

2025-2028 Student Equity Plan

Executive Summary

Norco College

Contextual Introduction

“There’s no greater agony than bearing an untold story inside you.”
-Maya Angelou, *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings*

We proclaim equity work is collective work. Norco College (NC) believes equity does not belong to one person or one designated group of our college. Equity is more than a principle we follow; it is the mutual respect we carry for our shared community. As equity champions and practitioners, we intentionally ground this Student Equity Plan (SEP) in the communal truth and belief that student stories live within every statistic and we must not only tell the statistical accounts, but we must also tell the narrative truths, which demand that we recount the lives that exist inside the statistics. The stories and quotes centered throughout this plan were gathered through a holistic, culturally relevant and responsive qualitative inquiry process with current and potential students—for us these stories do not exist outside of the data, they are the data. Throughout this plan, we invite you to experience the lives of our students, as their stories direct, shape, and challenge our former and future equity strategies and initiatives. Through incorporating their stories, we invite you to listen intently, as we did, ensuring their stories do not remain untold, but instead become catalyst for shared work improving student equity here at Norco College and beyond.

**All names and identifying information have been changed and fictionalized to protect the privacy of the respondents.*

It’s 8:10 am on the first day of the fall semester. Isaac has just turned right onto Mustang Circle and is stuck in the long line of cars dropping students off at the roundabout. The baby was stirring in the back when Dawn grabbed her purse and a notebook before getting out, “I’m not going to be long; they said if I go talk to someone, I could maybe add the class before it starts tomorrow and get financial aid. Give me like 30 minutes, tops.”

“What if she wakes up and starts hollering,” Issac glanced at the car seat in the rearview mirror, anxious to get the car moving and Amara sleeping soundly.

“Just pick her up or something; I won’t be long, I got work in two hours,” Dawn closed the door and rushed up the stairs towards the first building she saw.

While he waited and kept the car idling, Issac pulled out his cell phone, trying to finish enrolling. He kept refreshing the screen, but he kept arriving at the same issue—he couldn’t figure out what to do next. “Man, this is easy, and I’m over here stuck on step

one, can't get past Go. Ain't no way I'm ready for nobody's college; I don't care what Dawn talking about."

In Pedley, a few miles away, Sarah and Javier, sat at the dining room table in their Abuelo's house. Sarah was translating the instructions of Abuelito's newest heart medication, as Javier went through a catalog of classes for Norco College. While Sarah was nearing the end of her six-year journey, Javier was just beginning his. Despite the different turns and trials their paths will take, both journeys will be equally challenging.

"Ay, Hermana, ven aca. Which one of these classes do I got to pick?"

"Javi, pick whatever they told you to," Sarah said while counting out pills for their abuelito's organizer. "I got an hour to finish Abuelito's meds, get ready for work, and make Gio's lunch."

"No me dijeron nada. They just gave me this sheet with a bunch of classes and said take them cuando quiero, whenever."

Javier was tired of Sarah getting on him about working, talking about he needed to think about his future. Apa taught him to work, like him and Ama, but Sarah's chiding him like a second mother was driving him crazy. Ever since Abuelita died she's been acting as if she was his mom, telling him he needs to think about what's next.

"Well, just don't take an English class yet, especially not like the one I had. Teacher kept giving everyone zeros and everybody was just dropping."

"I'm'a just pick anything, then."

"I mean, if they didn't tell you nothing else, just pick whatever, but at least get started, Javi."

These are not random or exceptional experiences and stories. Issac and Dawn, Javier and Sarah are reflections of the systematic barriers students have navigated while undertaking a path toward upward mobility at NC. Instead of asking our students to continue bearing the agony of their untold stories of struggle and working through our well-meaning but misguided intentions, through the 2025 – 2028 Student Equity Plan (SEP), NC moves beyond acknowledging the systematic barriers and challenges that have perpetuated persistent equity gaps for our disproportionately impacted (DI) students, but we also commit to centering our students' stories, speaking truth to our power to change inequities, and working intentionally to dismantle the burdens they've carried. By focusing on and drawing from students' lived experiences in their own voices, we aim to turn their day-to-day realities into catalysts for institutional change rooted in our holistic, culturally relevant and responsive data inquiry processes, which will now drive our decision-making.

While these are distinctly personal experiences—we know their uniqueness is deeply familiar to greater populations of DI students NC has endeavored to serve. Their four experiences represent

what data has told us time and time again: without rooting our work in an “equity minded mode of thinking,” our efforts will continue to support, uphold, and foster inequitable systems that burden the current and future dreams and lives of our students.

For students like Isaac and Sarah, NC’s shift was desperately needed and did not arrive soon enough:

“What you mean you ain’t gonna go?” Dawn asked Isaac. He was halfway out of the car, dressed in his Chipotle uniform, ready to take on his late shift. “We was supposed to do this together.”

“I can’t be bothered with that right now, Dawn. Not while Amara is so young and needs so much. I mean, I tried but if I can’t get the most simplest part right, it must not be for me. Plus, we can’t afford to pay for both of us, so you just keep going.”

“They said I might not have to pay if I can qualify for something else, but I just didn’t get it in this time.”

“If you can’t get help and you doing everything right, then what you think it will look like for me?” Isaac kissed Amara on the forehead, then Dawn, “Don’t worry, I’m a make manager soon.”

“Isaac we too old to be working with teenagers, we got to do something else.” Dawn felt like she was failing him and their baby. She never imagined they’d be seven years after graduation and still working, barely making ends meet.

Meanwhile, across town Sarah and Javier were enduring their own challenges. Sarah was struggling in a math class during her sixth year; it was one of the last classes she needed to finally graduate.

