

# Factors That Affect Latina/o Student Academic Success at FCC

## A Qualitative Research

### INTRODUCTION

This qualitative research study was conducted as a result of goals identified in the Fresno City College 2014 Student Equity Plan. Campus-based research in the plan revealed achievement gaps in transfer for Latina/o students. A part of the strategy to close this gap included the development of deeper inquiry strategies to identify ways to support students in order to close achievement gaps. Specifically, the plan (E.1) indicated a need to conduct research with students to help alleviate potential barriers at Fresno City College (FCC) that affect their academic success. In addition, the Fresno City College 2015 Student Equity Plan asks for qualitative data to be collected as part of the plans evaluation process.

To begin understanding the Latina/o student experience at FCC and assist the campus with addressing the goals of the Student Equity Plan, four focus group sessions in spring 2016 and fall 2016 were conducted using questions from the RP Groups *Student Support (Re)defined*. The sessions began with an overall question regarding what helped students to be successful at the college followed by questions related to the six success factors (see Appendix A for exact wording):

- **Directed** – helping students clarify their aspirations, develop an educational focus they perceive as meaningful and develop a plan that moves them from enrollment to achievement of their goal
- **Focused** – fostering students' motivation and helping them develop the skills needed to achieve their goals
- **Nurtured** – conveying a sense of caring where students' success is important and expected
- **Engaged** – actively involving students in meaningful and authentic educational experiences and activities inside and outside the classroom
- **Connected** – creating connections between students and the institution and cultivating relationships that underscore how students' involvement with the college community can contribute to their academic and personal success
- **Valued** – providing students with opportunities to contribute to and enrich the college culture and community

### RESEARCH QUESTION

In reflecting on the six factors of success, what supports, both inside and outside the classroom, do current Latina/o students identify as important to their success as community college learners?

### METHODOLOGY

With the assistance of the Student Equity Coordinator, Puente counselor, Latina/o Studies faculty, Dream Center counselor, and EOPS advisor, announcements were made in classes and at club meetings of the opportunity to participate in the focus groups. A total of 24 students participated in the sessions. There were 10 males, 14 females, and the groups included all age

categories, athletes, DACA (Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals) students, students with disabilities, a broad range of majors, and students receiving and not receiving financial aid<sup>1</sup>. In each of the focus groups, the session started with a question about the most important factor to their success (overall), and was followed by a series of questions grouped by the six success factors (directed, focused, nurtured, engaged, connected, and valued). At the end of each session, they were provided with a short form that asked them to identify the three factors that are most important to their success (Appendix B).

## **ANALYSIS**

The sessions were recorded and a contracted service was used to transcribe the recordings. The responses were first sorted by the order in which the factor questions were asked (overall, connected, directed, engaged, focused, nurtured, and valued). The participant responses often discussed multiple factors at the same time, and the responses were coded into categories using the RP Groups *Student Support (Re)defined* definitions of the factors.

In addition, open coding was used to further identify categories. In “Qualitative Research; a Guide to Design and Implementation” (Merriam, 2009, pg. 204) the author suggests that while coding, researchers should “think of yourself as having a conversation with the data – asking questions of it, making comments to it, and so on”. As the coding progressed, two additional categories emerged, supports to success and racial inequities. Supports to success was further coded with sub-categories; self, peers, family, community, faculty, counselors, external factors, special programs, and clubs.

At the end of each session, participants completed a form in which they identified what they considered as the three most important factors. The ratings were compiled and a frequency analysis was used to identify the top three factors.

## **FINDINGS**

Discussion of the findings is divided into three sections, Three Most Important Factors, Supports to Success, and Racial Inequities. The students had many similar positive and negative comments regarding the supports to success. Quotes were selected across sessions and from multiple students. Each quote is followed by an identification of the session, gender, and factor (i.e. “1-F-valued” indicates session one-female-factor).

### **THREE MOST IMPORTANT FACTORS**

In addition to the focus questions, at the end of each session, students were asked to select and rate the three factors they thought were most important to their success. The top choice was nurtured, followed by directed and focused (Appendix C). Student’s reflections on the top three factors often describe relationships and external factors that were perceived to influence their ability to be successful.

---

<sup>1</sup> Gender was collected with observation in the focus groups by the research team and all other demographic data were collected based on the conversations in the focus groups.

## **Nurtured**

Students discussed the importance of nurturing and its impact on students. The lack of connecting on a personal level with faculty and counselors was perceived to be a deterrent to experiencing a nurturing environment.

