# SANTA MONICA COLLEGE
## Institutional Research

# A Guide: Analyzing Individual Faculty Racial Equity Course Success Data

## September 2021 v. 2

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# How is Equity Defined at SMC?

Santa Monica College (SMC) defines **equity** as:

> Fair and just inclusion. An equitized society is one in which all can participate and prosper. The goal of equity must be to create conditions that allow ALL to reach their full potential. Equity is an ongoing process and an accountability lens. It is not an end-product (p. 2)
>
> [Source: 2019-2022 Santa Monica College Student Equity Plan](#)

While SMC seeks to achieve **equitable outcomes** and foster **equitable experiences** for all students who are disproportionately impacted, the College prioritizes the elimination of disparate outcomes and experiences of **racially minoritized students** in the 2019-2022 Student Equity Plan, as racially minoritized groups, particularly our Black, Latinx, and Native American students, experience the **largest** and **most persistent** equity gaps in terms of outcomes related to completion, transfer, and career. As thus, the College defines **racial equity** as:

> The application of justice to systems that have been out of balance with regards to race. Racial equity is both a process and an outcome. As an outcome, we achieve racial equity when race no longer determines one's socioeconomic outcomes; when everyone has what they need to thrive, no matter where they live. As a process, we apply racial equity when those most impacted by structural racial inequity are meaningfully involved in the creation and implementation of the institutional policies and practices that impact their lives (p. 2)

> Adapted from the definition of racial equity used by [Race Forward](#).

In both definitions of equity, we explicitly state that equity is an ongoing process, and in the first definition, we specify that equity is not an end-product. Our intent behind the statements was to acknowledge that we will not be able to achieve equitable outcomes for our disproportionately impacted students through tools, programs, and policies alone - that to advance racial equity and achieve deep, sustained, long-term changes, it will **require us to be introspective and relentless in our efforts to continuously examine data and redesign the College to meet the needs of our most disproportionately impacted students**. As cultures and our student populations shift, our equity work will not have an endpoint and will **require us to be an institution focused on ongoing learning and improvement.**

 **REFLECT**

Reflect on SMC's definitions of equity and racial equity:

- Do these definitions differ from your prior understanding of the terms? If so, how?
- How have you engaged with equity work at SMC?
- What are actions can you take as an [insert your role(s) here] to ensure that equity work at SMC is ongoing and leads to an organizational culture that values empathy[1], continuous learning, and improvement?

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[1] Specifically cultural empathy which is the learned ability to understand the thoughts, perceptions, and feelings of those from cultures different than our own

**EQUITY VS. EQUALITY**

The terms equity and equality are sometimes used interchangeably at SMC. But these two terms are distinct and lead to different consequences for students. Has a colleague ever said to you (or perhaps you have said this yourself), "I am an equity-focused instructor because I treat all students equally"? While the intentions behind comments like this one may be student-centered, in the real world, our diverse students enter our institutions with varied resources, experiences, and challenges which mean they need different levels of support to achieve their educational goals.

The following graphics developed by USC's Center for Urban Education (CUE) illustrate why treating students "equally" does not necessary advance our equity goals.



Equality assumes that students come to our institutions with the same resources, experiences, and needs.



