12 partners, the college hosts orientations, classroom visits, and family engagement nights that highlight the benefits of early college credit.

Tailored Support Services

Merced College provides a network of services to help students where they are. The Pathway Counseling Program hires high school counselors as adjunct Merced College counselors to deliver advising, registration, and educational planning directly on campuses. Additional support includes peer mentoring, tutoring, and a Dual Enrollment Welcome Series with workshops on study skills, time management, and technology training.

K12 Partnerships and Pathway Alignment

Formal agreements with K12 districts ensure offerings align with both high school and college requirements. Guided Pathways aligned course sequences support progress toward degrees and certificates. A pilot with Merced Union High School District enrolled 350 ninth grade students in a wellness course, providing early exposure to college and informing the creation of a standardized Canvas template for consistency.

Data Driven Practices

Disaggregated data on enrollment, retention, and success are analyzed by race, ethnicity, and socioeconomic status. Findings are shared with K12 partners to identify gaps and design responsive programs.

Through these collaborative and equity focused strategies, Merced College is expanding access to early college credit and ensuring all students, especially those historically underserved, have clear pathways to higher education and careers.

Strong Workforce Program/Perkins

Merced College's Strong Workforce and Perkins programs are aligned with Vision 2030 Goal 1: Equity in Success and work closely with the Student Equity and Achievement Program to support disproportionately impacted students in achieving economic mobility. These programs expand access to high wages, high demand careers for students who are low income, first generation, from rural communities, or students of color.

High Tech, High Touch Learning Models and Outreach

Instructional models combine advanced technology with personalized engagement. Outreach includes classroom visits, media campaigns, and hands-on events that elevate the visibility of Career Technical Education.

Pathway Development and Labor Market Alignment

Investments focus on associate degrees, short term certificates, and stackable credentials aligned with regional labor demand. Programs emphasize high growth sectors such as agriculture, advanced manufacturing, business, and health sciences. Curriculum is updated with input from faculty and industry partners to ensure students gain relevant skills.

Work Based Learning and Industry Connections

Students benefit from paid internships, apprenticeships, and expanded real world learning that build workforce readiness. Adult learners are supported in transitioning from noncredit to credit programs, advancing more quickly into living wage careers. Efforts are guided by labor market data and the Central Valley Mother Lode Regional Consortium.

Equity Focused Supports and Instructional Integration

Embedded career counselors, early alert systems, orientations, and peer mentoring provide tailored support. Faculty collaborate with program staff to embed career readiness and culturally responsive practices into instruction.

K12 and Community Partnerships

Partnerships with K12 districts, adult schools, and community organizations create equitable pathways to early credential attainment and long-term engagement.

Career Services and Continued Support

Students access career services including workshops, resume building, interview preparation, and one on one support. Integrated into academic programs, these services ensure readiness for the transition to career.

Through these strategies, Strong Workforce and Perkins help close equity gaps, advance economic mobility, and prepare students for meaningful employment in alignment with Vision 2030.

Additional Programs

LGBTQIA+ Student Support Merced College supports its LGBTQIA+ community through programs that promote belonging and success, aligned with Student Equity and Achievement goals.

Pride Scholars and HEARTS Club Pride Scholars anchors LGBTQIA+ support, while the HEARTS Club (Healing, Empowerment, Advocacy, Respect, Togetherness, Support) offers space for students and allies to connect and engage in affirming events.

Faculty and Staff Development of the Lavender Faculty Inquiry Group bring together faculty, staff, and allies to strengthen inclusive practices. Safe Zone Trainings equip employees to create affirming classrooms and reduce bias.

Counseling and Wellness Services a EOPS Equity Counselor provides academic and personal counseling, while peer networks and wellness workshops focus on resilience and identity development.

Celebration and Recognition The annual Lavender Celebration honors graduating LGBTQIA+ students, offering affirming spaces for students and families.

Inclusive Campus Infrastructure Supports include gender inclusive restrooms, affirmed name updates, and staff trained in LGBTQIA+ inclusive health practices.

Transfer and Academic Support Counselors guide students in transferring to affirming four-year institutions and connecting them with statewide LGBTQIA+ resources.

Community Partnerships Merced College partners with Merced LGBTQ Alliance, Central Valley Pride, and LGBTQ Merced to expand access to youth programs, events, health referrals, and advocacy.

Ongoing Engagement Students engage through HEARTS, peer networks, workshops, and the Lavender Celebration. Faculty and staff are encouraged to join the Lavender FIG and Safe Zone trainings.

Through intentional programming, inclusive policies, and partnerships, Merced College provides holistic support for LGBTQIA+ students.

Umoja advances African American student success through culturally responsive strategies. Working with SEA, Umoja expands counseling, mentoring, and transfer pathways to UC, CSU, and HBCUs.

A2MEND The A2MEND Charter supports Black male students through mentorship, leadership development, and academic support. Coordinated with SEA, efforts include outreach, cultural events, and outcome tracking.