“...My **teacher made me feel really nurtured...she took time to motivate, to encourage me, and I loved it...**my brother is fighting a life sentence, and so I couldn't even focus in class. I just didn't know what to do. And I had to go in and talk to her about it and she was totally understanding, totally compassionate.” (3-M-nurtured)

“Sometimes the teachers do play a part in this [nurtured], because some of them are really looking forward to what you will be doing with your life... it's cool that **some teachers have this passion for students**, not just for teaching the subject. I think **that really nurtures students** as well, if the teachers have that.” (1-M-nurtured)

“I have gone to a class and the **teacher says**, “If you don't show up to class, that's on you. If you don't do your work, that's on you. Because **I still get paid. I still get my paycheck. So if you don't succeed that's your fault.**” So they give an impression that they don't care about your success...**I dropped that class**” (4-M-nurtured)

“...we are with the program [PUENTE]. Our **English teacher tells us all the time, “I love you guys** with a righteous and holy love.” Our **counselor**, he texts me all the time. **If I don't make it to class, “Hey, how are you? How are things going?”**...I feel like **that's really helpful...**if general counselors or even some other professors were able to communicate with the **students like that**, it would really make them **[students] feel like they mean something** or that **their presence and their knowledge is worthy.**” (2-F-nurtured)

“...the colleges intention, it is to help the students...Fresno City's very lucky to even have a program for students that don't have food...All you have to do is give your student ID... and I go and see students lined up...I do see the college making an effort... but having said that, **I feel like counselors, maybe upstairs only see students for your ed. plan...**I feel like a lot of them should actually focus on the student specifically because **every student has different backgrounds...**the counselor himself or herself would **know a little bit more about them** ...if you **need psychological services**, if you need **house service**, if you **need food**, if you **need tutorial centers...**if the actual counselor focused on the students specifically, **I feel like the student will feel more connected**, will feel more appreciated, will feel like there's actually someone that cares...I just feel like they haven't found a way to do it or connect with the students.”(4-F-nurtured)

“...they should [assign counselors] because that shows consistency...the actual counselor can focus and track the students based on the semesters and just see progress. Because **if you constantly see a different counselor how are you ever going to have an interaction or a connection with them.**” (4-F-nurtured)

## **Directed**

Students discussed frustration with employment opportunities and their need for direction in obtaining a college education. K-12 teachers, family, faculty, and counselors played a role in students' ability to feel directed.

"For me, I wasn't even looking into college...I was like, it's something that's not going to happen...It's just like, whatever, I'll be working somewhere, I'll find a job somewhere...**I started hanging out with one of my teachers [K-12] who told me, there's so much you can do, there's so much more...**" (1-M-directed)

"when I was going to school, I'm like, I'm just going to work, so **I started working in the fields...and then I talked to my brother...because I don't want to be working in the fields...and he helped me...it was hard in the beginning**, because **I didn't have no money, no job...**" (1-F-directed)

"**I took too long to come back to school**. I had been **contemplating going to school and working at the same time**, but obviously, **what is important for a lot of people are economics...being a little older...I need to accomplish something with my life...get a better education** so that I can be not only productive in the work force but **be somebody that can help out the community** because many of **our peoples in the community are struggling and suffering.**"(3-M-directed)

"I've been in school way too long...I was very confused about what I wanted to do. I started as initially **pre-nursing** and then **I got a job in the field and I realized this is not for me** whatsoever...I actually **changed my major practically every semester**. I was very confused until I actually focused on business...one of the reasons why **I stick to business was because the opportunity that I have with a mentor, with my instructor**, and also because **I was able to connect with a club on campus.**" (4-F-directed)

"The first thing to help me decide my goal was a **counselor in the career and employment center**...at that time I didn't know what I wanted to do...my major wasn't decided, and **I was still so confused...**so **I did a series of tests...**and then **through counseling with her, it helped me decide on the focus** that I am now, which is **social work.**" (4-F-directed)

## **Focused**

Staying focused was often attributed to the student's individual ability. Students also indicated that external circumstances and finances affect their ability to stay focused.