But our students are not the same. Some students, particularly our racially minoritized population, come to us from under-funded, under-resourced schools (an example of **structural racism** – see next section for definition), which means they start on a lower rung on the ladder to reach their educational goals when compared to those come from adequately resourced schools, and have access to support, resources, and opportunities.
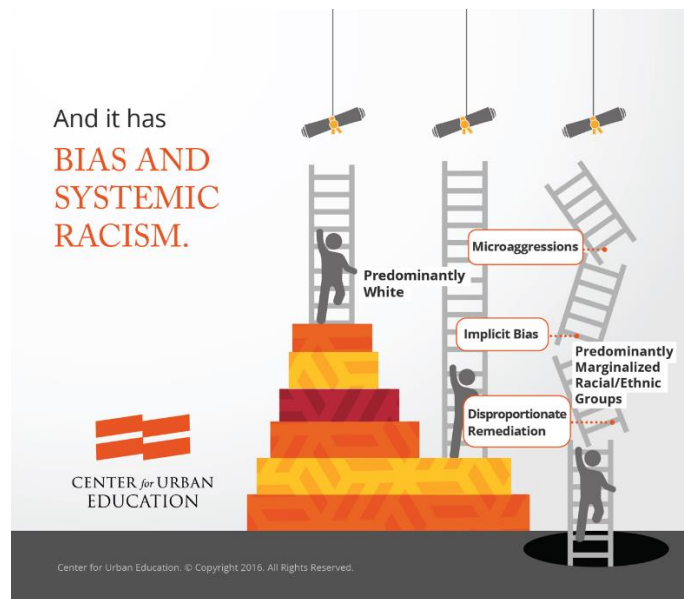
In addition to **structural racism**, our racially minoritized students encounter **institutional or systemic racism** and **individual racism** (definitions provided in next section), for example, course remediation policy (institutional racism) or microaggressions committed by classmates and professors (individual racism), which negatively impact their educational experience and ability to climb higher on the ladders towards their goal. They encounter a broken ladder.



Equity is the work we engage in to "fix" the broken ladder and remove the barriers that our racially minoritized students face at our institutions.

Access this three-page resource from CUE to familiarize yourself with other terms and concepts to deepen your understanding of racial equity: [Core Concepts of Racial Equity](#)

**STRUCTURAL, INSTITUTIONAL, AND INDIVIDUAL RACISM**

Examining your own racial equity data for your classes may be uncomfortable and painful, especially if you find that the classes you teach produce gaps for racially minoritized students or other disproportionately impacted groups. This exercise may initially lead to defensiveness ("I'm not racist"), shame ("I'm not as student-centered as I thought"), or distress ("I've tried everything to help students, the gaps I see are upsetting"). We need to push through these (valid) feelings and refocus on the work that is before us. The complex reality is that even data for classes taught by the most dedicated, reflective, and equity-minded practitioners may show gaps for racially minoritized students. The reason gaps in educational outcomes for Black, Latinx, and Native American students continue to persist is because our institutions and the structures of our country are skillfully designed to produce them. Racism is pervasive in education and shapes our policies, structures, practices, and our engagement with students.

There are different interrelated types of racism that impact the lives and experiences of racially minoritized students which ultimately lead to the racial equity gaps we see in our data. This infographic from Living Cities, a nonprofit organization dedicated to closing racial income and wealth gaps in the U.S., provides a visual representation of the ways that structural, institutional, and individual racism interact and compound to produce racial gaps: **[Infographic] A Day in a Life: How Racism Impacts Families of Color**

The graphic on the following page provides you a snippet of the infographic that defines the types of racism.

## TYPES OF RACISM

### 1 Structural

Social, economic or political systems featuring public policies and practices, cultural representations and other norms that perpetuate inequities.

### 2 Institutional

The policies and practices within and across institutions, like schools, that put certain racial groups at a disadvantage.

### 3 Individual/Implicit bias

Face-to-face or covert actions toward a person that express racial prejudice, hate or bias.

Here are some examples of the three types of racism in the context of SMC and our students:

- **Structural:** Our Black and Latinx students are more likely to come from under-resourced schools because of the historic practice of redlining (denying loans based on race or ethnicity), housing segregation, and funding of schools through property taxes.
- **Institutional (also called Systemic):** Pre-AB 705 legislation, instructors waived Black and Latinx students who earned A grades in English 21A directly into English 1 (bypass English 21B) at lower rates than white students.
- **Individual/implicit bias:** Disproportionately fewer Black and Asian students who participated in the racial campus climate survey felt they mattered or belonged in classes taught by white professors when compared to white students.

