

EQUITY STRATEGIC PLAN

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PART ONE

EQUITY AT Foothill COLLEGE, TODAY AND TOMORROW

Foothill College has a history of providing transformative educational experiences that meet the goals for its students and produces outcomes that have served to lessen disparities among our most vulnerable populations. Individuals and areas of our campus have long sought to achieve student equity, whether on their own or in response to state-mandated equity plan requirements. While these plans helped to fund equity activities on our campus and set goals to help move the work forward, those efforts have been relatively siloed, often intermittent, and sometimes were not interconnected with all areas of the campus to produce systemic impact on equity disparities. This college Strategic Equity Plan is an effort to provide a sustainable, and systemic approach to achieving equity through eliminating demographically-predictable disparities at Foothill College.

Philosophy and Values

In conversations with the campus, several things surfaced in regard to what the Foothill community valued about equity. The campus prided itself on being proactive versus reactive when addressing challenges. They appreciated spaces on campus that embodied team, family, and community spirit. They also recognized that students are continuously improving and developing. Perhaps most importantly, the campus expressed the value in acknowledging individuals as whole people and seeing their potential.

While we are strong in the statement of our values, they are not lived because we are still an institution existing within a social structure that is oppressive. The system of education itself has a long history of upholding an oppressive premise about who gets access to quality education, and what that looks like. But people have always found ways to persist in challenging and changing the oppressive structure of education because we still believe in the value of education.

What's different about the California Community College (CCC) system is that a vision was laid out to provide high quality, post-secondary education to all who want it, regardless of personal circumstances. As employees of this system, we are in a unique and exciting position in that we get to live out such a revolutionary concept! Having the thought to develop a world class, open access, educational system was revolutionary, but having the thought isn't enough. Truly living out the intent of the CCC's original mission requires constant disruption of systemic oppression. Equity is the responsibility of the entire Foothill campus, a commitment to our students and colleagues.

DEFINITION OF EQUITY

As mentioned in the previous section, one striking observation was that Foothill community members don't yet share a definition of equity. This makes it challenging to 1) discern which groups of students are benefitting from our "equity work"; 2) help each member of the Foothill community conceptualize how they contribute to equity efforts, and; 3) demonstrate whether our myriad equity interventions are having local impact within a program and/or systemic impact across many areas of the college. The process to develop such a definition

brought together college feedback, a common industry understanding of equity described in educational code, and scholarship on race and equity.

Student feedback highlighted the need for better academic resources and social support, the college talked about the need to institutionalize entities to help manage implementation and follow up, and how to better connect the work across departments and offices. These are asks for systemic change. Changing systems locally means acknowledging the larger educational systems and structures that influence our college. Historical systems that are oppressive by design and that have long called for change. The campus talked about community, and spaces that embody team, family, and community spirit. Scholarship states that students of color in particular benefit from creating community and sense of belonging in college.