“I’m struggling in this class,” Sarah confided in her work best friend, Ana. “It don’t feel like anyone is helping me understand the subject better. Problems are written on a white board and we just work on the problems, but no one is helping us with our mistakes really. The professor don’t make designated time to go over homework problems. I think I’m going to have to drop it.”

“What if you got a tutor; I’m sure they have tutors you can hire,” Ana said.

“That’s the thing, I can’t afford it, but if I drop or don’t pass the class, I won’t graduate and it’s already been six years. Me and Gio can’t live con mis papás por simple.” Sarah sighed and tried not to tear up. She couldn’t afford to lose it at work and put her job in jeopardy.

Javier, having felt alone and unguided through the class selection process, found himself unsure about how his progress was unfolding.

Javier, quickly climbed the stairs towards Mr. Johnson's office; he was nervous and his tendency during times like this was to move fast. It was like the faster his heart pumped blood through his valves, the faster his feet beat the stairs through the stairwells. He landed at the top, and realized arriving sweaty with his heart-racing might not send the right message to Mr. Johnson, and he was desperately trying to impress him. He wanted to show he had the potential to become a CPA.

"You gotta slow down and breathe," Javier told himself. He counted to five with his eyes closed, while slowing down his breath. Soon as he felt his heart rate settle, he did a quick smell check of his armpits, before opening the door and exiting the stairwell to see what the boss wanted.

"Good Afternoon, Sir," Javier announced his arrival.

"Javier! Come in Son," Mr. Johnston stood, walking towards the door. He shut the door and continued, "I wanted to talk to you about your progress at school, Norco, right? We have a junior-level position coming up and I think you'd be excellent for it, but you'll need an Associate's degree, or at least an Accounting certificate."

"Yes, sir; I'm currently at Norco." Javier sat up a bit taller, his Apa was always on him about standing and sitting tall, proud, showing he was deserving. Now, more than ever, he wanted to show that.

"I thought so. How's it going? When do you think you'll have your degree or even a certificate?" Mr. Johnston grabbed the job description he printed for Javier and sat at the edge of his desk.

"It's going well. I'm somewhat confident I'm working towards my goal, but I don't have a date. I've done the coursework on the sheet they gave me and attended a few meetings of the Business club. But I don't know the exact steps towards completing the certificate or degree."

"Have you met with a counselor, yet?" Mr. Johnston looked a bit confused, "My daughter is completing her last year at Riverside City, she's been there two years and is ready to transfer. Her counselor was key to her getting through so fast."

"No, sir. I've never been able to get an appointment with an advisor; they're always booked."

"Oh, you don't know the Midnight Rule. The trick is to sign up at midnight; that's when all the new appointments become available." Mr. Johnston shook his head in a bit of dismay, "It's an odd trick to the system; wonder why no one's told you already."

Issac, Dawn, Sarah, and Javier are not experiencing isolated or unique experiences; we've uncovered that for DI students at NC, enrolling, gaining financial aid, or finishing in three years is not a matter of effort. Many DI students at Norco are navigating a system that was never

properly designed to ensure their success. Unfortunately, our research has uncovered that when Black students like Isaac suspend the enrollment process, they do not come back to us and abandon college all together. Sarah and Dawn represent varied but common situations as many of our Black/AA and Hispanic/Latine women students: They are more likely to report burnout and express little time to care for themselves with the burdens they carry for both their families and their extended family. Javier is like many of our DI Hispanic/Latine students—they feel left to figure things out on their own and without clarity of how to schedule counseling appointments they're left to navigating the system without completing a vision goal and understanding their next steps.

We acknowledge these experiences have persisted as part of a larger arc of social, racial, gender, ability, class, sexual, and historic matrices of inequities that have impacted the larger systems and structures of academia, including our institution. Despite our best intentions and efforts, it has taken time to understand, uncover, and develop NC's current approach to student equity. Over the past two SEP cycles, covering six years, NC has moved through phases of awareness and intentional but misguided action, to researching and identifying root causes through student-centered inquiry, to coalescing key college constituents to develop data-driven actionable steps. While we celebrate the incremental strides we have made towards change, we recognize to understand where we currently stand and where we must go, we must begin by reflecting on how we arrived here. Equity work at NC has not been a static endeavor, it has evolved over planning cycles with pivots marked by reflection, deeper listening, and learning how to better serve students as equity champions and practitioners. During each cycle we have dug deeper, constantly moving towards uncovering and identifying the root causes of our systematic inequities and uncovering our blind spots. Our hope moving forward is to shorten the path between intention and impact and creating lasting institutional cultural change.

Operating from a place of critically engaged agency and hope turned inwards, during the previous 2022-25 SEP cycle, NC engaged with inquiry activities that better aligned with our pursuit of achieving the target outcomes outlines in the 2022-25 SEP, resulting in significant insight into the systematic causes that root and perpetuate the equity gaps identified in Black/AA and Latine students. Qualitative inquiry research uncovered the most tenacious gaps have been driven by a synthesis of systematic challenges that impede students' success: persistent access barriers, support insufficiently tailored to disproportionately impacted (DI) students, and demographically misaligned communication.

We locate ourselves in the current moment by reflecting, not as an accounting of what we have done, but to acknowledge, address, and identify what still must be done.