**REFLECT**

- What other examples of the three types of racism have you observed or encountered at SMC?
- How have the examples you named in the question above impacted your students' outcomes and experiences?

# How is Course Success Defined at SMC?

SMC uses the statewide adopted definition of "course success": the percentage of students who receive a passing or satisfactory grade. Source: [The Research & Planning Group of California](#)

**Numerator:** Grades A, B, C, P

**Denominator:** Grades A, B, C, D, I, F, NP, W

**Exclude from the calculation:** Grades IP (in progress), RD (report delayed), EW (excused withdrawal), UG (ungraded)
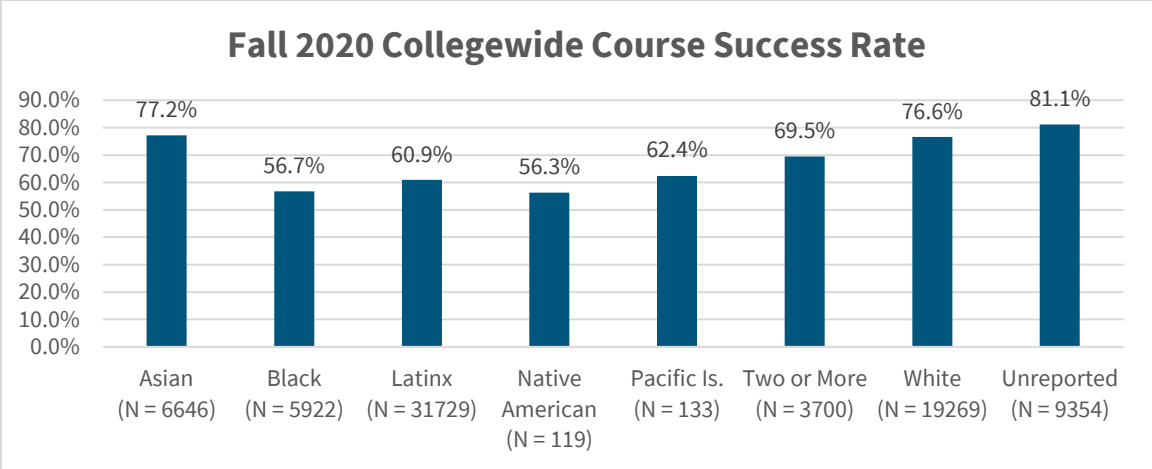
While students withdraw from classes for various reasons, including non-academic related ones, W grades are included in the denominator because withdrawal from a class means that the student did not complete the course, which negatively affects their progress towards attainment of their educational goal (certificate, degree, transfer, credits for career or job, etc.).

# How are Equity Gaps Calculated at SMC?

Disaggregated course success data is critical for identifying racial equity gaps in your classes and the magnitude of the gaps experienced by racially minoritized students. In addition, disaggregated course success data provides a baseline from which you can measure your progress. The California Community College's Chancellor's Office (CCCCO) recommends that colleges use one of two methods to calculate equity gaps:

1) The **[percentage point gap (PPG)](#) method** is primarily used for student outcome metrics that are expressed in rates or percentages and involves subtracting the performance of each group from the performance of all students (total). **Course success data uses the PPG method to calculate equity gaps.**

2) The **[proportionality index (PI)](#) method** is most useful for student outcome metrics that are expressed in numbers or volume of students. The method involves comparing the representation of one group in a successful outcome (i.e., 35% of associate degree completers are Latinx) to the representation of the same group in a reference population (i.e., 40% of all students with a degree goal are Latinx). Groups who are **underrepresented** in the successful outcome when compared to their representation in the reference group are identified as experiencing an **equity gap.**

SMC uses a modified version of the PPG method to calculate equity gaps. Instead of calculating the difference in course success rates between one group of students versus **all** students, SMC compares the difference in outcome of one group to the **highest performing group, not including the "unreported" group.** SMC uses the highest performing group to account for the fact that our Latinx students represent a disproportionately larger percentage of all students (42% of credit students in Fall 2020) when compared to other racial/ethnic groups.