"...**you have to take responsibility** for your own self...you can't just joke around...when **you're undocumented, you have to really focus**" (1-M-focused)

"So I think in the community where I come from, focus or the **loss of focus comes a lot from financial needs** and just **mental stress** and not necessarily the skills to be able to read. **I can read and I can write but if my money's not right, I can't come up with a single sentence.**" (3-M-focused)

"I could have an assignment that's really interesting but then **I get my water cut off and it's kind of hard to focus. And that literally happens all the time.**" (3-M-focused)

"**We're investing time where many of us probably need a job.** We need to financially be responsible for ourselves...**instead of working, we're taking classes that we don't need or taking longer than we should** be taking...I say that from experience." (4-F-focused)

## **SUPPORTS TO SUCCESS**

### ***Self***

Students reflected that in order to be successful, they must stay focused, take their courses work seriously, and navigate the numerous distractions that can interfere with their success.

"...as we were told in high school, **it's really up to you.** You're grown adults. **It's up to you what you want to do...**" (2-F-connected)

"Whether you're undocumented or not, **you have to be focused on what you want, even if you don't know what you want...**if you know you're really outgoing, maybe try a communication class. If you know you're really down to earth, and you want to **explore a little bit** of something artistic, take some kind of art class. **You never know what you're going to be good at until you try something...**so I feel like all students, they should be focused on what type of things they do like.."  
(1-F-focused)

"I really just want to focus on myself, and my education, because part of **high school was just a little too easy, and I didn't take it as seriously,** but I know **I'm a smart person.** So, **I want to prove that here.**" (1-F-focused)

"**I've been pulled over five times on my way to class...**I don't have a license because of trouble with DMV and the law. So **I ride a bike.** ...I'm riding my bike either down Fresno, down Blackstone, but **I found out a better way where I don't have to be out in the open.** I've found if I ride up McKenzie to San Pablo and under the overpass and past Belmont and keep going down San Pablo all the way, **I'll be able to get to school mostly without being seen by a cop.** So, **I won't be late to class.** I've been **pulled over for nothing.**" (3-M-focused)

### ***Faculty***

Faculty were discussed repeatedly as a positive and negative influence through course content, one-on-one conversations, and recognizing student's abilities and contributions.

"... I felt valued because **my teacher was acknowledging my intelligence** and they were acknowledging **my hard work...**I really did feel valued. I felt like **I was here for a reason** and this is why I was here." (2-F-valued)

"I had an instructor my first semester. He was a math teacher...he would actually **go individually student to student and make sure they understand the**

**materials and the work...he made us feel engaged** and he made us **feel more comfortable**. He made sure that we all understood and we are all on the same page” (3-M-engaged)

“Why is the system working in such a way we're not learning from the instructor? They are like a mechanical teacher. Because **there should be a class** that should be – **I don't know how to call it in English... pedagogía...how to be able to teach the other...they have to have that kind of skill to be able to teach the student, not rely only on that book**; that you have to learn that book, study for that test, and **that book is your teacher.**” (4-M-Engaged)

“Just because **they've [faculty] worked in that field [area of expertise] doesn't mean they can teach**. It doesn't mean they can **communicate effectively** with the students. It doesn't mean they will **encourage students to focus**. It doesn't mean they'll **motivate or inspire students** either. So if we can **have a program, or at least some training**, at least basic training for them...these **individuals who have expertise have never taught ...so that really is a disadvantage to the students..**” (4-F-engaged)

### **Counselors**

Students most often commented on the relationship with counseling and student success when reflecting on being nurtured, connected, and directed.

“I went to see a counselor, she **helped me** out real good, she was **very nice**, she was **polite...she let me know all the programs available** for me in my major...**I was still indecisive...she let me know about the workshop...I didn't even know that we had a workshop.**” (4-M-nurtured)

“...you hear that word counseling you're like, "Cool. I'm gonna go get some ideas of what I should do with my education career... they give you these classes to take but they're not even taking the time to see if you want those classes, if you're interested in those classes, or what field of your career you want to go into... for me physics, but what part of physics... because of what part of physics I'm going into there's certain math I should take, there's some electronics classes...I've had counseling by a teacher and I felt really like, "Wow, that's what I got to do to get to where I'm going"... **three times I've seen counselors I was confused when I got out of there...in one of the counseling sessions I was told to take classes I already took and then I was told to take classes I didn't need to take... that was very confusing, but then when I talked to that teacher that advised me on which way to go, then it cleared a lot of questions.**” (2-M-connected)

“...when we choose our SEP with **EOPS, they follow up** on ...**I get to see my counselor three times a semester**. That sounds repetitive, but when **you actually get to know the person**, you're like, okay, I'm okay with this, and you actually try to plan it before they have their deadline, so you're on top of it...**if every other student had that kind of a relationship with a counselor** here, outside of the EOPS program, **I think that'd be a lot better.**” (1-F-directed)

## **External Factors**

Finances, work, and childcare were concerns that affected the ability to be successful. Students also discussed the negative image of FCC and the perception regarding the institution's ability to help students succeed.

