

RIVERSIDE CITY COLLEGE EQUITY RESEARCH 2024

Student-identified barriers and opportunities



Report prepared by Yvonne Olivares, PhD, of S4DDS and is formatted for planning and report building purposes for Riverside City College. Not for external distribution.

ABOUT

The Riverside City College Equity Research study was a qualitative study focused on exploring the student experience of differentially impacted students with the greatest equity gaps.

- Black, African American
 - Successfully completing transfer-level Math their 1st year
 - Successfully completing transfer-level English their 1st year
- Hispanic / Latinx students
 - Transfer to 4-year (by their 3rd year) independent of vision goal completion
- Foster Youth (any race/ethnicity) students
 - Persisting from 1st to 2nd semester
- Pacific Islander students
 - Completing vision goal by their 3rd year

Study Aim: Identify student-led steps to increase equity at Riverside City College through understanding the barriers to equity that students experience and how students recommend removing those barriers.

STUDY OVERVIEW

Qualitative study held May 14-16, 2024

- Utilized Multimodal Cognitive Method
- Three-day confidential, online study that participants could complete on a laptop, tablet, or mobile device (including library loaner laptops)
- Sample size of 51 participants recruited based on representative sampling
- Daily 45–60 minutes of activities yielding about 5,000–6,000 minutes of data interaction

The study was designed and executed by S4DDS (Service for Data Driven Solutions). S4DDS is a minority female-owned consulting firm founded in 2013 by Yvonne Olivares, PhD. S4DDS specializes in hard-to-reach populations, equity, and innovative studies and is a CA certified MBE, WBE, and SB.

KEY STUDENT RECOMMENDATIONS

IMPROVING THE STUDENT EXPERIENCE AND CLOSING EQUITY GAPS FOR ALL

- ✓ Students across equity gap groups recommend improving communication of available support services and resources, specifying how student can access them. Students are especially interested in RCC communicating:
 - Tutoring services
 - Single-parent services/support
 - Mental Health services/support (Hispanic students)
 - Finance support - budgeting, finding scholarships (Black and Foster Youth)

BLACK STUDENTS COMPLETING TRANSFER-LEVEL MATH & ENGLISH 1ST YEAR

- ✓ Communicate the benefits of completing Math and English their 1st year as EARLY as possible, either while students are still in high school or when they first apply.
- ✓ Decrease student fear of failure (in Math and English) by communicating how to access (and encouraging) tutoring and any other relevant course support.

HISPANIC STUDENTS SUCCESSFULLY TRANSFERING TO A 4-YEAR

- ✓ Communicate any limitations in course requirements when students begin their education plan (e.g., required course only available every 2 years).
- ✓ Clearly identify which courses transfer to which 4-years.

IMPROVE FOSTER YOUTH PERSISTENCE FROM 1ST TO 2ND SEMESTER

- ✓ Improve availability of counseling appointments and allow students with more complicated questions/needs to schedule longer appointments.
- ✓ Communicate to Foster Youth how to access engagement centers.

PACIFIC ISLANDER STUDENTS ATTAINING VISION GOAL BY 3RD YEAR

- ✓ Create alternative support to counseling, when counseling is limited, to help students navigate their academic path.

COMMUNICATION PLAN

- ✓ Use multimode communications including:
 - Email
 - Social Media
 - Canvas (esp. important academic and financial dates and deadlines)
 - Text messaging
 - Website with everything posted in a singular searchable calendar
- ✓ Group non-urgent messages and send on a set schedule in Canvas, email, and text (depending on grouping it should be weekly Monday morning, every 2 weeks or monthly).
- ✓ Consider student language barriers by using clear concise language and when possible, make communications available in students' native language.

Table of Contents

Black Student Experience	1
Student Life	1
Completing Transfer-level Math and English their 1 st Year	2
Communication Plan	5
Hispanic / Latinx Student Experience	6
Student Life	6
Successful Transfer to 4-year	7
Communication Plan	9
Persisting Foster Youth Student Experience	10
Student Life	10
Persistence from 1 st to 2 nd Semester.....	11
Subset of Pacific Islander Student Experience	13
Student Life	13
Achieving their Vision Goal by 3 rd Year	14
Study Design	15
Method	15
Study Criteria.....	15
Timeline	17
Study Content	17
Data Collection Platform	18
Student Demographics	19

FINDINGS

Black Student Experience

Student Life

OUTSIDE OF RCC

Many Black, African American, and Afro Latina/o/x students are managing especially difficult schedules including full-time employment, family and work.

- *I wake up at 3am to go to work from 4-8. On Mondays I have a zoom class at 8:30 so I connect to zoom for class until 9:45. After class on Mondays I go back to work around 11am-3pm, once I'm finished with work and school I take a nap for a couple of hours. And when I wake up, I prepare and eat dinner, do homework and prepare for the next day. - Part Time, Female, 1st Gen, Black / African American, LC/SP = No, CTE, New, Online, 26-35, Living Wage: No*
- *Tired! I work many hours as a single parent over 100 hours per pay period to provide. I have a 16-year-old son who is a sophomore in high school and an athlete and I'm on school parttime. Here at RCC and Valley college. Striving to continue my education and its hard!! Very hard. Struggling to work and continue my education so that I don't have to work so much to always be left see with very little along with life and its daily challenges and obstacles called ...LIFE!!! - Part Time, Female, Not 1st Gen, Black / African American, LC/SP = No, AT, Ongoing, In-person, 36+, Living Wage: No*

RCC's youngest Black, African American, and Afro Latina/o/x students, with less competing responsibilities, often face struggles that strain their academic goals (e.g., working night shifts and housing insecurity).