## Fall 2020 Collegewide Course Success Rate

| | Asian (N = 6646) | Black (N = 5922) | Latinx (N = 31729) | Native American (N = 119) | Pacific Is. (N = 133) | Two or More (N = 3700) | White (N = 19269) | Unreported (N = 9354) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Success Rate | 77.2% | 56.7% | 60.9% | 56.3% | 62.4% | 69.5% | 76.6% | 81.1% |

The chart above describes the collegewide course success rates in Fall 2020 disaggregated by student race/ethnicity. The **highest performing group (HPG)** is the "unreported" race/ethnicity category at 81.1%. However, SMC uses the outcome of the next highest performing group, Asian students who completed their courses at a rate of 77.2%, to calculate equity gaps for all other groups.

For example:

**56.7%** - **77.2%** = **-20.5%**

| Course success rate of **Black** students | Course success rate of **HPG, excluding "unreported"** (Asian) | Racial equity gap experienced by **Black students** |
|---|---|---|

In Fall 2020, Black students successfully completed their courses at a rate of 56.7%, a rate 20.5% lower than the highest performing group (not unreported), Asian students who completed their courses at a rate of 77.2%. SMC produced equity gaps for our Black students in terms of course success in Fall 2020.

*A note about our Native American and Pacific Islander populations:*

SMC enrolls a small number of Native American and Pacific Islander students. In Fall 2020, each group represented approximately 0.2% of the student population. When you are examining your courses' disaggregated data, you may observe very small numbers of students in these two racial/ethnic categories. In these cases, we caution you to not use these groups as the highest performing group (HPG) as a reference for calculating equity gaps.

# Now What?

The disaggregation of course outcomes data by race/ethnicity is an effective tool for revealing inequities in outcomes or equity gaps in our classes. This exercise is the first step in identifying the issue. Now what?

As you reflect on the disaggregated data and equity gaps in your courses, ideas about how you can address them may start percolating in your mind. The disaggregated course success data, while useful for making us aware of where gaps exist and for whom, is not useful in telling us *why* the gaps exist; therefore, it does not tell us *which* solutions and strategies will help us close the gaps for our racially minoritized students. We encourage you to use the results of your disaggregated data to engage in further inquiry and reflection and generate questions that when answered, can lead to meaningful findings and changes that are specific to the gaps experienced by your racially minoritized students.

**EQUITY-MINDED VS. DEFICIT-MINDED FRAMEWORK**

How we frame our inquiry questions directly affects the sense-making and discussions of equity data and the decisions we make about how to address gaps. Framing the inequities our students experience using an **equity-minded** lens is most productive in promoting critical self-reflection and leading us to the transformational changes that ultimately close the gaps for our racially minoritized students. The figure below, taken from a guide developed by USC's Center for Urban Education, *Laying the groundwork: Concepts and activities for racial equity work,* provides a summary of key equity-minded competencies.

| EQUITY-MINDED COMPETENCE | LACK OF EQUITY-MINDED COMPETENCE |
|---|---|
| Aware of their racial identity | Claims to not see race |
| Uses quantitative and qualitative data to identify racialized patterns of practice and outcomes | Does not see value in using data disaggregated by race/ethnicity to better understand the experience of racially minoritized students |
| Reflects on racial consequences of taken-for-granted practices | Resists noticing racialized consequences or rationalizes them as being something else |
| Exercises agency to produce racial equity | Does not view racial equity as a personal responsibility |
| Views the campus as a racialized space and actively self-monitors interactions with racially minoritized students | Views the classroom as a utilitarian physical space |

