Research Acronyms and Glossary

A Working and Living Document

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- **Academic Year**: Three consecutive terms starting in summer and progressing to fall and finishing in spring
- **Access**: Ability of individuals from historically minoritized or underserved groups to have equal opportunities to participate in and benefit from resources, services, and programs.
- **Ally**: Individual with privilege and power to affect change, who works in solidarity and partnership with others from a minoritized group (those without privilege and power) to advocate for change to an oppressive system or practice.
- **Asset-based approach**: Framework focused on the strengths, skills, and potential of individuals or communities, rather than their deficits.
- **Baseline**: Establishes the starting point against which progress can be measured; it is an initial measure taken before implementing changes, so that the effect of those changes can be judged.
- **Benchmark**: A benchmark provides a target or goal – it is where we want to go. For example, ask what the best colleges are doing (e.g., practices, policies, processes, programs), and establish the desired standard or goal based on those best practices. However, comparisons should be realistic in terms of such elements as number of students, student demographics, student readiness, resources, etc.
- **Bias**: A feeling, preference, or opinion that interferes with impartial judgment about an individual or group of people. Bias can occur unconsciously (implicitly) or consciously (explicitly) and is held by everyone—even equity-minded practitioners.
- **BIPOC**: An acronym that stands for "Black, Indigenous, and people of color."
- **Campus Climate**: The general atmosphere and communication style or environment of an organization.
- **Co-Conspirator**: Individual who takes personal risks and uses their power and privilege to disrupt the status quo and challenge systems of oppression. "Accomplice" is a different term with the same meaning as co-conspirator.
- **Cohort**: A selected population established for tracking purposes, usually a group of students entering together for the first time.
- **Completion**: A student who completes a class and receives any grade of A, B, C, D, F, CR, NC, I, P, NP. Students who drop or withdraw from a class are not considered to complete. See, Success.
- **Continuing Student**: A student enrolled in the current term and was enrolled in the previous primary (fall, spring) term.
- **Cultural competency**: Ability to understand, appreciate, and empathize with the beliefs, behaviors, and needs of others from different cultures, including the role of race and power in producing systemic inequities.
- **Cultural humility**: Ongoing process of self-reflection, self-critique, and accountability to address and redress power imbalances and structural racism.
- **Culture**: Learned and shared values, beliefs, traditions, behavioral norms, linguistic expression, knowledge, memories, and collective identities that are shared by a social group and distinguish members from other groups. Culture is not static; it can change over time.
- **Dependent variable**: A dependent variable is what you measure in the experiment and what is affected during the experiment.
- **Deficit-minded**: Mental frame that relies on explanations for inequities in outcomes and experiences that focus on what minoritized groups lack. By focusing on the perceived shortcomings of minoritized groups, the role of systemic and structural barriers to equity are ignored and the institution's responsibility to address equity gaps is absolved.
- **DEI/DEIB/DEIBAR**: Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, Belonging and Anti-Racism
- **Discrimination**: Unfavorable or unfair treatment toward an individual or group based on their race, gender, social class, sexual orientation, physical ability, religion, national origin, age, and other identity-related or demographic categories.

