

Mission

The Mission of CCEAL is to partner with community colleges to close equity gaps and improve outcomes for students who have been historically underserved in education. CCEAL is a national research and practice lab whose purpose is to advance three objectives:

1. To use assessment and inquiry to facilitate institutional capacity-building within community colleges
2. To conduct and disseminate empirical research on the experiences of historically underrepresented and underserved students in community colleges
3. To provide professional learning experiences that build educators' capacities to employ equity-minded and culturally-affirming practices in teaching and serving

The Community College Equity Assessment Lab (CCEAL) at San Diego State University was contracted by Napa Valley College to engage in a comprehensive assessment of the experiences of African American students. The assessment entailed conducting focus groups with students who represent a range of backgrounds and identities. This project is a part of Napa Valley College's efforts to redress persistent inequities and outcome disparities in student success that disproportionately affect historically underrepresented and underserved students.

CCEAL administered the Community College Success Measure (CCSM) at Napa Valley College during the Spring 2018 term. It is also important to note that a total of 957 students completed the survey. However, the number of African American students who completed the CCSM fell below the required threshold of 50 respondents for data disaggregation. Thus, these focus groups were conducted to gain in depth insight into the needs, challenges, and experiences of African American students.

The conceptual framework guiding this study is the socio-ecological outcomes (SEO) model (Harris III & Wood, 2016). As illustrated in Figure 1, the SEO model is comprised of

The Equity and Inclusivity District Committee of Napa Valley College acknowledges that society is composed of many groups and individuals whose diverse social, physical and cultural backgrounds are the source of innovation and creative problem solving. As a result, the College has a responsibility to cultivate and sustain the richness of different perspectives and experiences for the growth of the community as learners and workers.



METHOD

Participants

A total of 35 students (22 women, 12 men, 1 non-conforming) participated in the focus groups. African American/Black students comprised the largest racial/ethnic group in the sample (27 students), followed by Multiethnic (6), West African (1), and Mien (1) students. Twenty four (24) of the 35 participants were enrolled in 12 or more units. The majority of students in the sample had completed at least 15 units at the time of data collection, and 8 of the 35 students completed between 45-60 units. With regard to the participants' ages, 23 were 18-24 years old, five (5) were 25-30 years old, seven (7) were 31 years or older. More than half of the students reported being employed (22 of the 35). The overwhelming majority of the participants (25 of the 35) indicated "transfer to a 4-year institution" as their primary educational goal. Six (6) of the participants reported having taken at least one developmental education course. Among the 35 students who had been enrolled in developmental education, three of them reported taking a combination of reading, writing, and mathematics.

Data Collection

Data collection for this project occurred during the Spring 2019 semester. Students who identified as experiencing disproportionate impact at Napa Valley College and who were currently enrolled in credit-bearing courses were invited by the Director of Student Equity to participate in one of two focus groups that occurred over the course of two days. Prior to each focus group, participants were informed (both verbally and in writing) that their participation was strictly voluntary. Participants were informed that they could opt out of answering questions

they did not feel comfortable answering and could discontinue their involvement in the project at any time without consequences. None of the participants who began the project discontinued their participation.

All of the participants agreed to have their conversations audio-recorded and were assured that the insights they provided would be treated confidentially by our project team. All of the audio recordings were transcribed for data analysis. Immediately following each focus group, the facilitators co-constructed research memos to capture the salient aspects and interpersonal dynamics of the conversations that took place. We relied on both the transcripts and research memos to construct this report.

As incentives for participating in the focus groups, the Office of Equity provided each student a \$20 gift card redeemable at the campus bookstore. In addition, participants were offered meals and snacks before, during, and after the focus groups.

Data Analysis

The audio recording for each focus group was transcribed

for data analysis. The transcripts were then coded and analyzed using the following themes: (1) student experiences, (2) student perceptions, (3) student needs, (4) student expectations, (5) student challenges, (6) student strengths, (7) student resources, (8) student support, (9) student engagement, (10) student participation, (11) student leadership, (12) student advocacy, (13) student activism, (14) student social justice, (15) student community, (16) student culture, (17) student identity, (18) student belonging, (19) student well-being, (20) student success.

FINDINGS

The following themes emerged as salient across the 5 focus groups.

Pathways and Experiences That Led
Students to Community College
“Why I Chose Napa Valley College”

Relationships and Interactions with Faculty

Pathways and Experiences That Led
Students to Community College
“Why I Chose Napa Valley College”

As is often the case with community college students, the focus group participants were compelled to enroll at Napa Valley College by a range of both personal and institutional factors. Having somewhat easy access to the campus was one of the most widely cited reasons that emerged during these discussions, as was the comprehensive academic programs and services that are available at the college.