Practitioners who use **equity-mindedness** to frame the racial equity gaps observed in student outcomes perceive equity gaps as evidence that something that *we* are doing is not working; those

inequities are a dysfunction of the policies, practices, and structures that we as educators and practitioners are responsible for influencing.
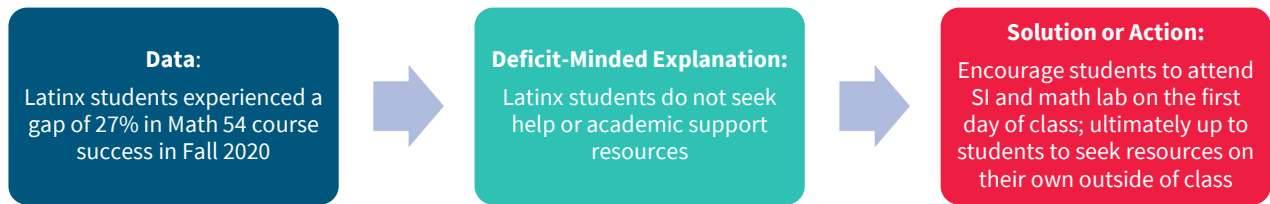
Practitioners who are equity-minded:

- ☐ Engage in continuous **critical self-reflection** about their own racial identity, and racialized belief and assumptions, and take stock of how their experiences and biases influence their practices;
- ☐ Engage in **inquiry to identify the root causes of the unequal outcomes**, focus on underlying causes that are in the control of the institution, and monitor outcomes disaggregated by race and ethnicity;
- ☐ Understand the **historical, social, institutional, and systemic relationships of power, specifically related to racism in higher education**, in the United States and apply this sociohistorical context to make sense of racial equity gaps;
- ☐ **Take accountability for the success of racially minoritized students**, and assume personal and institutional responsibility for eliminating racial equity gaps in student outcomes and experiences; and,
- ☐ Actively **self-monitor** their relationships and interactions with students and colleagues to minimize racial microaggressions, implicit bias, racelighting, and other forms of racism, and to address them when they occur.
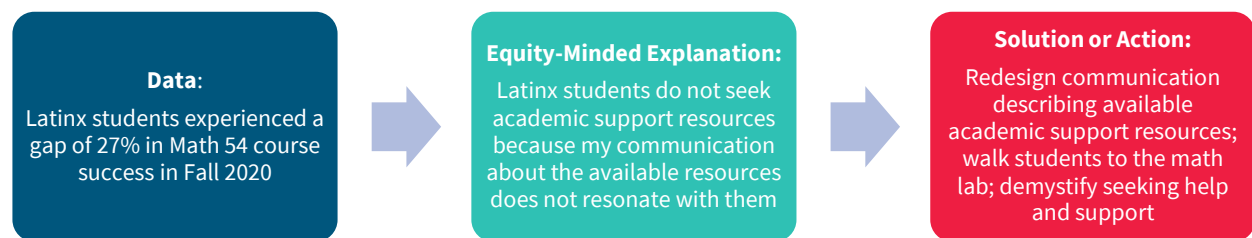
In contrast to equity-mindedness, **deficit-mindedness** is a framework that focuses on the perceived deficiencies of racially minoritized students, for example, their life circumstances (working full-time), educational background (attended an under-funded and under-resourced high school), and other student characteristics (low-income, not motivated, not academically prepared, etc.) and behaviors (don't complete their work, don't use academic support resources, don't visit office hours). While students play an active role in actualizing their educational goals, using a deficit-minded lens to examine racial equity data places the sole responsibility for change and action on the students themselves and ignores the role of educational policies, norms, and practices in producing student outcomes. An equity-minded lens places responsibility for change and action on the institution and practitioners.

Using a deficit-minded framework to analyze racial equity data often to lead to questions and solutions that are designed to "fix" students or ones that focus on factors that are outside of our control. These questions and solutions do not address equity gaps. The two figures below illustrate a simplified example of how deficit-minded vs. equity-minded frames lead to different actions and locus of responsibility and accountability for the racial inequities.