"...honestly, **we [DACA students] can't mess around like everybody else.** It's like, you're working, you're working, you're working, you're in school. You're working, you're in school... **just working and school,** and focusing on pretty much **narrowing down whatever's fun outside of it,** we block it off, just to get done." (1-M-engaged)

"I know in **Mexican culture,** I think of all of **South America, Latin America culture,** work is really, how can I say, pretty much **you have to work to be valued...** since I was a kid I was helping my dad, but then I worked on my own, I always followed the same value. **You work hard because that's what you do.** You always have a job even if you get ripped off because that's your work and it has to look good. Yes, it's a good value to work hard, but work for what? We have to really ask that question before we start working harder. Work for what? So **if somehow or way the college could express to our communities that, "Come do some hard work over here and it's going to benefit you in a huge ways and the rest of the community."** I think a **lot of us would be like,** "Oh, you know what? I'm going to go **work over there [college]** instead of out here on **this cleaning up construction or whatever...** it is never going to compare to what **working hard here in the school is going to give me and my family and the whole community.**" (3-M-valued)

"I'm a **single parent** myself. Thankfully, I have a **family** that **helps** me but that's probably **25 percent of the time.** The other **75 percent I gotta** either **figure it out or just not come to school.** I know I'm not supposed to but one time I brought my daughter to class, **I had to sneak her into class,** so that **doesn't make me feel connected to the school,** that **the school might reprimand** me for **bringing my daughter so that I can come to class.**" (3-M-connected)

"I had a lot of **bad stigma in high school,** saying that if **you go to Fresno City College,** you're **going to be stuck here six years,** not knowing what to do with your life." (1-F-overall)

"...as if it's such a **crime to attend a JC [junior college]** before transferring. For the longest time, I had the **worst image** about junior colleges, **about Fresno City,** and how **if you were to attend,** you'd **result in being unsuccessful.**" (2-F-connected)

"I feel like they (high school) shouldn't have put that type of stigma there, because **anyone who did go to Fresno City College wouldn't make anything of themselves.** I really hated that they said that, because at that point, I didn't know anyone who actually got a successful career from Fresno City College. I didn't want to believe that they couldn't. I did get accepted to Fresno State right after high school, but they told me at that point, like, financially, they said it wasn't going to cover it. I knew I wouldn't have money to do it more than one semester. I could do it for the first semester, with the money I had saved up, but I would've

probably dropped out after the first semester, because of the money. So, I decided to come here, and then transfer out.” (4-F-focused)

### ***Academic Support (Tutorial/PASS)***

Student expressed an appreciation of academic support using the Tutorial Center and Pass Program. These programs were discussed when addressing what students perceived as assisting overall in their success.

“Puente instructors **require us to go and get tutoring**. ...now going on to the next level, I won’t go just because it’s required. I’ll go because I know it’s there. I know **it was helpful**.” (2-F-overall)

“...**tutoring** sessions or the tutoring rooms **have been very helpful**. Like the PASS Center but also the Math Center. I’m not very good at any of my math and I feel like a lot of the resources were there to **help me out to become a successful student**.” (2-F-overall)

“...**tutoring center has helped me a lot** too when it comes to really understanding your class. Sometimes they have tutors for a specific class, which helps out a lot too.” (4-M-overall)

### ***Special Programs***

Students expressed the importance of special programs and the impact on their progress and achievement.

“For me it [overall importance for success] was getting into the **EOPS program**. They’re **good counselors**. Because before I had a different major. But I wanted to change it, but I never got around to changing it. So when I went to the EOPS program they **had me set up an SEP**. And so setting that up, that **really helped me get on track and be more successful**.” (4-F-overall)

“...probably the biggest person that’s helped me ...**I missed the deadline the first semester**, but it was my high school’s fault...**He [educational advisor] said**, no, **don’t worry, we’ll take care of it**...he said, look, none of that matters. **You are a student, you are human, I’m going to treat you as such**. ... **made me cry, because he said it in such a profound way**... he’s the one who helped me get into the program [EOPS] , and he recommended certain classes to take first...” (1-F-nurtured)

“Being in Puente, I am getting **constant emails and messages from professors**, from my English professor, from my counselor. The involvement is **no comparison to any other instructor**. It’s just you heard us talking about how our essays earlier and how worried we are to have everything prepped because we don’t want to disappoint basically. **We don’t want to disappoint our instructors because they do so much for us**. We want to be the best for them as well.” (2-F-overall)



## **Student Clubs/Peers**

Students mentioned the importance of clubs in each session. They also discussed how peers and group activities contributed to their academic success.