2022-2025 SEP Assessment: Uncovering Root Causes of Inequity

Norco College (NC) approached the 2022-2025 Student Equity Plan (SEP) with a sharp focus on dismantling institutional barriers that disrupt efforts to close equity gaps. Through a keen emphasis on utilizing data-driven decision making while implementing and undertaking equity efforts and initiatives, NC took action to ascertain the root causes that lay at the foundation of continued inequitable outcomes for its Disproportionately Impacted (DI) Black/AA and Hispanic/Latine students. NC arrived at this decision following the 2019-2022 Student Equity

Plan Review by University of Southern California’s Center for Urban Education (CUE), where it was noted the SEP included minimal details regarding how the plan’s activities were derived, how the plans were proposed to make a difference for Black/AA and Hispanic/Latine students, and finally, details outlining how the implementation and evaluation of the proposed activities would occur were lacking. With Black/AA and Hispanic/Latine students accounting for 65% of NC’s student population and targeted interventions and support confined to historically unfunded/under-funded special programs (Puente and Umoja), NC committed to focusing its efforts on examining the institutional policies, practices, and processes that perpetuated inequitable outcomes for both DI populations during the 2022-25 Student Equity Plan cycle.

Instead of continuing with activities and initiatives without a grounded understanding for our equity gaps’ causes, NC took a step back to reflect and engage with holistic, culturally relevant and responsive inquiry activities that uncovered what rooted our inequitable outcomes in each of the five metrics for the student equity plan designated by the California Community Colleges Chancellor’s Office (CCCCO).

Successful Enrollment: percentage of first-time in college students who applied and enrolled in the same year in a primary term*

Transfer-level math and English: percentage of first-time in college students who completed transfer-level math and English in the first year*

Persistence: percentage of first-time in college students who enrolled in the subsequent semester*

Vision Goal Completion: percentage of first-time college students who completed a degree or certificate in three years**

Transfer: percentage of first-time in college students who transferred to a four-year institution within three years**

**first-time college students who were credit enrolled, excluding special admit students*

*** first-time college students who were credit enrolled who earned 12+ units any time in three years and exited the California Community College system, excluding special admit students*

Following a review of the 2019 – 2022 SEP, NC composed a project team of faculty, staff, and administrators to develop the 2022 – 2025 SEP. This SEP focused on data-driven decision-making to determine the root causes of enduring inequitable outcomes for DI students of color. Using longitudinal data, NC utilized its Office of Institutional Effectiveness to generate a disproportionate impact (DI) study using the Percentage Point Gap-1 (PPG-1) methodology to identify equity gaps across the five metrics.

In Winter 2023, NC hired an equity-centered research consultant to help develop and lead inquiry activities to investigate the leading causes of the equity gaps for the DI students identified and prioritized by the College in the 2022-2025 Student Equity Plan (see Figure 1).

Figure 1. 2022-2025 Student Equity Plan DI Groups by Metrics with Three-Year Action Plan

Metric	Successful Enrollment	Transfer English & Math	Persistence	Vision Completion	Transfer
Population	Black/ African American	Hispanic/Latinx	Black/ African American	Hispanic/Latinx	Hispanic/Latinx
DI	7/7	4/10	6/9	3/7	6/6
Goal	Decrease equity gap by 40% by 2025				
Action Plan:	Implement inquiry-based process to identify and eliminate equity gaps				
Year 1 (2022-23)	Using an action research lens, create and launch equity-minded inquiry teams for each metric. Teams will assess and evaluate practices, policies, and culture that may be contributing to equity gaps, and make recommendations to close equity gaps.				
Year 2 (2023-24)	Pilot recommendations, collect quantitative and qualitative data, evaluate efficacy of intervention(s) and make adjustments, or pivot if necessary				
Year 3 (2024-2025)	Implement changes, collect data, evaluate efficacy, and finetune intervention(s). Changes will be operationalized until gap is reduced by 40%.				

Subsequently, in Spring 2023, faculty, staff, and students were recruited to serve on a Student Equity Plan Inquiry (SEPI) project team that aligned with the DI study generated by the Office of Institutional Effectiveness. Team members were selected and/or appointed in consultation with Academic Senate and California School Employee Association (CSEA) appointment procedures with support from Executive Leadership. The initial team was comprised of 12 faculty, 12 classified professionals, and eight students, and an administrative team consisting of managers and Institutional Research. They focused their efforts on gaining a better understanding of equity gaps for Black/AA students and Hispanic/Latine students which were broken down accordingly based on our DI findings:

Black/African American Student Equity Gaps

- Enrolling successfully
- Persisting from first to second term

Hispanic/Latine Student Equity Gaps

- Successfully completing transfer-level Math and English in their 1st year
- Attaining their vision goal (degree or certification completion) by their 3rd year
- Transferring to a four-year college (independent of degree completion) by their 3rd year.

In the summer of 2023, team members completed a two-day comprehensive training on qualitative research methods and conducted a comprehensive assessment of student support services and instructional practices using the “action research” method. The team also provided key feedback to the researcher on the design and implantation of the inquiry study. Following the work generated in the summer, in Fall 2023 the researcher conducted rigorous representative sampling to find students from various categories for the study. Once identified, the researcher held two 3-day confidential, online interactive surveys with students, using multimodal cognitive methods to conduct 45-60 minutes of activities daily with participants, yielding approximately 10,000 minutes of data interactions.

In keeping with our efforts to promote equitable outcomes, participants were compensated for their participation and allowed to respond and engage with the researcher during times that fit their schedules and in modalities they were already comfortable and proficient utilizing. The inquiry process was designed to meet respondents where they were, and to properly compensate them for their time and emotional investment. Finally, all student respondents were offered supportive services in response to any needs that arose during their reflections.