*Example of deficit-minded framing of inequity*

**Data**:
Latinx students experienced a gap of 27% in Math 54 course success in Fall 2020

→

**Deficit-Minded Explanation:**
Latinx students do not seek help or academic support resources

→

**Solution or Action:**
Encourage students to attend SI and math lab on the first day of class; ultimately up to students to seek resources on their own outside of class

*Reframing the problem using an equity-minded lens*

**Data**:
Latinx students experienced a gap of 27% in Math 54 course success in Fall 2020

→

**Equity-Minded Explanation:**
Latinx students do not seek academic support resources because my communication about the available resources does not resonate with them

→

**Solution or Action:**
Redesign communication describing available academic support resources; walk students to the math lab; demystify seeking help and support

## AVOIDING THE RISING TIDE

As you begin to reflect upon the changes and actions you want to take to address the racial equity gaps in your classes, you will need to be aware of the "rising tide". The **rising tide data scenario** occurs when all groups experience improvement in an outcome as a result of an implemented intervention, but the equity gaps experienced by racially minoritized groups continue to persist. The rising tide is evidence that the intervention or strategy or action you tried is not effective in reducing equity gaps.

**Example: Rising Tide Data Scenario**



Improvements for all groups, but gaps persist

⚬ Group 1    ⚬ Group 2    ⚬ Group 3
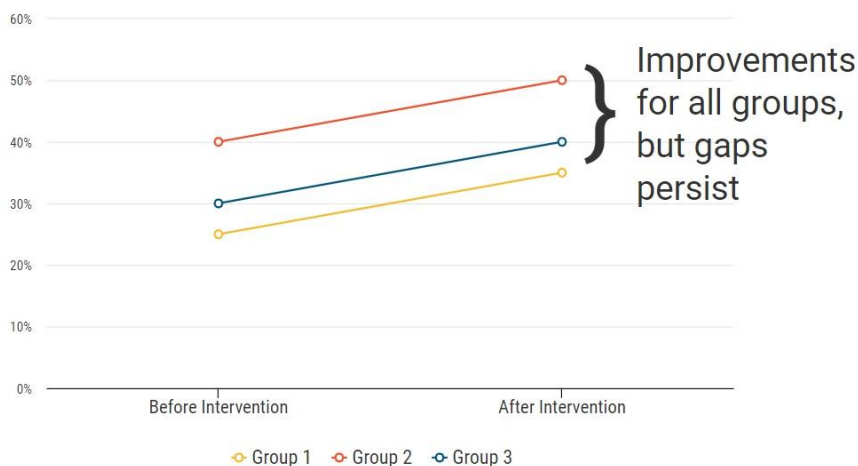
The first goal of equity interventions and strategies is to improve the success rates of the groups experiencing gaps to the level of success experienced by the highest performing group. This scenario is called the "strategic rise" at SMC. Refer to Appendix B in the SMC Vision for Success and p.9 the 2019-2022 Student Equity reports for more information about the various data consequences of equity interventions.

**REFLECT**

What types of strategies, interventions, and practices in the classroom do you think contribute to the rising tide scenario? Why?

**REFLECTION QUESTIONS TO GET YOU STARTED**

Answer the suggested questions below to get you started in your analyses and reflection of the equity gaps you observe for the classes you teach:

1) Who is the highest performing group?
2) Which group is experiencing the largest equity gap? Is this pattern consistent across all semesters and terms that you are observing?
3) What is your hunch for why equity gaps exist for students belonging to the group in #2 above?
4) What questions, when answered, would help you better understand how the policies, procedures, and practices in your classroom contribute to the observed gaps for students belonging to the group you identified in #2?
5) Are the questions you posed in #4 equity-minded?
6) What steps do you need to take to gather additional information or data to answer questions in #4?