ON CAMPUS

There is a marked difference in the sense of belonging between students who are involved in a Learning Community or Special Program (LC/SP) and those who are not.

- Black, African American, and Afro Latina/o/x LC/SP students are:
 - More aware of, and access, available student services including tutoring
 - Have greater sense of belonging
- Compared to their non-LC/SP peers who:
 - Want to be better informed about resources available and how to access
 - Wish for greater sense of belonging
 - *I wouldn't say I feel a sense of belonging because it is hard for me to connect to people and become friends with them, things that would make me feel a sense of belonging. - Full Time, Female, Not 1st Gen, Black / African American, Uncertain, New, Hybrid, 18-25, Living Wage: No, LC/SP = No*
 - Often work when current RCC activities, events, and clubs meet.

STUDENT RECOMMENDATIONS

- ✓ Instructors should take into consideration students' lives when deciding course assignments and timeline (e.g., brevity between notice and due dates).
 - *More extra credit options if they don't allow you to redo assignments or minor tests because it can be hard to bring up your grade if you have a rough start to the course - Full Time, Female, Not 1st Gen, Black / African American, Uncertain, New, Hybrid, 18-25, Living Wage: No, LC/SP = No*
 - *More time. I don't know if that fits everyone else but for me and my educational experience more time! And I say that only because I work the number of hours that I do. - Part Time, Female, Not 1st Gen, Black / African American, AT, Ongoing, In-person, 36+, Living Wage: No, LC/SP = No*
- ✓ Improve communication of available resources, especially for students who are not part of a LC/SP. Support service wish list:
 - Single-parent support services (and support groups)
 - Older-student specific services
 - Financial Aid support
 - Budgeting and managing finances
 - How to find scholarship
 - Mentorships program
 - International student support
- ✓ Communicate and make more activities, events, clubs available at times convenient for working students (i.e., evenings).

RESEARCHER RECOMMENDATIONS

- ✓ When possible, encourage enrollment in learning communities and/or special programs as engagement in learning communities and/or special programs increases awareness, and access, of student services including tutoring (an important element for successful completion of transfer-level math and English – according to students) and increases sense of belonging at RCC.

Completing Transfer-level Math and English their 1st Year

FIRST-COURSE ADVISORS

Black, African American and Afro-Latina/o/x students who were initially advised by a counselor their first year do not recall being advised to take specific courses first.

- *I wasn't necessarily advised to take any particular course my first year. My decisions were primarily based off what I wanted rather than a suggested need. - Full Time, Female, 1st Gen, Black / African American, AT, Ongoing, Online, 18-25, Living Wage: No, LC/SP = No*
- *I don't remember the exact advice given to me about how to proceed with classes, but I do know that I was advised about how my classes were transferred to a UC and if I chose, I could earn my associates in the process of transferring and EPS in guardian scholars offer help with classes - Part Time, Female, 1st Gen, Afro Latina/o/x, Other: Belizean, AT, Ongoing, In-person, 18-25, Living Wage: Yes, LC/SP = Yes*

The only student in the study who was specifically advised to complete their Math course their first year was a student who was unable to schedule an appointment with a counselor so sought advice from their high school teacher.

- *I was told to take my Math class first since it was pretty much the same course I took in HS. - Part Time, Female, Not 1st Gen, Afro Latina/o/x, Black / African American, AT, New, Online, 18-25, Living Wage: Yes, LC/SP = Yes*

Black / African American and Afro-Latina/o/x students wish counseling appointments were more accessible.

- *Counseling appointments needs to be more accessible to students - Part Time, Female, Not 1st Gen, Afro Latina/o/x, Black / African American, AT, New, Online, 18-25, Living Wage: Yes, LC/SP = Yes*

ENROLLING/COMPLETING TRANSFER-LEVEL MATH THEIR 1ST YEAR

Black / African American and Afro-Latina/o/x students are unaware of the benefits of completing transfer-level Math their 1st year.

- *I was never informed of that [success rate]. And for someone who struggles with math it would have been good to know back then... But had RCC expressed that with the reasons why then maybe I would not have had to go the route that I'm in [having dropped out to return years later]. - Part Time, Female, Not 1st Gen, Black / African American, AT, Ongoing, In-person, 36+, Living Wage: No, LC/SP = No*

Most students say knowing that students who enroll in transfer-level Math their 1st year are more likely to successfully complete it the first time (due to the shorter time between high school and college math) would have made a difference in their decision-making, this was true even for students who had graduated high school many years before.