**“Joining a club is the most important thing to do in a college.** I notice by everything that my peers are saying, we see this very similar alignment of every student **finding that goal-oriented group that will help you** guys work towards your education **now, present, and to the future.**” (2-F-overall)

“It was my first semester... **we were working on our essays, and it's just the moment where everyone was like, let's go hang outside...**we were **having conversations about English...**we were all talking about it, and this **communication and engagement** was really there for everyone in that group, and that atmosphere. **In that moment, I was like wow, I really feel like a college student.** Everyone's **talking**, and we're all **working together**, I was like, wow, **that's pretty cool.**” (1-M-engaged)

**“You feel alone.** But when you're talking to the person next to you, when you're talking to a group of people in the same class, taking the same course you're taking, doing the same homework, studying the same ways, you feel connected on so many different levels...I think **group work, partner work is really the best thing you can do in the classroom.**” (2-F-engaged)

## **Family/Community**

When discussing feeling valued, students indicated a sense of family and community influenced their ability to be successful.

**“I've built so many bonds and they made me feel valued.** I know that they truly are *family*. **We're all family.** She can call me, “Hey, my car broke down. I need a ride.” I'd go get her. “Hey, what are you doing after school?” I'll go hang out with him. If you guys want to build anything that will benefit the entire student body, **build more programs** [PUENTE]...” (2-F-valued)

“I think the education setting...if they **give back** like...**Fresno Pacific is interacting with the community** saying; hey -- **we have an alternative for you for the community.** We have **an alternative for your family.** Then they'll accept it. Otherwise people feel ostracized or like I said, you're introverted. Instead of saying; oh yeah -- I'll be part of the *community*. I'll be part of that club. I'll be part of the program.” (3-M-valued)

“We meet with **our counselor** more than twice a week. They're more **focused on us**, feeling **connected** with each other, making sure we **communicate**, and that **we're like a family.** They motivate us and they want us to succeed and be successful. They have **mandatory tutoring** for us to go to. And **it's really helpful.**” (4-F-valued)

“I think **students feel connected once they become a part of something else**, whether it's **extra-curricular** or maybe just they **meet some people** that they can connect with, whether it's **an instructor...**you **find that connection with a**

**family bond with people.** You find **someone that actually cares**, that **follows up with you**. So **that's when you feel valued**. And when you feel valued, **you want to contribute more...**" (4-F-valued)

"...providing **community service**, **I feel valued when I go to those places that I volunteer** to, and at the end of the shift, or at the end of the day, they'll say hey, thank you for coming by and helping. I feel valued during those moments. (1-F-valued)

"...an event that invites *families* onto the campus...or **an event that educates the whole family on what possibilities you have here**. Yes, **your undocumented, but there's so much more to that. You can do just as many things as another student would possibly do**. You just have to work harder for it...I have a friend who is attending UC Merced. She's a US citizen, she's a 4.1 type of student, as in GPA. But, before she got there, I think her senior year, her dad didn't let her go to UC Merced, didn't want to let her go, because that's not the way he grew up. His eldest daughter wasn't going to leave the house. I feel like if that happens to someone regular, who isn't undocumented, I can only think of the **type of parent** who would do that to someone who is **undocumented**. Who would kind of **force them to stay in the same lifestyle**. Not necessarily in the fields, but just in the lifestyle where, no, you're going to work, why are you gonna go to school? School does nothing for you. I still know a lot of **men** who are like that. It's also **women**, it's also a lot of moms, because **they're scared, they don't want their kids to go waste their time in college**, or connect with people who are into alcohol and drugs. **I still know a lot of parents who have a bad mentality about college**. (1-F-valued)

## **RACIAL INEQUITIES**

To assist in explaining the racial inequities voiced by the students Critical Race Theory (CRT) was used as a framework for reflection and analysis. In Critical Race Perspectives on Theory in Student Affairs, Patton, McEwen, Rendón, and Howard-Hamilton (2007) provide a theoretical framework which may be used to "illuminate racial inequities and hierarchies and to transform colleges and universities".