Acting as a deeper analysis of the previously identified equity gaps, the inquiry work conducted by the independent researcher worked to uncover what causes lie at the root of our DI student population's persistent gaps. It revealed to us that

1. Access to resources and support services such as academic advising, tutoring, financial aid, and mental health services were poorly tailored to, communicated to, and routinely inaccessible to Black/Latine students. Students often lacked knowledge of the resources available or did not know how to successfully secure support.
2. Students expressed a lack of belonging and cultural affirmation within the greater campus atmosphere, including the campus at large and within instructional and supportive spaces. Without a sense of cultural belonging and space to be authentically represented and appreciated, DI students expressed sentiments of burn-out and disengagement. Alongside a lack of a sense of belonging and cultural affirmation, students identified this lack was couple with a lack of empathy across campus entities they routinely interacted with.
3. DI students faced tremendous financial barriers (resources to secure course material and textbooks, lack of financial aid system knowledge, struggles with living expenses, and family financial obligations demanding greater work burdens) associated with attending college that led to greater financial and mental stress, leading to early drop-out.
4. Students identified a lack of effective, consistent, and timely communication as ongoing barriers and challenges to sustained success. Our qualitative inquiry highlighted a disconnect between resources students reported needing and desiring, and their awareness these resources already exists.

Following the study, during Winter 2024, the Inquiry team participated in a six-hour presentation that synthesized the findings of the research inquiry, as well as student and researcher identified recommendations.

My typical day would consist of waking and sliding out of bed trying to not wake the baby—wake my siblings for school—serve breakfast—my daughter wakes up and I change her and get her ready for the day—she goes with her day, and I take my siblings to school before heading to my morning class...I go to class and after I head to work, after work I pick up the kids...I then drop the kids off with my daughter's father and then head to my night class. The next day is a bit different, but mostly the same. Sometimes I have time to make dinner.

I wake up feeling tired and having some pain. I felt like I had a productive day [yesterday], but I was tired physically and emotionally.

-Anonymous Female Student

The inquiry moved beyond producing data, it revealed truths and uncovered the burdens our students carried. For example, Dawn's account highlights the burden Black female students often carry caretaking for their families and extended families while working and navigating school; they reported often feeling tired when they wake up and throughout their day. When reflecting about their experiences unsuccessfully navigating Norco College, Black respondents, both male and female, often blamed themselves for their lack of success. They routinely described arduous systems as "easy," even when they were unsuccessful at navigating the "easy" elements.

More precisely, our inquiry respondents helped us identify the following root causes to the persistent equity gaps, helping us to see where we have failed to dismantle the systems and processes that hinder their success and perpetuate equity gaps.

Isaac's decision to abandon the process of attending college was not rare, in fact, many Black students found the process arduous; it was also not a reflection of his deficient—it was reflective of ours.

This whole experience was intimidating at first.

I had a lot of questions that needed to be answered. I didn't have a lot of luck reaching an advisor and finally gave up.

-Anonymous Black Student

Our Black/AA respondents helped us to understand the following,

Black/AA Students' Reported Root Equity Causes

- **Lack of True Financial Aid Knowledge:** Potential and new students described themselves as knowledgeable about financial aid, but most were applying for key aid post-deadlines; additionally, despite their family income placing them below a living wage, their post-deadline applications were leading to disqualification for key grant money, such as the Pell Grant.
- **External Barriers to Financial Aid:** Students routinely identified parents who were unwilling to share tax information and an inability to communicate the importance and security of sharing this information, resulting in them not completing the FAFSA and securing aid.
- **Non-Intuitive Onboarding Technology and Tools:** New and potential students below a living wage more frequently detailed difficulty navigating Getting Started Tools; additionally, new and potential students expressed lack of clear communication on how to use Getting Started Tools, resulting in barriers to enrollment and/or difficulties navigating their first and early experiences at Norco.
- **Gatekeeping Counseling Rules:** Continuing students identified a lack of communication regarding when counseling appointments became available (midnight), resulting in only students "in the know" or part of special programs securing counseling appointments. The counseling "midnight rule" serves as a barrier to many new students enrolling and discourages continuing students from re-enrolling/persisting.
- **Lack of Awareness of Support Services:** Many new and continuing students were unaware of supportive student services beyond financial aid and counseling.

- Limited Communication of Student Services: The number one response from students was a lack of communication about existing services, their purposes, costs, and how to access them.
- Limited Communication of Campus Events: Students also expressed limited communication about campus events, groups, and activities.
- No Sense of Belonging on Campus and a Lack of Empathy: Most new and continuing Black/AA students expressed feeling like they do not belong and feel out of place on campus. Students also expressed a lack of empathy from faculty and supportive staff.
- Lack of Information/Clarity about Courses and Paths: Students reported a lack of self-serve information that allows them to identify which courses to enroll in to successfully navigate their academic path.

Meanwhile, our Hispanic/Latine students like Javier might eventually make it successfully to their second year, but as they progressed, they also struggled along an unclear path, arbitrarily picking classes without guidance, and not feeling confident in the transfer process. Often using the terms advisor and counselor interchangeably, they showed us that independent of their student status (new/ongoing) or their living wage, first generation status, or program status, their knowledge or lack thereof was rooted in not having first-hand experiences with our counselors, leading to subsequent equity gaps, like vision attainment. In fact, our research showed us many of Hispanic/Latine students, especially younger students, did not have clear academic or career goals.

“Honestly, I don’t know I’m still figuring my life out, but probably something simple that makes money, nothing special but I’m thinking about the proven ways, like real estate, restaurants, laundromats, maybe learn how to fix cars, or do taxes since I’m majoring in accounting.”

“I don’t know anything about trying to get into a four-year college, and also, I understand attending a four-year college has a much higher tuition rate.”

-Anonymous Hispanic/Latine students

Like most DI Hispanic/Latine students, Javier struggled to find his way through a clear path.

I could have used the hand holding in the beginning, where I was learning how to apply for classes and what classes I should take. Norco could have helped me with that by providing a step-by-step basis on what I should do and any important information for me.

Unfortunately, had to navigate my career plan by myself. I didn’t have help...I had to research a lot.

I felt like I was in this alone.