- *I would have taken Math immediately. I think the counselor should have made me aware of the importance of trying to go to a 4 year or become a transfer student. I think I could have still gained the certificate, but It would have been more advantageous for me to go for an associate to transfer. By being presented with the easier option, as a student who is already unsure that I could have success on this academic path, I naturally took the easier path. - Full Time, Male, 1st Gen, Black / African American, AT, Ongoing, In-person, 36+, Living Wage: Yes, LC/SP = No*
- *I would have gotten it out of the way and the counselor I believe should tell that information. - Part Time, Female, 1st Gen, Black / African American, AT, Ongoing, In-person, 36+, Living Wage: No, LC/SP = Yes*

Knowledge of benefits is not enough to overcome fear of failure for RCC's multi-dimensionally impacted students (Black / African American AND Foster Students, First Generation College, Living Wage = No and LC/SP = No).

- *I don't believe it would've made a difference. I have always struggled with math, and I have always needed a support class or tutoring in order to complete math with a satisfactory grade. Even if RCC had made that aware to me, I still would*

have made the decision I made. - Full Time, Female, 1st Gen, Black / African American, AT, Ongoing, Online, 18-25, Living Wage: No, LC/SP = No, Foster Youth

ENROLLING/COMPLETING TRANSFER-LEVEL ENGLISH THEIR 1ST YEAR

Knowing success rate of enrolling in English their first year would impact enrollment for some, but many students say this information would not have impacted their decisions because they are confident in their English course skills and feel they can succeed whenever they choose to enroll.

- *Not for me personally because I don't struggle at all with reading or writing. I never have [trouble] accomplishing or taking an English class wouldn't affect my ability to do well in my opinion. - Part Time, Female, 1st Gen, Afro Latina/o/x, Other: Belizean, AT, Ongoing, In-person, 23-25, Living Wage: Yes, LC/SP = Yes*
- *Again, no I don't believe that it would have made a difference. I have always been a strong English student, and I believe in my abilities to successfully pass the class. - Full Time, Female, 1st Gen, Black / African American, AT, Ongoing, Online, 18-25, Living Wage: No, LC/SP = No*

Black, African American and Afro-Latina/o/x students who are less confident in their English course skills indicate knowing of benefits would be useful only if they knew how to access tutoring.

- *easier access to tutoring because I know we have tutors, but I don't know where to go for tutoring. - Part Time, Female, 1st Gen, Black / African American, CTE, New, Online, 26-35, Living Wage: No, LC/SP = No*

STUDENT RECOMMENDATIONS

- ✓ Communicate the benefits of completing Math and English their 1st year as EARLY as possible, either while students are still in high school or when they first apply.
 - *I think it would be important to inform them if possible while they're still in high school. - Full Time, Female, 1st Gen, Black / African American, AT, Ongoing, Online, 18-25, Living Wage: No, LC/SP = No*
 - *If they send out this information we have now when first time students apply to their college, I think it would be very encouraging. - Part Time, Female, 1st Gen, Black / African American, CTE, New, Online, 26-35, Living Wage: No, LC/SP = No*
- ✓ Decrease student fear of failure (in Math and English) by communicating how to access (and encourage) tutoring and any other relevant course support.
 - *Tell them the success rates and how there are tutoring sessions for any Math and English class - Full Time, Female, Not 1st Gen, Black / African American, Uncertain, New, Hybrid, 18-25, Living Wage: No, LC/SP = No*
 - *The best way to encourage students to enroll is to let them know all their options such as tutoring, outside help that the school offers, a program that offers what is to be expected from those courses. Also to let the students know that if you should fail the course, you always have to the option to retake it. - Part Time, Female, Not 1st Gen, Black / African American, Uncertain, Ongoing, Online, 26-35, Living Wage: Yes, LC/SP = Yes*

RESEARCHER RECOMMENDATION

- ✓ While students say all benefits (of completing transfer-level math and English) should be communicated, based on how students talk about the courses and their plans, the benefits that should be highlighted are:
 - Success rates for Math and
 - Likelihood of transfer to 4-year for English
- ✓ Recommend continuing interventions implemented to counseling and/or guided pathways self-service since the RCC Voice of the Student 2023. Students in that study were so unhappy with counseling services and guided pathways information that they identified them as a primary barrier to success– this was not true a year later. While students still want more access to counseling appointments and have recommendations on what to communicate in those appointments (regarding Math and English), their current access and pathway information has improved dramatically.

Communication Plan

When asked how RCC should communicate the information they need to succeed, Black, African American, and Afro Latina/o/x students said they want multimode communications, including:

- Email
- Social Media
- Canvas
- Welcome video specific to student services and resources
- Course related support should also be communicated in the classroom

Older Black and African American students (36+ years) would like workshop/video on how to navigate enrollment, dropping classes, and using canvas.

Frequency: Younger students want information grouped and sent out weekly to avoid receiving frequent non-important communications.

RESEARCHER RECOMMENDATION

- ✓ Continue implemented communication improvements (implemented since the RCC Voice of the Student 2023). New students, who have only seen improved communications implemented since the RCC Voice of the Student 2023, are more likely to say they are happy with RCC's communications.
 - *Honestly, I think who ever this person is now doing a great job [in communications] ... Keep doing things like this and asking students and staff what you all can do better - Part Time, Female, New, Not 1st Gen, Black / African American, CTE, Hybrid, 36+, Living Wage: No, LC/SP = Yes*

Hispanic / Latinx Student Experience

Student Life

OUTSIDE OF RCC

Many Hispanic/Latinx students must balance school, with work and family with both male and female students often responsible for caring for children or younger siblings. These students often describe themselves as anxious, fatigued and feeling overwhelmed.