With regard to the latter, one student cited the comprehensive academic programs and services that are available at the college.

Another recurrent issue during the participants' discussions of interactions with faculty was feeling invisible or not being

Key Sources of Campus Support “It Feels Like Family”

Through the focus group we learned that most of the support services students relied on regularly were provided by UMOJA, EOPS, TRIO Program, and financial aid. Interestingly, when asked about other campus supports (i.e. math lab, tutoring center and writing center), the students conveyed that they did not utilize these services on a regular basis. Similarly, students shared that there was a lack of access to information and expressed having a hard time learning about resources that were available to them. When we asked about the food basket, they reported that it was a good resource but it was not readily accessible and that oftentimes the hours conflicted with class times.

Several participants mentioned that they felt supported

Culturally-A rming Teaching and Learning Practices “I’m Really Rooting for You”

Another theme that we inquired about were teaching and learning practices utilized by classroom faculty that students felt added value and contributed to their success. Several teaching practices that were aligned

Finally with regard to authentic care, students conveyed the importance of faculty being available to meet with them one-on-one during office hours to explain difficult content. As one student noted,

"I always make use of office hours because I think it helps me understand [the content] more because I'm a slow

The Student-Athlete Experience
“There's Six of Us in a Two-Bedroom Apartment”

As a part of our efforts to examine the experiences of African American students at Napa Valley College, one of

[Coaches] are trying to add another player to the apartment. But I don't really want to take them. I'm not trying to be driving six people in the car again. You know, we're driving in Napa, we got six Black people in one car. That's a red ag.

Finally, we asked the student-athletes to discuss key sources of campus support that were critical to their personal well-being and academic success at Napa Valley. This conversation focused almost exclusively on the support they received from the Umoja Program, speci cally Tit.3 iay.

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2. Scale Programs That Serve Disproportionately Impacted Students

Clearly evident in the focus groups was the critical role that programs like UMOJA, EOPS, TRIO, and others that served disproportionately impacted students played in making the campus accessible, welcoming, and inclusive for students, which has a direct impact on their persistence and success at Napa Valley. Moreover, these programs are providing critical support and student services that are not as accessible to students outside of the context of these programs. The college should consider infusing resources into these programs so they can be scaled and serve more students who meet the criteria to participate. In doing so, campus leaders must be mindful to not compromise the core values, impact, and integrity of these programs.

3. Use Equity-Minded Hiring Practices

The lack of representation of African Americans among Napa Valley College's faculty and staff is a salient concern for the students who participated in the focus groups. Students expressed the need to have more faculty who "looked like them" and to whom they could potentially relate to culturally. Equally important is to hire faculty and

5. Inquire About the Experiences of Student-Athletes at Napa Valley College

One of the most concerning findings from the focus groups was the experiences of the African American student-athletes. The experiences of the diverse student-athletes who participated in the focus groups may or may not be representative of the larger African American student-athlete population. Thus, some additional inquiry is warranted. Gaining insights from African American student-athletes who compete in sports other than the one that was represented in this project would be value-added in this regard. That said, the concerns they raised regarding unmet promises for financial and housing support that were made by coaches are disconcerting and suggest that some ongoing intervention in the athletics department is necessary. Student-athletes who reside out-of-the state who want to enroll at Napa Valley College should be required to meet with the Vice President of Student Affairs and/or a designated dean before they are allowed to enroll. The goal of these meetings is to confirm that the student-athlete has the support they will need to have their basic needs met while enrolled at the college. These students should also be informed of what (if any) institutional support is available to them. These conversations should not be left to the discretion of coaches or the athletics department.