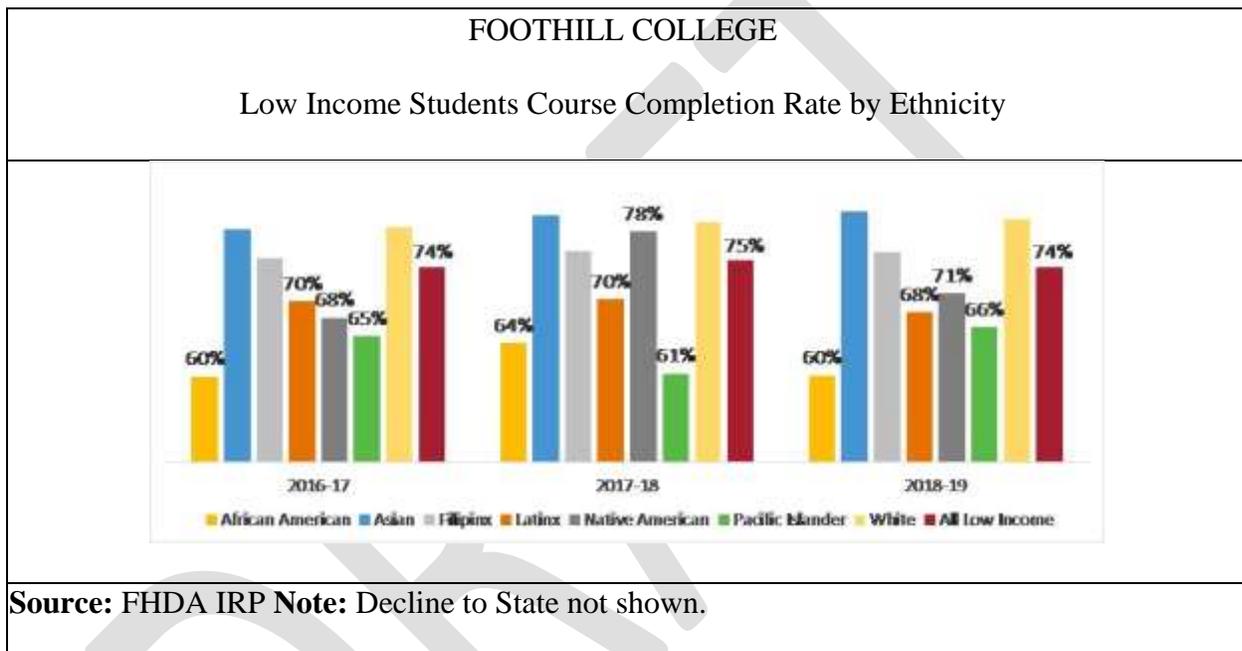
Why Center Race?

At Foothill when we talk about equity, we are intentional in our choice to center race. We recognize that since its inception, the system of education in the United States was never intended to serve all demographic groups and that many continue to be marginalized, including but not limited to persons of color, women, LGBTQ, Veterans, disabled persons, and the economically disadvantaged. And, like most other institutions, despite our ongoing efforts over the years Foothill continues to have demographically predictable disparities in student success. Our students experience equity gaps across the entirety of their journey with us, from access to completion.

We are mindful, though, that when we disaggregate our educational outcomes data by demographic group, we see racial disparity within all groups. For example, our data demonstrates that low income students are less likely to meet their educational goals. When we

disaggregate that data by race (figure 1), we see low-income students of color consistently have lower success than low-income non-students of color. We do not suggest to ignore disparities for women, disabled students, etc. but that as we attend to disparities for those groups we also intentionally address students of color within those groups. We must maintain focus on race even as we act to mitigate other group disparities.

Figure 1



We realize the topic of race is difficult and uncomfortable to discuss. However, if we are to dismantle systemic barriers at Foothill College, we must talk about race. By consistently centering race in our plan, even as we seek to eliminate inequity for all groups, we are holding ourselves unwaveringly accountable to our most historically underserved of groups. This college Strategic Equity Plan is one step along the path of that purpose and vision for the Foothill College community. Thus, the following definition of equity is proposed:

The work of equity at Foothill College is dismantling historic oppressive structures that are the basis of our educational systems and have led to disproportionate outcomes for students,

particularly along racial lines. Our goal is to create a college where success is not predictable by race.

PROCESS OF PLAN CONSTRUCTION

Historical Context

The work of equity and diversity is not new to the Foothill community. [Highlight previous work here]

The development of this Strategic Equity Plan began as an evaluation of equity efforts named in the 2015-16 plan. Those activities were to be evaluated annually, with the desired goals to be achieved by the 2019-2020 academic year. The Education and Equity governance council (E&E) was charged with evaluating the 2015-16. Due to its large and operational undertaking, E&E tasked the Office of Equity to complete the evaluation and share its findings with the Council.

Through this process, some general observations surfaced. The college lacked an entity overseeing the implementation and annual evaluation, and did not have a strategy to institutionalize this process. Furthermore, years of conversations in venues such as shared governance committees, program review, and professional development activities demonstrated a need for a shared vision of equity, anchored by a common definition. While the metrics in the state mandated plan meant to indicate progress, they ultimately weren't sufficient in addressing the cultural and systemic change the College was really asking for.

Consequently, this plan is meant to be different. Where previous state plans led with a particular set of metrics, this plan has set goals that organically rose from the issues surfaced by the campus community. This plan is not compliance, we are not being reactionary, no one is