- *...my days are usually packed with school and work so I'm too busy to have any specific feelings, but I'd usually feel overwhelmed at school when I don't understand my assignments...* - Part Time, Female, 1st Gen, Hispanic / Latinx, AT, New, Online, 18-25, Living Wage: Yes, LC/SP = No
- *When I woke up this morning, I felt blessed and grateful to be alive. I might not have what I want, but I have what I need for the most part. But some days, I don't feel like getting up because my depression and anxiety overwhelm me, but I am strong-minded enough to know how to overcome those emotions.* - Full Time, Female, 1st Gen, Hispanic / Latinx, Uncertain, New, Online, 36+, Living Wage: Yes, LC/SP = No
- *I felt tired still, I wake up to take my three siblings to school then come back and start my selfcare.* - Full Time, Female, 1st Gen, Hispanic / Latinx, AT, Ongoing, Online, 18-25, Living Wage: No, LC/SP = Yes

ON CAMPUS

Most Hispanic/Latinx students feel a sense of belonging on campus (independent of age, enrollment, type of courses, LC/SP experience, or Living Wage status). Though most feel a sense of belonging, older-young-adults aged 25-35 years of age see room for improvement in communication of existing clubs and events.

- *Advertising more all the resources RCC already provides* - Part Time, Female, Not 1st Gen, Hispanic / Latinx, AT, New, In-person, 26-35, Living Wage: No, LC/SP = No

There is a great divide in campus life between Hispanic/Latinx students who are part of a learning community or special program (LC/SP) and those who are not.

- Hispanic/Latinx part of a LC/SP are aware of and use more support services and resources including tutoring, library, counseling, basic needs services, career center and disability services.
- Hispanic / Latinx not part of a LC/SP have limited awareness of support services beyond counseling.

STUDENT RECOMMENDATIONS

- ✓ All students recommend improving communication around available support services, resources, clubs and events and how student can access them. Students especially recommend improved communications around:
 - Tutoring services

- Mental health services
- ✓ Non-LC/SP students also recommend improved communication on how to schedule appointments with counselors.
 - *The counseling system need improvement, it should not be this difficult to get an appointment. I think they can improve how we are able to schedule appointments... It would be far easier if new appointments were not exclusively available Thursdays at 12am. - Part Time, Female, 1st Gen, Hispanic / Latinx, AT, New, Online, 18-25, Living Wage: Yes, LC/SP = No*
- ✓ Other recommended student services students wish were available on campus:
 - Single-parent support
 - Mentoring
 - Club providing nutrition, healthy eating recipes
 - DACA student support

Successful Transfer to 4-year

WANING TRANSFER CONFIDENCE

New Hispanic/Latinx students (first enrolled SU2023 or FA2023) are confident they will transfer by their 3rd year, they feel RCC has provided them the information they need to succeed.

- *I am extremely confident that I can transfer by the end of my third year. RCC has given me the tools and resources I need to be successful, and it is up to me to make sure I pass my classes. I am motivated by my desire to take my career to the next level. I have two teenagers who will be in college soon, so I need to be able to provide them with the means to go to any college they want. - Part Time, Male, 1st Gen, Hispanic / Latinx, AT, New, Hybrid, 36+, Living Wage: Yes, LC/SP = No*

On-going students (enrolled SP23 or earlier) are more likely to say they are not confident they can successfully transfer. Reasons provided for uncertainty were:

- Finding out “too late” about limitations on required courses (i.e., required courses only being offered every 2 years)
- Misadvised on transferable courses

CONNECTIONS THAT INCREASE TRANSFER CONFIDENCE

A closer look at the few on-going Hispanic/Latinx on-going students, who are confident they will transfer, reveals they are all part of a learning community/special program (LC/SP).

Hispanic /Latinx students who are part of a LC/SP (independent of part/full-time enrollment, gender, age and Living Wage status) are:

- More likely to have had early and frequent positive experiences with counselors,
- Aware of and use more support services,

- Confident they are going to meet their vision goal (an essential element of transfer),
- Can successfully use EduNav to track and plan and
- Feel confident they will transfer.

HOW STUDENTS WITHOUT CONNECTIONS NAVIGATE

Some Hispanic /Latinx students who have never been part of a LC/SP rely on themselves, via their Ed Plan, to navigate their course selection. These students assume their Ed Plan only suggests transferable courses.

- *The RCC portal allows you to create a plan that assigns you courses depending on your major. You can register for the classes listed under the plan which pertain to your major which makes it very easy to pick classes in my opinion. In my opinion it's a lot easier than having to schedule an appointment with a counselor. - Part Time, Male, 1st Gen, Hispanic / Latinx, CTE, New, Hybrid, 26-35, Living Wage: No, LC/SP = No*

Some Hispanic/Latinx students, who are not part of a LC/SP, choose courses based on their work and family schedule with the hope the available courses will transfer.