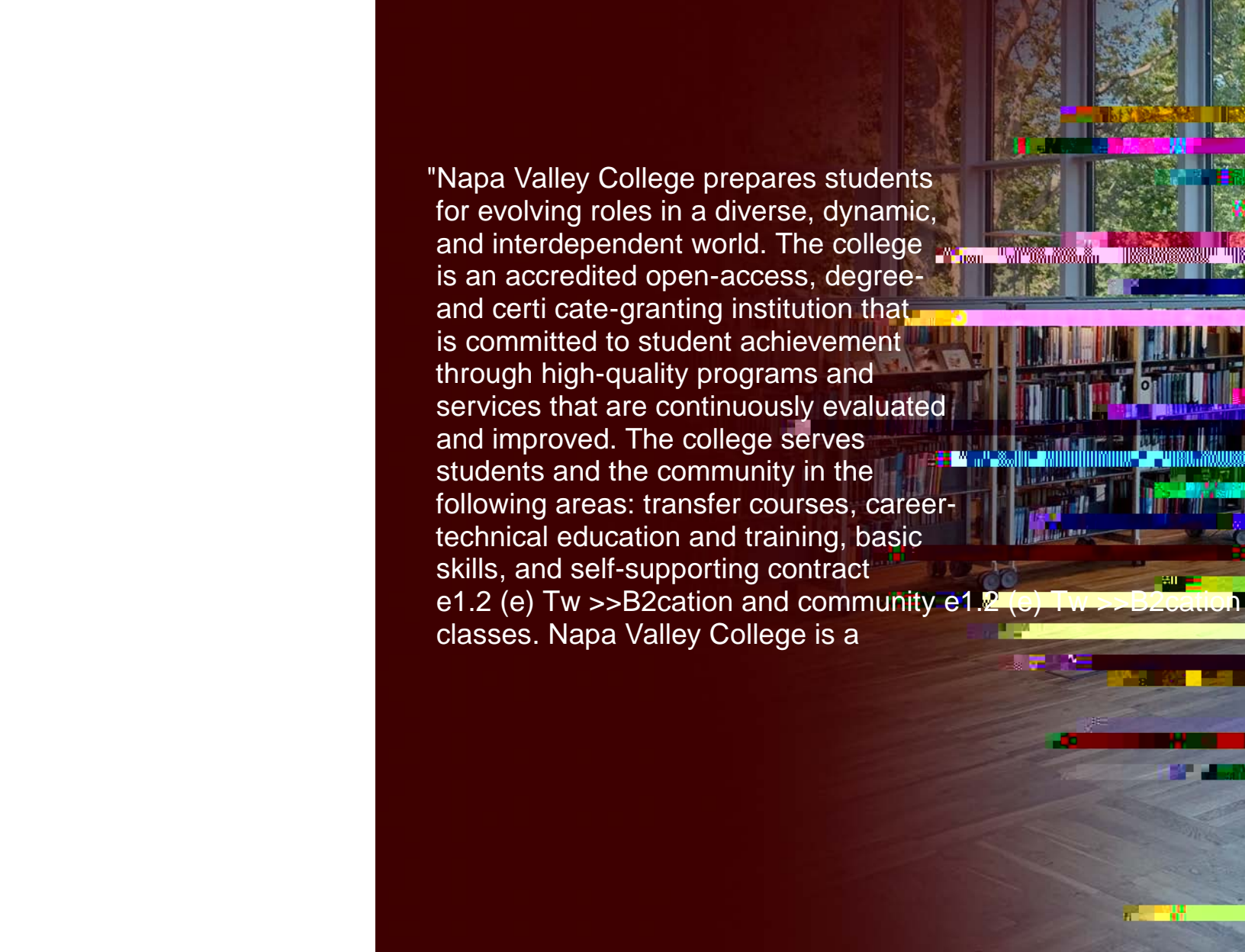
6. Address Invisible Labor for Women of Color

We observed that many of the faculty and staff who were going above and beyond to support these students were women of color. According to the students, these faculty and staff were supporting them in dealing with acute issues that extended beyond what they were required to do according to their job descriptions. On occasion, these women made themselves available to students outside of their “normal” work hours. This “invisible labor” can have a deleterious effect on their health, well-being, and work performance, which can lead to chronic fatigue, burnout, and a diminished career trajectory. Thus, we suggest that the institution take some proactive steps to support colleagues who consistently enact extraordinary measures to ensure African American students are successful.

7. Devise a Strategy to Act on the Findings and Recommendations of This Report

This project was informed by the College's CCSM findings. The college should come up with a systematic plan, work group, committee, or task force to review both reports and devise a strategy to make the findings and recommendations actionable. In doing so, the campus should prioritize findings and recommendations that are aligned with its Student Equity Plan and its Guided Pathways Action Plan. Finally, the Planning and Research Office should be involved in developing a plan to evaluate and monitor the strategies that are enacted based on the recommendations provided in this report.

If I'm doing homework online where I can email her and ask her questions, she responds. You can basically talk to her and if you need a time that she doesn't have an office hour, she'll make time for you to see her.

The background of the slide is a photograph of a library. It features tall wooden bookshelves filled with books, a large window on the right side looking out onto green trees, and a wooden floor. The lighting is warm and natural.

"Napa Valley College prepares students for evolving roles in a diverse, dynamic, and interdependent world. The college is an accredited open-access, degree- and certificate-granting institution that is committed to student achievement through high-quality programs and services that are continuously evaluated and improved. The college serves students and the community in the following areas: transfer courses, career-technical education and training, basic skills, and self-supporting contract e1.2 (e) Tw >>B2cation and community e1.2 (e) Tw >>B2cation classes. Napa Valley College is a