## **CURRICULUM**

CRT discusses racial inequities and hierarchies in the classroom through the use of curriculum that "focuses exclusively on White, western viewpoints that render students of color invisible in what is learned and discusses in class". One student voiced his appreciation for a faculty that addressed this when discussing an experience in a class.

"History 12, that was a great class because the teacher, **he focused a lot on the general side of Native Americans**. And **I don't know any other history teacher that even mentions that. It's kinda swept under the rug**. They always talk about Hitler and the Jews, but it's like – not that that doesn't matter but it's like right here where we stand, on this land, there was something worse committed." (2-M-engaged)

Another student voiced what CRT recognizes as "professors 'own' the curriculum in their classrooms and design it according to their own ontological and epistemological

assumptions, which may work against students of color.” One student talked about the differences between three faculty and the effect it had on engagement.

“...as soon as we would get to the class, she [faculty] would say, “Okay, now **everybody take out your phones and find a news article.**” And we would go and she would go down the line, like “What did you find?”...she made us focus on finding a news article and being on our phones and then we would all discuss it. **I really like that**, too, because it was a way to keep us up with current events but also use our phones. **She was smart about adapting to us**, like molding herself to fit in to our younger crowd because she was a much older woman and we were all fresh out of high school. So she really knew what she was doing. I really feel like **in order to be successful in a classroom, it’s kind of up to the professor.**

One of my professors, it’s a **three hour long class**, but he will show his PowerPoint and he would be like, “And they dropped the A bomb on Hiroshima and it was crazy!” **We’re all wide-eyed because he’s so energetic and he loves history.**

Then I get to a **communications class** and **she’s cussing at us and blah, blah, blah.** We’ll give a presentation and it’ll be like, “This isn’t what I assigned. What are you doing?” And we’re like, “Can you help?” She was like, “I gave you the assignment. You should have read the syllabus.” I think it’s kind of up to the professor because now **I go to communications and I’m just kind of like, “I don’t want to be here.”** But, I’ll walk into **my history class** like, “**Okay! Let’s learn about the 1920s!**” (2-F-engaged)

### **MICRO-AGGRESSIONS**

CRT explains “racial micro-aggressions or subtle insults (verbal, nonverbal, and/or visual) directed toward people of color, often automatically or unconsciously” have an impact on students.

**“I have sat in classes where I see children coming in.** And I feel that there is a certain **disconnection between that student who’s having to bring their child into a classroom setting.** There’s a disconnection with everybody else because some people they view that and they say – they’re like, “Oh, why did they let them bring their kid?” So **it’s a process of shaming the person...** I’ve talked to one...it was **a woman who had her daughter with her**, I talked to her after class about her daughter and stuff...she just told me that **she felt very embarrassed** and I think that was more of an internal feeling of shame, of **having to deal with bringing her kid to class.** And yeah I think that would definitely...that would make someone feel disconnected.” (3-M-connected)

“...we’re talking about **marketing**, we’re talking about **recruiting.** For instance, **our communities...** mass marketers of products that are being consumed are not focused on education. For instance, as I was coming here, just down the road you see **huge billboards of beer and a party. Where is about the education?** Where is **about Fresno City College?** You know, “Come to school.” It’s not. So **where are you going to put the value for their life, for their education?** It’s not there.” (3-M-valued)

## INSTITUTIONAL CULTURE

It is particularly important to use a CRT framework because it “moves beyond an individualistic focus, is respectful of the socio-political realities of marginalized groups, and does not reinforce the power structures in society.” An institutional culture that emphasizes this framework will increase our sensitivity to the realities Latina/o students’ experience.

“...**the LGBT campaign**, where it's saying on doors, when you open any door in the math and science building, saying **“This is a safe space.”** Even though I don't identify myself as one, I'm still a supporter for that community. So, **knowing that those people can feel just safe as I do for being undocumented**, like, **I've always seen a connection between the undocumented community, and the LGBT community...**We feel like **we're an outsider**, that **we don't belong**. Just a **lot of emotions that we share.**” (1-F-nutured)