- *being that I don't have many choices with my work schedule and the fact that we change schedule every six months, but I won't know what's available until is too late to register for science classes because they get full so quickly - Part Time, Female, Not 1st Gen, Hispanic / Latinx, AT, New, In-person, 26-35, Living Wage: No, LC/SP = No*

STUDENT RECOMMENDATIONS

- ✓ Communicate any limitations in course requirements when students begin their education plan (e.g., required course only available every 2 years).
- ✓ Highlight in EduNav and EdPlan when courses are not regularly available.
- ✓ Clearly identify which courses transfer to which 4-years.
Improve communication of student services to students who are not part of a learning community or special program.

RESEARCHER RECOMMENDATION

- ✓ Communicate alternatives course options that meet requirements when students begin their education plan to allow students with heavy external obligations to find a way to stay on schedule to transfer.
- ✓ When possible, encourage enrollment in learning communities and/or special programs as engagement in learning communities and/or special programs increases transfer confidence.
- ✓ Recommend continuing interventions implemented to counseling and/or guided pathways self-service since the RCC Voice of the Student 2023. While students still want more access to counseling appointments and improved communications around self-service navigation there is a dramatic improvement in their satisfaction since that study one year ago.

Communication Plan

When asked how RCC should communicate the information they need to succeed, Hispanic / Latinx students said they want multimode communications with important messages sent in multiple modes, including:

- Email
- Social Media
- Canvas – important academic and financial dates and deadlines
- Text messaging
- Website should have everything posted in a singular searchable calendar
 - post a QR Code around campus that send students to the calendar

Frequency

- Non-urgent messages should be grouped and sent on a set schedule in Canvas, email, and text (depending on grouping it should be weekly Monday morning, every 2 weeks or monthly)
 - *consolidate information where possible. - Part Time, Female, Not 1st Gen, Hispanic / Latinx, White/ Caucasian, AT, Ongoing, Online, 26-35, Living Wage: No, LC/SP = Yes, Foster Youth*

Language:

- English communications should be clear and concise – remembering student language barriers
- Communications available in Spanish

RESEARCHER RECOMMENDATION

- ✓ Continue implemented communication improvements (implemented since the RCC Voice of the Student 2023). New students, who have only seen improved communications implemented since the RCC Voice of the Student 2023, are more likely to say they are happy with RCC's communications.
 - *RCC does a great job of keeping students informed on activities, as well as important academic updates. - Part Time, Male, 1st Gen, Hispanic / Latinx, AT, New, Hybrid, 36+, Living Wage: Yes, LC/SP = No*

Persisting Foster Youth Student Experience

As a result of the study timing (in Spring semester), the following is the story of former Foster Youth students who have persisted past their first semester. When reviewing student findings and recommendations please note these findings should be used to inform existing barriers and opportunities with awareness that there may be unexplored barriers and opportunities.

Student Life

OUTSIDE OF RCC

Foster Youth student lives outside of RCC are closely tied with their race.

ON CAMPUS

Sense of belonging for successfully persisting former Foster Youth is closely tied with their race, age and connection to a learning community or special program (LC/SP) with Black, Hispanic, young, and those not currently part of a LC/SP feeling the most isolated on campus.

In general, former Foster Youth are less likely to be aware of the breadth of support services available on campus compared to non-former Foster Youth. The former Foster Youth aware and using services are the youngest students, with older students having limited, to no, contact with services beyond counseling and financial aid.

Some successful former Foster Youth are aware of engagement centers and the types of services provided but are uncertain how to access them or if they are even allowed.

- *LHSS was never promoted nor shared to me until my last year 2024 - Part Time, Female, 1st Gen, Hispanic / Latinx, White/ Caucasian, AA, Ongoing, Online, 26-35, Living Wage: No, LC/SP = Yes, Foster Youth*

STUDENT RECOMMENDATIONS

- ✓ Former Foster Youth recommend creating the following services:
 - Single-parent support group
 - Finance-related support
 - Understanding financial aid and finding scholarships
 - How to budget and manage finances, credit cards
 - Food-related events
 - *I would definitely say having events where students could have access to food and entertainment could probably help many students have a sense of belonging. - Full Time, Female, 1st Gen, Black / African American, AT, Ongoing, Online, 18-25, Living Wage: No, LC/SP = No, Foster Youth*
 - Addiction support
 - Employment support that helps them find work while in school

Persistence from 1st to 2nd Semester

COUNSELING

While former Foster Youth students are more likely than any other group to have had early and repeated communication with counselors, they are also more likely to indicate they received conflicting information from counselors than non-former Foster Youth students (independent of race, part/full-time status, new/on-going, living wage or age).

- *I think counselors could cross reference each other's work because they make plans for students that the next counselor changes and it leave students confused and participating in courses not needed. - Part Time, Female, 1st Gen, Hispanic / Latinx, White/ Caucasian, AA, Ongoing, Online, 26-35, Living Wage: No, LC/SP = Yes, Foster Youth*
- *I agree, sometimes I'm confused as well. I started making appointments with just one specific counselor to bypass that issue though. - Full Time, Female, 1st Gen, White/ Caucasian, AT, Ongoing, Online, 36+, Living Wage: No, LC/SP = Yes, Foster Youth*
- *At first, I did ask for advice, but I was confused so I just did it myself. - Full Time, Female, 1st Gen, Hispanic / Latinx, Uncertain, New, Online, 36+, Living Wage: Yes, LC/SP = No, Foster Youth*

Inconsistency of information from counselors may be connected to former Foster Youth being more likely to indicate uncertainty with their current academic paths.