-Anonymous Hispanic/Latine students

Our Hispanic/Latine respondents helped us to understand the following:

Hispanic/Latine Students:

- **Obstacles to Math/English Completion:** Students expressed a lack of knowledge and awareness about when they should complete Math/English courses. Students also identified they were not told why (greater chance of success) they should complete these courses first.
- **Obstacles to Vision Goal Attainment:** Students expressed feeling left to figure out things alone, and a lack of “hand-holding” in the step-by-step process, resulting in a need to do a lot of research to figure out how to navigate their career plan.
- **Counseling Clarity Lacking:** Students reported a lack of knowledge and clarity regarding the process of scheduling counseling appointments—most are not aware of the “midnight rule.”
- **Lack of Understanding/Knowledge about Transferring:** Students identified a main barrier to transferring to a four-year college is not knowing and understanding what the process would entail; they also reported having questions about four-year institutions, but not knowing where or how to get answers to their questions.
- **Lack of Awareness of Existing Support:** When considering transferring and transfer equity, students expressed a lack of awareness about the existing supportive services available to them.

In summation, by approaching the persistent equity gaps DI Black/AA and Hispanic/Latine students face with a holistic inquiry that married quantitative data from NC’s Office of Institutional Effectiveness and culturally relevant and response qualitative research from an outside consultant during the 2022 – 2025 SEP cycle, NC was able to better understand the institutional causes that have systematically impacted identified student populations and recommend institutional and cultural changes:

- To systematically overhaul and enact institutional change that is lasting and effective, NC will need to improve the ways it communicates and delivers pertinent information to the targeted DI student populations.
- NC has done a great job of creating and implementing many student-serving services, resources, and tools students need to succeed, but the way they are communicated and delivered are reinforcing existing equity gaps instead of removing them. At the core of next steps for NC is to completely overhaul and redesign the ways these services are not only communicated, but also designed, implemented, and delivered to targeted student populations.

2025-2028 Disproportionate Impact (DI) Findings

For the 2025-2028 Student Equity Plan, the CCCCO requires the use of the PPG-1 methodology. The PPG-1 methodology removes the outcome rate of the primary subgroup from the reference group to determine DI. The outcome rate of the primary subgroup is compared to the outcome rate of all other cohort students, rather than comparing the outcome rate of the primary subgroup to the outcome rate of all cohort students. For example, the Percentage Point Gap minus one (PPG-1) methodology compares the persistence rate of Hispanic/Latinx students to the persistence rate of all non-Hispanic/Latinx students. For a detailed explanation of PPG-1, please

visit The California Community Colleges Chancellor’s Office (CCCCO) publication [CCCCO Percentage Point Gap Minus One \(PPG-1\) Methodology Notes \[2022\]](#). The CCCCCO now provides annual PPG-1 student equity plan data.

Norco College utilizes the PPG-1 methodology to examine longitudinal DI across student groups. The numbers highlighted in yellow in the table below (see Figure 2) indicate the student populations identified with the highest number of years of DI when data are disaggregated by ethnicity as required by the CCCCCO. The numbers in parentheses at the top of each column, next to each metric, indicate the number of years of data made available.

Figure 2. Norco College DI Populations by Equity Metric for Racial/Ethnic Student Groups

Primary Subgroup	#1 Successful Enrollment (9)	#2 Completed Eng/Mat (11)	#3 Persist (10)	#4 Vision Completion (8)	#5 Transfer (7)
American Indian/Alaska Native	2	5	1	<u>3</u>	<u>3</u>
Asian	1	0	0	0	1
Black/AA	<u>7</u>	3	4	0	0
Filipino	0	0	0	0	0
Hispanic/Latinx	0	<u>6</u>	<u>1</u>	2	<u>6</u>
Multiple Values Reported	1		0	0	
Pacific Islander or Hawaiian Native	3	2	0	2	4
Two or More Races	0	3	2	2	0
Unknown/Non-Respondent	<u>8</u>	5	1	<u>4</u>	1
White	5	0	0	0	0

**Bolded and underlined counts indicate that DI was found in the most recent year available*

Black/AA students are identified as having the highest number of years with DI in the first-year outcomes (Successful Enrollment and Persistence), and Hispanic/Latinx students are identified as having the highest number of years with DI in two of the completion outcomes (Transfer English/Math Completion, and Transfer). American Indian/Alaska Native students are newly identified as having the highest number of years of DI in Vision Completion, which Hispanic/Latinx students previously held.

Additionally, Norco College examined DI across student populations as recommended by the student equity plan (see Figure 3). The DI subgroups included Gender, First-Generation, Individuals with Disabilities, Foster Youth, Veterans, LGBT, and Perkins eligible students.

Figure 3: Norco College DI Populations by Equity Metric for Special Populations

Primary Subgroup	#1 Successful Enrollment (9)	#2 Completed Eng/Mat (11)	#3 Persist (10)	#4 Vision Completion (8)	#5 Transfer (7)
Female	3	1	1	0	0
Male	0	2	2	<u>5</u>	<u>3</u>
Multiple Values Reported	1				
Non-Binary*	0	3 (of 4)	0	<u>1</u> (of 1)	
Unknown/Non-Respondent	<u>6</u>	0	0	2	0
First Generation	-	<u>9</u>	<u>6</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>5</u>
DSPS	-	2	0	0	1
Foster Youth	-	<u>4</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>4</u>	0
Veteran	-	2	0	0	0
LGBT*	-	2	<u>3</u>	<u>3</u>	0
Perkins	-	1	0	0	<u>2</u>

**Bolded and underlined counts indicate that DI was found in the most recent year available*

The table above indicates disproportionate impact among gender, first-generation, and Foster Youth students. The College will continue supporting these groups through existing programs and services such as the Asian American Native Hawaiian Pacific Islander (AANHPI) Student Achievement Program, the Basic Needs Resource Center, Men of Color Scholars Program, MESA, Phoenix Scholars, the Unity Zone, and Umoja.