- **Disproportionate impact**: Condition that exists when minoritized students experience disparate outcomes, such as course completion, retention, and graduation, when compared to the overall population. While the term is used interchangeably with "equity gap" in the CCC system, the concept of disproportionate impact (DI) is more commonly used to determine if disparities exist for a specific group, while the term "equity gaps" is used to discuss disparities between two or more groups.
- **Diversity**: Extent to which individuals with a wide range of social and cultural identities and characteristics (e.g., race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, social status, religion) are represented in a group.
- **Educational equity gap**: Condition that exists when minoritized student groups experience significant and persistent disparities in educational experiences and outcomes. This term is referred to in its shortened form ("equity gap") more frequently in the CCC system. While the term is used interchangeably with "disproportionate impact" (DI) in California Community Colleges (CCC), "equity gap" is more commonly used to discuss disparities between two or more groups, while DI is more commonly used to determine if disparities exist for a specific group.
- **Effect size**: The magnitude, or size, of an effect. Statistical significance (i.e., $p<0.05$) only tells us there was a difference between two groups or more based on some treatment. It fails to tell us the magnitude or the size of the difference.
- **Enrollment**: A student counted as enrolled in a course if an end-of-term grade notation is recorded on their official transcript (a, B, C, D, F, I, CR, NC, P, NP, W). If a student is enrolled in more than one class, they are counted as enrolled for each class. For example, a student enrolled in three classes will be counted three times in enrollment. For contrast, see **Headcount**.
- **Equality**: State in which all people have the same status and rights and are given access to the same resources and opportunities, regardless of individual differences.
- **Equity**: State in which all people are given what they specifically need (fair treatment, access, resources, opportunities), regardless of individual differences, to achieve equal outcomes.
- **Equity-minded**: Mental frame that calls attention to patterns of inequity in student outcomes. Practitioners who use an equity-minded frame are willing to take personal and institutional responsibility for the success of students and critically reassess their own practices. Those who exhibit equity-minded thinking are race conscious and aware of the social and historical context of exclusionary practices in American higher education. Source: USC Center for Urban Education
- **Ethnicity**: Socially or politically derived identity based on shared cultural criteria, such as language, values and beliefs, customs, and shared history. category of people who identify as a social group on the basis of a shared culture, origins, social background, and traditions that are distinctive, maintained between generations, and lead to a sense of identity, common language or religious traditions.
- **First-time student**: A student enrolled in college for the first time after high school.
- **Full-time student**: Generally considered a student taking 12-15 or more units during a primary term (fall, spring). See, Full-Time Equivalent Student.
- **FTEF**: Full-Time Equivalent Faculty.
- **FTES**: Full-Time Equivalent Student. Approximately each 30 units of enrollment counts as one FTES, 1 FTES = 525 contact hours. FTES are derived from weekly student contact hours (WSCH) and are the workload measure most often used for apportionment purposes. FTES are subdivided into categories such as primary term and summer intersession FTES, credit and non-credit FTES, resident and nonresident FTES, and other categories.
- **Gender and Gender Identity**: Gender describes socially constructed roles, behaviors, activities, and attributes that society considers "appropriate" for boys and men or girls and women. This term is differentiated from "sex," which is the biological classification (male, female or intersex) based on genetic, physiological, and anatomical differences. Gender identity is a person's internal sense of being male, female, or nonbinary. Since gender identity is internal, one's gender identity is not visible to others.
- **Headcount** (Unduplicated Enrollment): A student enrollment count based on an individual student that identifies a student only once in the system – regardless of the number of units or courses in which that student is enrolled. For contrast, see Enrollment.

- **Implicit bias**: Feeling, preference, or opinion individuals unknowingly hold that occurs automatically and interferes with impartial judgment about an individual or group of people.
- **Inclusion**: Creating an environment in which historically excluded individuals and groups are welcomed, respected, supported, and valued as fully participating members, and in which differences are treated as sources of strength, innovation, and success.
- **Independent variable**: the variable you have control over, what you can choose and manipulate. It is usually what you think will affect the dependent variable.
- **Intersectionality**: Interconnected nature of the social identities held by individuals, such as race, gender, sexual orientation, and class, that create overlapping and interdependent systems of discrimination of disadvantage. The term was coined by Dr. Kimberlé Crenshaw (Columbia Law School).
- **Institutional average**: The current average level for a measure at the institution.
- **Institutional set standards**: The minimum level for a measure at the institution.
- **Low income**: Describes individuals from households whose taxable income for the preceding year did not exceed 150 percent of the poverty level, according to the US Department of Education.
- **Matriculation**: A process which may include admissions, orientation, assessment and testing, counseling, and student follow-up to ensure that all students complete their college courses, persist to the next academic term, and achieve their educational objectives.
- **Mean**: Mean is the average score. For example, on a scale of 1 to 5, out of 10 scores if 2 people choose answer #5, 2 people choose answer #4, 3 people choose answer #3, 2 people choose answer #2, and 1 person chooses answer #1, the mean is 3.2. [Mean = ((5*2)+(4*2)+(3*3)+(2*2)+(1*1))/10].
- **Median**: A median is the score that splits all the scores exactly in half. Half of the scores are above the median, and half the scores are below the median. For example, on a scale of 1 to 5, out of 10 scores if 2 people choose answer #5, 2 people choose answer #4, 3 people choose answer #3, 2 people choose answer #2, and 1 person chooses answer #1, the median is 3. [5 5 4 4 3 MEDIAN 3 3 2 2 1].
- **Mode**: A mode is the most commonly-appearing score. The mode identifies where most people score. For example, on a scale of 1 to 5, out of 10 scores if 2 people choose answer #5, 3 people choose answer #4, 2 people choose answer #3, 2 people choose answer #2, and 1 person chooses answer #1, the mode is 4, because more people chose that answer than any other.
- **Minoritized**: Conditions in which groups, whether they represent the numeric or proportional minority or not, are systematically excluded, marginalized, and oppressed in educational settings and elsewhere based on cultural and physical differences (i.e., race, ethnicity, gender, disability). The term “marginalized” has a similar meaning to “minoritized,” but the former is defined using language that alludes to inadequacy or deficiency. As such, we are recommending the term “minoritized” instead.
- **Obligation gap**: Disparities between how community colleges serve minoritized students versus the actual needs of the students who attend these institutions. It places the onus of change on the higher education institution rather than the student.
- **Part-time students**: Generally a student taking less than 12 units during a primary term (fall, spring).
- **Percentile**: Percentile is most often used for determining the relative standing of an individual in a population or the rank position of the individual. For example, if a score is in the 86th percentile, it is higher than 86% of the other scores.
- **Persistence**: Students who continue at BC from the previous primary term. Term-to-term persistence is calculated for two adjacent primary terms (e.g., fall to spring). Annual persistence is from one year to the next (e.g., fall to fall).
- **Population**: The collection of all individuals or items in a statistical study.
- **Power**: The ability to exercise one’s will over others. Power occurs when some individuals or groups wield a greater advantage over others, thereby allowing them greater access to and control over resources.
- **Prejudice**: Preconceived opinion, judgment, or attitude about an individual or group (usually negative and unfair) based on their membership in one or more groups (e.g., race, gender, age, religion), and not based on real experiences, reasons, or facts