CLASSROOM EXPERIENCE

Successfully persisting former foster youth report highly positive course experiences.

- *I've had one of the best times in my classes at RCC this Spring. Both Dr. Lee and Professor Lowden, have been exceptional instructors. I really appreciate Dr. Lee's approach of instruction and his communication, his flexibility and ability to convey information in an easy manner to retain it. Professor Lowden has a really easy and hands on approach to her practical delivery for CPR methods and has a lively manner in delivering her instruction in class and has made the tedious and detailed information needed to retain for CPR and First Aid not so monotonous and boring. The classmates are very diverse and friendly for the most part, I haven't met one person on campus who isn't friendly or receptive back to a stranger... - Part Time, Male, 1st Gen, Hispanic / Latinx, Native American, White/ Caucasian, AT, Ongoing, In-person, 36+, Living Wage: No, LC/SP = Yes, Foster Youth*
- *If I were to describe my course experiences at RCC with my instructors, the coursework my classmates I would say that it's been a very positive experience I feel fairly supported by my instructors. I am primarily an online student and so my coursework is sometimes demanding, but I understand that these are a college courses. And my classmates open up lots of ideas and help change my perspective about particular topics. I feel like coming back to school this time around. I have more of an ideal college experience. - Full Time, Female, 1st Gen, Black / African American, AT, Ongoing, Online, 18-25, Living Wage: No, LC/SP =No, Foster Youth*

STUDENT RECOMMENDATION

- ✓ Improve availability of counseling appointments and allow students with more complicated questions/needs to schedule longer appointments.
 - *I feel they can have more availability for counseling and to make the appointments longer than 45 minutes because that crams the session, in my experience things were left out and I still had questions, as well as I was given misinformation and was told I needed only 2 more classes. - Full Time, Female, 1st Gen, Hispanic / Latinx, AT, Ongoing, Online, 18-25, Living Wage: No, LC/SP = Yes, Foster Youth*
- ✓ Communicate to former Foster Youth how to access engagement centers.

RESEARCHER RECOMMENDATIONS

- ✓ Improve self-service information available about academic paths to allow students to ask more informed questions and decrease confusion and miscommunications with counselors.
- ✓ Remember we do not know how much, if any, the successfully persisting former Foster Youth student experience reflects that of their non-persisting peers which means we should assume there are additional unknown barriers and student recommendations.

Subset of Pacific Islander Student Experience

Due to the population limits, we were unable to recruit a representative sample of Pacific Islander students. Recruited Pacific Islander study participants were all:

- First-generation,
- Female,
- Enrolled full-time,
- Associate for Transfer,
- Below a Living Wage, and were involved with a
- Learning community or special program

The following should be used as insight into a subset of the Pacific Islander student experience and NOT representative of the Pacific Islander student experience.

Student Life

OUTSIDE OF RCC

Participating Pacific Islander students describe heavy responsibilities and high stress comparable to Black, African American, and Afro Latina/o/x student experiences.

- *Usually waking up I feel anxious. I usually have a lot going on. I have custody of my sisters 5 kids, so it takes a lot to get them up and ready, making breakfast and cleaning up before we're out the door. I usually have their clothes and lunches ready the night before. I usually then head off to work part time (8am-12pm) at the kid's school. After that we have lunch together. After lunch, they head back to class, and I get online for classes. 4 of the children get out of school at 3pm and then my high schooler is out by 4:30pm, so we're usually finishing homework until 4:30pm. After that we usually head to a park since it's free and run around for 1 hour, then I go home and start dinner. The kids usually wind down and shower and then we have dinner, and they get to have about 1 hour of screen time before bed. During breaks I try to study. I usually feel overwhelmed if I don't have a list of tasks / errands completed, because whatever I don't finish today gets carried over until tomorrow, and because I also have my nieces and nephews to worry about, these tasks can add up quickly - Full Time, Female, 1st Gen, Pacific Islander / Native Hawaiian, AT, Ongoing, Online, 26-35, Living Wage: No, LC/SP = Yes*

ON CAMPUS

Participating Pacific Islander students feel a sense of belonging on campus – based on other student groups this is expected as all participating Pacific Islander students were part of a LC/SP. Even though they feel a sense of belonging they are concerned how little their peers know about the services available.

- *I think letting students know about the resources and groups available to them (not just through signage and flyers) so students can take advantage of them. There is so much “help” that RCC offers but I have found a lot of my fellow classmates don’t know about them. - Full Time, Female, 1st Gen, Pacific Islander / Native Hawaiian, AT, Ongoing, Online, 26-35, Living Wage: No, LC/SP = Yes*
- *make sure the counselors are aware of ALL resources so if a student has a need, they can direct them to the appropriate resource - Full Time, Female, 1st Gen, Pacific Islander / Native Hawaiian, AT, Ongoing, Online, 26-35, Living Wage: No, LC/SP = Yes*

STUDENT RECOMMENDATIONS

- ✓ Improve communication around existing services and resources.
- ✓ Create support for single parents including childcare.