Moving forward, Norco College will continue to prioritize an intensive focus on Black/AA and Hispanic/Latinx students per the 2025-2028 Student Equity Plan requirements. These students represent 75% of all First-Generation students and 68% of all First-Time College students at Norco College (see Figure 4).

Figure 4. Intensive Focus DI Groups by Metric with Number of Students to Close the Gap

Group	Metric Number	Metric Description	Students to fully close gap (most recent year available)
Black/African American Students 6% of FTCS 4% of First Gen students	1	Successful Enrollment	28/405
	3	Persistence	9/95
Hispanic/Latinx Students 62% of FTCS 72% of First Gen Students	2	Compl Transfer Eng/Mat	86/1073
	4	Vision Completion	18/1519
	5	Transfer	47/523

**American Indian/Alaska Native newly identified as DI in Vision Completion*

The current student equity will build on and continue the work from our 2022-2025 student equity plan, which prioritized uncovering the root causes of inequity for Black/AA and Hispanic/Latinx students. With continued focus on these same student populations, planned activities are in direct response to the qualitative research findings of our 2022-2025 plan. The planned activities are aimed at addressing systemic barriers to equity through structural changes and improvements. Additionally, the Office of Planning and Development will provide leadership, integration, and coordination of equity services and programs to ensure support of all DI students, including American Indian/Alaska Native, male-identifying students, first-generation students, Non-Binary students, and Foster Youth.

2025-2028 SEP Action Plan

While previous years' plans (2019 – 2022) were well-intentional, they were not intentionally focused on the racial groups with the highest DI, resulting in equity efforts that were primarily focused on student services and programs but lacked involvement of instructional faculty, staff, and students. There was little focus on driving decision with data that analyzed the rooting causes of inequitable outcomes, resulting on persistent high levels of DI for Black/AA and Hispanic/Latine students.

NC utilized the most recent SEP cycle (2022 – 2025) to utilize holistic inquiry to map out all services, activities, structures, and cultural practices to ascertain and get at the root of inequitable causes and outcomes for Black/AA and Hispanic/Latine students. Following the recommendations of our constituents (faculty, staff, students) and the Inquiry Consultant, NC has developed the following action plans that will inform the campus community's investments in services and initiatives targeted to have the greatest impact in closing equity gaps for Black/AA and Hispanic/Latine student populations:

1. **Targeted Summer Bridge Event(s) for Black Students:** One of NC’s key initiatives targeting Black Student Success will be a summer bridge event that prioritizes DI student participation, with targeted outreach to Black students. The proposed event will provide access to resources in academic support in both Math and English, counseling and career assistance, while also providing social and emotional support to foster students’ transition into college. Summer Bridge will provide workshops on financial literacy/financial aid, career exploration, and build a sense of community, belonging, and preparedness through peer and staff engagement. By providing students with relevant tools they need to succeed before they begin their first semester, Summer Bridge intends to significantly improve the enrollment, retention, and success rates of DI Black student populations. By facilitating a collaborative approach between student services, academic affairs, and equity programming, this approach to early intervention addresses both academic and non-academic barriers from the inception to close the equity gap of enrollment and persistence for Black students.

“I think it’s confusing because I don’t think I ever got a comprehensive overview, or if I did it was overshadowed by the mountainous barrage of information that is college.”

“I’d say maybe a short “quick start” guide that lists all the different sites/systems we use and what they are used for.”

“I believe that consolidating resources in a single location would greatly enhance navigation for students of all ages.”

“The thing that Norco should have done better in those pre-enrollment experiences is to make students feel like they’re on the journey together not just picking classes for another student.”

-Anonymous Student Inquiry Recommendations

2. **First-Year Experience (FYE) Program for Hispanic/Latine Students:** NC intends to target persistent gaps experienced by Hispanic/Latine Students with a key initiative, the First-Year Experience (FYE) program, specifically designed for DI Hispanic/Latine student populations. FYE will offer specialized academic advising and counseling, English and Math learning communities, and culturally relevant programming to support students and families during students’ first year at NC. The program is intended to help foster a sense of belonging by creating a supportive community for Hispanic/Latine students, connecting them with faculty, staff, and peers who share similar experiences and cultural backgrounds. This initiative and action step will support increased engagement, higher retention rates, and better completion of transfer-level courses in the first year with a culturally relevant and response cohort approach.

“Show statistics as to why it would be helpful to take these courses [English and Math] first.”

“Show orientation videos from students who are currently in school or recently graduated that could give real advice from a student perspective.”

“More math and English courses would need to be available to accommodate larger numbers of first-year students taking both math and English.”

“Norco could maybe offer a support group or something of the similar sort that could like meet once every month to make sure everyone is making progress towards their academic goals”

“It’s not easy to find a community, because there is not a lot of signage...we have opportunities here but it kind of feels like gatekeeping in that you gotta know someone to get that opportunity.”

-Anonymous Student Inquiry Recommendations

3. **Enhanced Communication and Outreach Strategy:** In direct response to the identified barriers around access to resources and support, NC has recognized its need to develop strategic communication strategies as a student equity priority. As a result, NC will develop a comprehensive communication plan to ensure all students, especially Black and Latine students, are regularly informed of available services and opportunities to support their success. The plan will include regular updates via text, email, and targeted social media, as well as campus-wide workshops and events that promote financial aid literacy, registration processes, and supportive services. We anticipate an increase in awareness will foster higher student participation in key services, resulting in improved persistence and completion rates for DI and all students.

“I think that there should maybe be a monthly webinar on how to get started with enrolling, registering, exploring pathways? I feel that there aren’t enough advertisement regarding career pathways and more generalized career paths are always offered.”