**“Five years ago I was here, I was enrolled.** There was a huge disconnection and I feel like it was probably because of my background. My background is I grew up in an urban setting, California urban setting, Central Valley urban setting, which is composed of mostly Latinos – Latinos, southeast Asians, and blacks. **I grew up in a gang.** I was – I am a former gang member and that's the stuff that I had to deal with on a daily basis. As **I was coming to college, trying to have an education**, trying to just do something different than what all my friends were doing. But **I ended up being arrested** and I ended up **going to prison**. So now five years later, I'm out. Actually, I got out last year and I enrolled as soon as I could. But the problems with that was the fact that when I was arrested and I was enrolled here – I couldn't do anything while I was incarcerated. I couldn't call. **I couldn't make phone calls. I couldn't write Fresno City College and tell them, “Hey, I'm incarcerated.”** So what happened to my classes? They all went to zeros, boom. **I wasn't able to drop or withdraw anything. That effected my financial aid. That effected debt. You have to pay money back.** That effected a few other things but those are the main ones. So coming back and enrolling I had to pay money that I didn't have, money that I had to scrape. When I first got out of prison, my first thing was going back to City College. **I want to get an education. I spent all that time in prison, I don't want to waste any more time with my life**, you know? So, I came out. I said, “Hey, I need an education.” But the struggle was coming up with the money to pay City College back. And they don't – **people in administration, they don't care that I went to prison.** They don't care why I went to prison. They don't care about all the details of that situation. So in not caring I have to basically, essentially, be individualistic and **try to do my best to come up with the money to pay \$900.00 plus that I owed the financial aid for dropping out and not finishing the semester. I had to pay them back and then at that, I still don't get financial aid.**” (2-M-connected)

“...some of us are actually **here to make a difference, do something with ourselves**, not just be the typical, oh, **they're smugglers**, or oh, they're **taking away our jobs**, because **Hispanic, Mexican people**, immigrants, in general, **we are hardworking people who come from nothing.** Because **I used to live in a third world setting**, where I lived in the hills, and **donkeys and everything** was my life. But, it's just like, **I have this understanding for what can be taken**

**away, and what can be given, and something like that is something to value, and to lose it is just crazy.” (1-M-valued)**

**“The value of community, comunidad, family...to work hard for academic purposes, if our community knew that they can achieve much going into an academic setting...I'm a youth minister. I work with youth in the Lowell neighborhood. ...they're like..."I have to work with my dad." I have kids that work in the fields...if you were to promote City College on a massive scale...I believe that that would be transformation in and of itself. ...our youth and our families, our communities, not just the youth but even the adults, the more older generation adults...they could come to school and get an education and do something more...I know very, very smart people, but they're in this self-defeated mode where, "No, I have to work no matter what. This is what's supporting my family." (3-M-valued)**

## **CONCLUSION**

In reflecting on the six factors of success, Latina/o students identified ‘nurtured’, ‘directed’, and ‘focused’ as most important to their success at FCC. The factors identified by Latina/o students as important to their academic success can be used to inform decisions when determining planning not only for the Student Equity Plan, but also for other institutional plans. Using this qualitative data with other institutional data (Institutional Effectiveness Index, Equity data, CSSEE, etc.) will strengthen our ability to provide evidence to guide decisions. What other questions should we be asking our students? What questions should we be asking of ourselves?

As FCC continues to grapple with the inequities experienced by Latina/o students and other disproportionately impacted groups as identified by campus based research, it is important to reflect on our strengths so we can prioritize and scale up activities that qualitative and quantitative data support. It is recommended to use this report to engage student support stakeholders such as faculty, counselors, student services professionals, administrators, staff and students in conversations about these findings. It is important to reflect and begin dialogue on how to foster a conducive learning environment that promotes students’ academic success.

## **REFERENCE**

Patton, L. D, McEwen, M., Rendón, L, & Howard-Hamilton, M. (2007). "Critical Race Perspectives on Theory in Student Affairs" San Francisco: Responding to the Realities of Race on Campus. New Directions for Student Services Vol. 120

Merriam, S. B. (2009). Qualitative Research: A Guide to Design and Implementation. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

## Appendix A

### STUDENT EQUITY FOCUS GROUP AGENDA

1. Introductions
2. Purpose
3. Protocol
4. Conduct Question & Answers
5. Rap-up



the Research & Planning Group  
for California Community Colleges

### STUDENT SUPPORT (RE)DEFINED

#### Focus Group Questions

Success Factor	Question(s)
OVERALL	1. What is the most important thing that has happened to you at the college that has helped you be successful as a student? Why was this
CONNECTED	2. Our research suggests that students who feel connected to their college are more likely to be successful. Still, some students don't feel connected to their college. <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>a. Why do you think that is the case? Why do some students not feel connected to the college?</li><li>b. What can a Fresno City College do to make students feel connected?</li><li>c. Tell me about a time when you felt strongly connected to the college.</li></ol>