Achieving their Vision Goal by 3rd Year

Participating Pacific Islander students only somewhat know what courses they need to take to achieve their Vision Goal.

Participating Pacific Islander students use multiple sources of information to identify the courses they need to take including the course catalogue, online searches and appointments with counselors.

- *I like that I can find most of what I need in the catalogue and confirmed through counselors, and online. I think just letting students (especially first-time students) know the path they need to take with the exact courses would be helpful. - Full Time, Female, 1st Gen, Pacific Islander / Native Hawaiian, AT, Ongoing, Online, 26-35, Living Wage: No, LC/SP = Yes*

STUDENT RECOMMENDATIONS

- ✓ Create alternative support to counseling, when counseling is limited, to help students navigate their academic path.
 - *I know counselors are busy, so maybe having an accountability partner somehow would be awesome! I like the idea of having a student accountability partner in each class as it’s easiest, but also 1 person in each overall course department who is assigned to check in on students who are slacking etc. I think email / Canvas to keep in touch is great but also having a face-to-face option like a counselor option would be great - Full Time, Female, 1st Gen, Pacific Islander / Native Hawaiian, AT, Ongoing, Online, 26-35, Living Wage: No, LC/SP = Yes*

RESEARCHER RECOMMENDATION

- ✓ Remember Pacific Island student barriers and recommendations reflect only a subset of the student experience which means we should assume there are additional unknown barriers and student recommendations.

STUDY DESIGN

Study Design

Method

The study leveraged the Multimodal Cognitive Method (MCM) which was developed by Yvonne Olivares, PhD to collect more reliable qualitative data from diverse populations including those who would normally be excluded from traditional research including those:

- working jobs with excessive and/or nontraditional hours,
- with family obligations,
- reliant on public transportation/ride-shares, and
- from underserved populations who are weary of unknown situations.

The Multimodal Cognitive Method has been used by school districts, state agencies, community colleges and education-related nonprofits to support inclusive student-centered and equity-based research. This study used an online platform to engage participants allowing them to complete the study at their convenience with guided activities and a live research moderator.

Study Criteria

Disproportionately impacted student groups and equity gaps explored:

- Black / African American students
 - Successfully completing transfer-level Math their 1st year
 - Successfully completing transfer-level English their 1st year
- Foster Youth (any race/ethnicity) students
 - Persisting from 1st to 2nd semester
- Pacific Islander students
 - Completing vision goal by their 3rd year
- Hispanic / Latinx students
 - Transfer to 4-year (by their 3rd year) independent of vision goal completion

Disproportionately impacted student group and equity gap excluded:

- Black / African American female students
 - Successful Enrollment

Though successful enrollment was identified as a priority in the RCC 2022-2025 Student Equity Plan, we were unable to explore this area of the student experience as this study was limited to currently enrolled and no longer enrolled students. Effective exploration of

this equity gap requires a separate sample of potential students, specifically Black / African American female students who applied but did not enroll. Due to the potential reasons students may not have been able to successfully enroll (e.g., RCC systems/processes, work/family/personal barriers), these potential students require heavier and more timely recruitment.

It is recommended this equity gap is explored, potentially in a smaller follow-up study about the student experience from application to enrollment. Ideally this study would be scheduled in the fall to allow the study to have the largest sample of recent applicants (who planned to enroll summer or fall semester).

In the interim, RCC can review enrollment findings from Norco College 2023-2024 SEP Research study. Though the Norco College study was not specific to Black / African American females (their Enrollment equity gap was Black / African American students in general), their findings could provide insights into potential barriers to successful enrollment at RCC and how students recommend removing those barriers.

Representative sample took into consideration the following criteria:

- Enrollment status
 - Full-time
 - Part-time
 - No longer enrolled (eligible if withdrew SP24 w/o transfer or vision goal)
- Gender
 - Female
 - Male
 - Nonbinary
 - Choose not to say
- Highest Parent Education
 - 1st Gen - first generation college student
 - Not 1st Gen - not a first-generation college student
- Participated in RCC learning communities and/or support programs (Learning communities such as Rainbow, Puente, Guardian Scholar, and Special Programs such as UMOJA, Promise Program, La Casa, Student Athletics, CalWORKs, Honors, EOPS/Care, etc.)
 - LC/SP = Yes
 - LC/SP = No
- Vision Goal
 - CTE
 - AA
 - AT
 - Transfer
 - Uncertain
- When they began at RCC

- New (first enrolled between SU2023-FA2023)
 - On-going (first enrolled SP2023 or earlier)
- Types of courses
 - Online
 - Hybrid
 - In-person
- Age
 - 18-25 years
 - 26-35 years
 - 36+ years
- Living Wage (calculated variable based on location, household income, number of adults residing in household, and number of children residing in household)

Timeline

The study was scheduled for Spring 2024 to learn from findings of Norco College (district member college) Student Equity Plan Research Study, a study funded by Growing Inland Achievement. Learning from Norco College’s comprehensive multi-step research study allowed RCC to make the most of the budget constraints in their own equity research.

- Students were recruited April 15, 2024 – May 10, 2024.
- Study held on May 14-16, 2024.

Study Content

Study activities were designed to decrease stress on participants brought on during self-reflection. This included making certain each question was inclusive, judgement free, and that each day’s last activity was a positive and/or empowering one.