“Have a less standardized response to my new enrollment to create a more tailored experience and encourage understanding or question asking.”

“Norco could send emails encouraging students to receive support services.”

“They should make these support services clearer on the website...put like a direct link to each service.”

“Posting weekly about the services available on Norco CC Instagram...a banner, electronic sign, etc. that displays clearly what will be going on that month.”

-Anonymous Student Inquiry Recommendations

Building off the feedback obtained from NC's 2022-2025 SEP Review, NC took a step back from creating activities and initiatives without a deep understanding of the root causes that perpetuate equity gaps for our DI Black/AA and Hispanic/Latine students. We discovered that data-driven decision making must inform our equity work and that to dismantle the systems that disproportionately impact our Black/AA and Latine students we must engage in a holistic process of gathering data to inform our actions. NC further discovered that this inquiry process is only holistic and generative if we mined data not only from the Office of Institutional Effectiveness, but also if we practiced qualitative data procedures in a culturally relevant and responsive way. Finally, NC discovered that we have a wealth of equity practitioners within our constituents, who are not only key stakeholders in our equity goals but are also actively engaged and ready to develop and implement equity work and initiatives.

Moving forward, NC will ensure continuity between SEPs by ensuring all actions and initiatives are data-driven; our key constituents (faculty, staff, students) remain a key part of inquiry, development, and implementation; and we continue to foster an environment where equity is everybody's work. To achieve this NC developed institutional actions, approaches, and processes informed by the quantitative and qualitative research gathered that were garnered by the SEP inquiry groups. The comprehensive report developed by the consultant as well as the results and recommendations from the students and inquiry group has been used as a "blueprint" in the development of our targeted, equity-minded intervention to close equity gaps for Black/AA and Hispanic/Latine students. The interventions will be piloted in the forthcoming SEP cycle, along with continuing the annual Equity Summit piloted during the current SEP cycle.

By undertaking the forementioned institutional actions and initiatives that have been rooted in holistic and culturally responsive data-driven inquiry, NC is taking significant strides towards closing equity gaps. Through addressing both academic and non-academic barriers, fostering a sense of belonging and a culture of empathy, and improving access to resources, NC is not only meeting its equity goals but also cultivating a more inclusive and supportive campus environment. These efforts represent a fundamental cultural shift at NC towards creating an equitable, student-centered educational experience for all students, especially those from DI communities. This shift is rooted in the belief that equity is everybody's work and is in alignment with NC's core commitment to Access, Equity, Inclusiveness, and Student Success.

Section II

Our Equity Imperative

While the challenges we have confronted to effectively serve the educational needs of all our students are great, Norco College is poised to face them head-on and with a renewed commitment to closing racial equity gaps. To achieve this goal, the inquiry project teams have acted with a sense of urgency and have avoided being ambiguous about our equity imperative. Norco College has continued to focus its efforts on closing equity gaps for historically minoritized students, specifically Black/AA and Hispanic/Latinx students. While these student groups account for 65% of our populations, targeted interventions and support for Black/AA and Hispanic/Latinx students have been confined to historically unfunded/under-funded special programs, such as Puente and Umoja, which we have worked systematically to move towards a more holistic, campus wide intervention and support strategy. Like many institutions, Norco College historically provided a one-size fits all approach to student success. This race-blind approach failed to recognize the embedded structural racism that American institutions of higher education were founded on when Black Americans were denied the right to an education. We recognize that if we continued as we did in the past, we maintain and perpetuate the legacy of historical oppression on minoritized students by making invisible our collective institutional responsibility for equitable outcomes for all students, especially for Black/AA and Hispanic/Latinx students.

We boldly stand in correction and take agency and accountability for dismantling our systems and cycles of oppression at our institution.

Our focus on racialized students is based on critical race theory, which asserts that race is the most significant factor in determining educational outcomes. While class and gender intersect to help explain variances in education, race continues to be most powerful in predicting school experience and performance.¹ Our equity priority aims to address our lack of institutional knowledge and practice as agents of racial equity.

Our vision for our equity work is defined by the following concepts:

- Race Consciousness
- Intentional in its Focus
- Student Centered
- Institutional Expectations
- Data Driven
- Continuous Evaluation

Our work will continue to be inwardly focused to systematically address institutional structures and culture that impede equitable outcomes. Sylvia Hurtado argues that the

¹ Ladson-Billings, Gloria, and William F. Tate. "Toward a critical race theory of education." *Teachers college record* 97.1 (1995): 47.

campus racial climate must be addressed through the 1. Inclusion of students, faculty, staff, and managers from minoritized backgrounds; 2. Curriculum that reflects the experiences of minoritized students; 3. Targeted programs and support for minoritized students; and, 4. A mission statement that reflects a commitment to equity.² Specifically, our work seeks to engage in deep inquiry, action, and evaluation in transforming the attitudes, processes, systems, and climate that pose barriers to minoritized students.

The college's previous equity efforts have been primarily focused on creating programs and providing services for DI students. The college has also supported professional development for faculty, staff, and administrators, but few faculties have been involved in planning and implementing equity efforts focused on instructional practices. We have also not taken into consideration the systemic institutional barriers that may be contributing to inequitable outcomes. Moving forward, our faculty, staff, and administrators are committed to working collectively with each other and students to ensure access and success for minoritized students by approaching our pedagogical and organizational practices through an "equity-minded" lens. According to CUE, equity-mindedness refers to,

*The outlook, perspective, or mode of thinking exhibited by practitioners who call attention to patterns of inequity in student outcomes and are willing to assume personal and institutional responsibility for the elimination of inequity.*³

By adopting an "equity-minded mode of thinking" as our method of examining student outcomes, we acknowledge that our practices and policies are the main contributors to inequities as opposed to blaming our students for these outcomes. Norco College is committed to utilizing (and updating as needed) and drawing from the inquiry of our policies, practices, processes, and culture to highlight and dismantle the root causes that are contributing to persistent inequitable outcomes, particularly for racial groups. We also commit to addressing equity gaps as described by Bensimon, Dowd, and Witham, "a normative standard for all aspects of the institution, from resource allocation to assessment to strategic planning" (2016).⁴ Additionally, we recognize that we can no longer expect an office, department, committee, or those who were involved in developing this plan to close equity gaps. Equity work is a campus wide effort, and everyone has a role and responsibility in helping to close equity gaps.