- **Qualitative research**: Qualitative research involves an in-depth understanding of human behavior and the reasons that govern human behavior. Unlike quantitative research, qualitative research relies on reasons behind various aspects of behavior.
- **Quantitative research**: Quantitative research refers to the systematic empirical investigation of social phenomena via statistical, mathematical or computational techniques. The objective of quantitative research is to develop and employ mathematical models, theories and/or hypotheses pertaining to phenomena.
- **Race**: Social construct that artificially divides people into distinct groups based on physical traits and geographic origin of ancestors (i.e., skin color).
- **Racism**: System of advantages, oppression, and discrimination based on a belief that one racial group is superior to others. Racism is racial prejudice plus power and involves the use of power by one racial group, usually White, to oppress, marginalize, and exploit other racial groups (non-White).
- **Range**: The range of a set of data is the difference between the largest and smallest values.
- **Retention**: Student stays in the course to the end of the term and receives a grade. The numerator is the number of enrollments with a grade of A, B, C, D, F, P (Cr), NP (NC); the denominator is the number of enrollments at census (receiving any grade). The retention rate is the percent of students retained out of the total enrolled. For example, in a class of 50 students where 5 students withdraw after census, the retention rate is 90%.
- **Sex**: Biological classification (male, female, or intersex) based on genetic, physiological, and anatomical differences. This term is differentiated from "gender," which is based on the social construction and expectations of the categories "men" and "women."
- **Standard deviation**: Standard deviation measures (on average) how far away each number is from their mean. It is the average of the squared differences from the mean. A low standard deviation indicates that the data points tend to be very close to the mean; high standard deviation indicates that the data points are spread out over a large range of values.
- **Success**: Student successfully completes the course (receives a grade of A, B, C, P (Cr)). The numerator is the number of enrollments with a grade of A, B, C, P (Cr); the denominator is the number of enrollments at census (receiving any grade). Note that students dropped prior to census are not included in this calculation. The success rate is the percent of students successful in courses out of the total enrolled. For example, in a class of 50 students where 30 students receive a grade of A, B, C, or P, the success rate is 60%.
- **T-Test**: T test assesses whether the means of two groups are statistically different from each other. One-sample t test compares the sample mean with a benchmark data. (Independent or paired) two-sample t test compares the means of two samples. Small P-value (< 0.05) indicates that the difference is statistically significant at 5% significance level.
- **Transfer Directed**: A student who has successfully completed a transferable English and a transferable math course.
- **Transfer Prepared**: A student who has earned 60+ transferable units with a 2.00+ GPA.
- **Transfer Ready**: A student who is both transfer directed and transfer prepared.
- **Transfer Velocity**: The percentage rate at which a group of students, who all started at the same time (commonly referred to as a **cohort**), successfully transferred within an identified period of time since their start date.
- **Transgender**: Individuals whose gender identity, gender expression, or behavior differs from societal expectations of their sex assigned at birth. Not everyone whose appearance or behavior is gender nonconforming will identify as a transgender person. "Trans" is sometimes used as shorthand.
- **Underserved students**: Students who have been historically disadvantaged in accessing the same educational opportunities and equitable resources as their peers due to various systemic, social, and economic factors. The definition may include but is not limited to students who are low income, racially minoritized, disabled, foster youth, English learners, and first generation.
- **Weighted average**: The weighted average is an average in which each quantity that is being averaged is assigned a weight. Weightings determine the relative contribution of each quantity to the average.

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1. Bakersfield College Office of Institutional Effectiveness Research Terms.
2. Cabrillo College Data Element Dictionary & Glossary of Acronyms.
3. The RP Group Living Glossary of Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) Terms for Institutional Research, Planning, and Effectiveness Professionals. Updated January 2025.
4. CCCCO Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) Glossary of Terms. Annually updated.
5. CCSF Glossary and Equity Resources