Day 1

1. About You - insight into student-life outside RCC
2. Goals – professional and personal goals
3. RCC Relationship – understanding where RCC is most and least successful overall
4. Working Towards a Path – confidence in vision goal traction
5. Course Advisors – steps taken /advisors supporting vision goal traction
6. Improving Advisors – how to improve getting the course advisement they need
7. Vision Goal Improvement – how RCC can improve vision goal completion

Day 2

8. Memory activity
9. First course advisor – who what advised their first course selection
10. First course direction – advice given about recommended first year courses including course transferability and available support/tutoring
11. Course experience – experience with instructors, coursework and classmates
12. Improving courses – student recommendations to improve courses
13. Improving Math – student recommendations to improve Math courses
14. Not enrolling in Math - why not enroll in Math their 1st year

15. Communicating Math –knowing benefits of completing math 1st year
16. Improving English – student recommendations to improve English courses
17. Not enrolling in English - why not enroll in English their first year
18. Communicating English –knowing benefits of completing Eng 1st year
19. Improving Math & English Enrollment – student recommendations to improve 1st year enrollment in Math and English

Day 3

20. Belonging – do student feel a sense of belonging at RCC
21. Improve Belonging – how to improve student sense of belonging
22. Support Services – support services students have used
23. Helpful Support - support services that have been most helpful and why
24. Support Needs Improvement – support services that need improvement and why
25. New or inaccessible Support – student wish list of support services
26. Transfer Uncertainty – why are students uncertain if they can transfer
27. Transfer Confidence – how to increase student confidence in their ability to transfer
28. Transfer Support – student recommendations to increase successful transfer
29. Communication Plan – student recommendations to make sure all students know and can easily access the information they need to succeed

Data Collection Platform

Qualboard was chosen as the data collection platform because it allowed participants to participate anytime, anywhere, from any device. Participants could flip back and forth between devices and even use text messaging for follow-up questions, if it better suited their communication needs. Participants could also choose to complete each day's activities in multiple or one-seating.

This platform also allowed participants to choose the communication medium that best suited them: written, video, or images.

DEMOGRAPHICS

Student Demographics

Students were recruited to reflect a representative sample of the disproportionately impacted students at Riverside City College.

Foster Youth

Internal Code	Responses	
No	34	66.7%
Yes	17	33.3%
	51	100%

Personal Racial Descriptors (multi-select and write-in responses allowed)

Answer Choices	Responses	
Afro Latina/o/x	2	3.9%
Black / African American	19	37.3%
Hispanic / Latinx	19	37.3%
Native American	4	7.8%
Pacific Islander	4	7.8%
White / Caucasian	11	21.6%
Other: Belizean	1	1.9%

Enrollment

Answer Choices	Responses	
Enrolled in 12+ units	18	35.3%
Enrolled in less than 12 units	33	64.7%
	51	100%

Participated in RCC Learning Community and/or Special Program

Answer Choices	Responses	
No	24	47.1%
Yes	27	52.9%
	51	100%

Gender

Answer Choices	Responses	
Female	35	68.6%
Male	16	31.4%
Nonbinary	0	0.0%
Choose not to say	0	0.0%
	51	100%

First Enrolled at RCC

Answer Choices	Responses	
Before this school year SP2023 or earlier (On-going)	28	54.9%
This school year – SU2023 or FA2023 (New)	23	45.1%
	51	100%

Parent/Guardian Highest Education

Answer Choices	Responses	
No College (1 st Generation College)	15	29.4%
Some college, no degree (1 st Generation College)	19	37.3%
College degree or higher (Not 1 st Gen)	16	31.4%
Uncertain	1	1.9%
	51	100%

Vision Goal

Answer Choices	Responses	
Associate degree	8	15.7%
Associate for Transfer to 4-year	28	54.9%
Transfer to 4-year only	3	5.9%
Certificate program	6	11.8%
Uncertain	6	11.8%
	51	100%

Types of Classes

Answer Choices	Responses	
Hybrid	15	29.4%
In-person	12	23.5%
Online	24	47.1%
	51	100%

Age

Answer Choices	Responses	
18-25 years	16	31.4%
26-35 years	15	29.4%
36+ years	20	39.2%
	51	100%

Living Wage (calculated variable based on location, household income, number of adults residing in household, and number of children residing in household)

Answer Choices	Responses	
No	36	70.6%
Yes	15	29.4%
	51	100%

Household Income

Answer Choices	Responses	
Less than \$25,000	17	33.3%
\$25,000 to \$49,999	17	33.3%
\$50,000 to \$74,999	7	13.7%
\$75,000 to \$99,999	1	1.9%
\$100,000 to \$124,000	6	11.8%
\$125,000 or more	3	5.9%
	51	100%

Number of Adults Residing in Household

Answer Choices	Responses	
1 only me	17	37.3%
2	17	29.41%
3	7	17.65%
4	1	11.76%
5	6	1.96%
7	3	1.96%
	51	100%

Number of Children (<18 years old) Residing in Household

Answer Choices	Responses	
0	0	0.00%
1	14	21.5%
2	16	24.6%
3	12	18.5%
4	8	12.3%
5	15	23.1%
	51	100%