Success Factor	Question(s)
DIRECTED	<p>3. Our research suggests that students who have a clear educational goal are more directed and more likely to be successful? Do you have a goal for your education?</p> <p><u>If response is yes:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. What is your goal? When did you decide on this goal?</li> <li>b. Who or what helped you develop the goal?</li> </ul> <p><u>If response is no:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>c. What do you think you need to develop a goal?</li> </ul>
ENGAGED	<p>4. Our research suggests that students are more likely to be successful if they are actively engaged in college inside and/or outside of class and feel they are really learning something. Still, some students don't feel engaged in this way.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Why do you think that is the case? Why do some students not feel engaged, not feel they are learning something?</li> <li>b. What can Fresno City College do to make students feel engaged?</li> <li>c. Tell me about a time when you felt strongly engaged during your time at this college. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>i. What was going on at the time? What were you doing? Who were you with? What was that person doing?</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
FOCUSED	<p>5. Our research suggests that students who stay focused on their goal are more likely to be successful. What has the college done or could it do to help you stay focused so you can achieve your educational goal?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. What helps or has helped you stay focused?</li> </ul>
NURTURED	<p>6. Our research suggests that students are more likely to be successful if they feel nurtured – that somebody wants them to succeed and helps them do so.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. What can Fresno City College do to make students feel that somebody wants them to succeed and helps them do so?</li> <li>b. Tell me about a time when you felt somebody really cared about your success or helped you be successful.</li> </ul>
VALUED	<p>7. Our research suggests that students are more likely to be successful when they feel valued and that they are contributing something to the college community, for example by being in a club, serving as a tutor or mentor, providing community service, participating or leading in student government or clubs, or playing sports. Still, some students don't feel valued in this way.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Why do you think that is the case? Why do some students not feel valued?</li> <li>b. What can Fresno City College do to make students feel valued?</li> <li>c. Tell me about a time when you felt valued at this college, or if you don't feel valued what might make you feel this way.</li> </ul>
RATING SHEET	<p>8. At this time, we have one final question for you. Of the six factors that we have found help increase student success, which ones are most important to you? Think through each factor and find the three that you think are most important to YOUR own success. Once you have decided on your top three, give the one that is most important to you a "1" – second most important a "2, and third most important a "3." Then write in the space at the bottom of the page a few sentences to explain why you chose the factor you rated number one to be the most important for you.</p> <p>Thank you all so much for your participation and help with our research.</p>

## Appendix B



### WHAT IS MOST IMPORTANT TO YOUR SUCCESS AS A STUDENT?

Here are six different ways you may feel as a college student – or wish you felt as a college student. We would like to know how important you think they are to your success as a student.

Please think about each one and then do the following:

1. Pick the three that you think are most important to your success.
2. Mark these three with a 1, 2 and 3 to indicate their order of importance to you. For the item that you marked with a "1" please indicate below the table, why you chose this item as the most important.

	<i>Rating</i>
Connected: You feel connected to the college	
Directed: You have a goal and you know what to do to achieve it	
Engaged: You listen and participate in class and participate in extra-curricular activities	
Focused: You stay on track – keeping your eyes on the prize	
Nurtured: You feel somebody wants you to succeed as a student and helps you succeed	
Valued: You feel that what you have to contribute to the college is valued	
<i>Why did you choose this item as the most important to your success?</i>	



### Appendix C

Results - What is most important to your success as a student?

Session	Connected	Directed	Engaged	Focused	Nurtured	Valued
1		2			1	3
1				2	1	3
1			3	2	1	
1	2		1		3	
2		3	2		1	
2	3	2		1		
2		1	2	3		
2		3		2	1	
3			2	1	3	
3		2		1		3
3	3	2			1	
3		3	1		2	
4	3	1			2	
4		3		2	1	
4			1		2	3
4		3			1	2
4		1		3	2	
4		1	3	2		
4		1	2	3		
4	3				1	2
4		1	2	3		
<b>N</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>Percent</b>	<b>24%</b>	<b>71%</b>	<b>48%</b>	<b>57%</b>	<b>71%</b>	<b>29%</b>
1st Choice	0	6	3	3	9	0