² Hurtado, S. (1992). The campus racial climate: Contexts of conflict. *The Journal of Higher Education*, 63.5, 539-569.

³ Pena, E.V., Bensimon, E.M., Colyar, J. (2006). Contextual Problem Defining: Learning to Think and Act from the Standpoint of Equity. *Liberal Education*, 92, 48-55.

⁴ Bensimon, E.M., Dowd A.C., and Witham, K. (2016). Five Principles for Enacting Equity by Design. *Association of American Colleges & Universities*, 19, 1-8.

Our Equity Framework

Our approach to doing campus wide equity work is guided by the “[Five Principles for Enacting Equity by Design](#).” According to Bensimon, Dowd, and Witham (2019), these principles provide the blueprints that leaders and practitioners need to build equity by design. Table 1 provides a summary of these five principles.

Table 1. Five Principles for Enacting Equity by Design	
Principle 1	Clarity in language, goals, and measures is vital to effective equitable practices. Clarity in language means that practitioners must not only notice but also name the specific racial/ethnic groups that are experiencing equity gaps and avoid being race blind. Terms such as “at-risk” and “underrepresented minorities” defuse the differences in circumstances experienced by Black/AA, Hispanic/Latinx, Asian American, and American Indian populations.
Principle 2	‘Equity-mindedness’ should be the guiding paradigm for language and action. Equity minded practitioners recognize and assume responsibility for inequities. They recognize that inequities may have been created by existing institutional practices and policies. They also acknowledge that they have the power to make changes.
Principle 3	Equitable practice and policies are designed to accommodate differences in the contexts of student’s learning-not to treat all students the same. Practitioners must not confuse equity with equality. Equity gaps cannot be eliminated by treating everyone equally. Policies and practices must recognize and accommodate differences for minoritized students to level the playing field.
Principle 4	Enacting equity requires a continual process of learning, disaggregating data, and questioning assumptions about relevance and effectiveness. Equity-minded practitioners must be willing to continually disaggregate data and conduct inquiry to learn if interventions are working or not working, and why.
Principle 5	Equity must be enacted as a pervasive institution-and system-wide principle. To successfully close equity gaps, institutions must consider equity as the norm for all aspects of the institution. Administrators, staff, faculty, and trustees must demonstrate equity-mindedness not only through language and reasoning, but also in resource allocation, assessment, and strategic planning at the local and district level.
	Source: Bensimon, E.M., Dowd A.C., and Witham, K. (2016). Five Principles for Enacting Equity by Design . <i>Association of College and Universities, 19, 1.</i>

These principles for enacting equity by design are similar in theory and design to institutional and structural recommendations contained in the 2021-22 Equity Audit conducted by HOTEPC Consultants. They also mirror many of the recommendations previously made by our Guided Pathways and Student Equity project teams, as well as the Racial Justice Task Force we piloted on campus from 2020 - 2023.

Conclusion: Towards Continuity and Sustainability

NC's institutional actions, namely the Summer Bridge Event for Black/AA, First-Year Experience for Hispanic/Latine students, and endeavors to overhaul and enhance our communication and outreach strategies will make significant strides toward closing equity gaps. By addressing both academic and non-academic barriers, fostering a sense of belonging, and improving access to resources, NC is not only meeting its equity goals but also cultivating a more inclusive and supportive campus environment. These efforts represent a fundamental cultural shift at NC toward creating an equitable, student-centered educational experience for all students, especially those from DI communities.

Over the course of the 2022 – 2025 SEP cycle, NC made a significant decision to elevate, highlight, and center student voices and we are making significant strides towards strengthening our strategic communication and outreach efforts. These initiatives have been crucial in ensuring that our equity actions are grounded in the lived experiences and needs of the DI Black/AA and Hispanic/Latine student populations we are tasked to serve. The insights garnered through our holistic quantitative and qualitative research study have been instrumental in shaping more culturally responsive, targeted strategies. Moving forward, these efforts are central to our 2025 – 2028 SEP and build off the goals and outcomes outlined in our 2022 – 2025 SEP:

Summary of 2022 – 2025 Goals

- Developing and Conducting Inquiry Activities that uncover the root of inequities instead of launching new activities, programs, and interventions without understanding why they exist and persist.
- Securing outside financial support to cover consulting fees for an independent consultant for our equity inquiry.
- Assembling a team of equity champions and practitioners that represented the greater campus community of constituents, including faculty, staff, managers, and students.
- Drawing from the inherent wealth of knowledge of our constituents, including students, to develop, implement, analyze, and make recommendations towards dismantling equity gaps.

Summary of 2022 – 2025 Outcomes

- Spring of 2024, the research consultant developed a comprehensive report summarizing the inquiry activities implemented, including the results and recommendation for closing equity gaps.
- Fall 2024 – Winter of 2025, key constituents developed a “blueprint” from the inquiry research with targeted, equity-minded interventions to close equity gaps for Black/AA and Hispanic/Latine DI populations.
- Spring 2025, Finalizing and aligning strategic plans in preparation for piloting and evaluating the blueprint’s efficacy and outcomes during the next SEP cycle, 2025 – 2028.