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Impact of California Community Colleges Student Centered Funding Formula on First-  
Generation College Students at Minority Serving Institutions: An Exploration  
of the Perspectives of Student Services Professionals

A Dissertation Submitted in partial fulfillment of the  
Requirements for the degree  
Doctor of Public Administration

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Generation College Students at Minority Serving Institutions: An Exploration  
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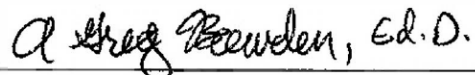
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## ABSTRACT

**Purpose.** This study aims to examine the impact of the Student Centered Funding Formula (SCFF) on a selection of California community colleges that are Minority Serving Institutions (MSIs) from the perspective of student services professionals at these colleges to understand the equity implications of the formula for first-generation college students.

**Theoretical Framework.** This research is based on resource dependence, principal-agent, and critical race theory.

**Methodology.** A qualitative phenomenological case study was conducted using open-ended interviews with 18 student services professionals to gain insight into their perspectives on the SCFF and the impact of the formula on first-generation college students from the lens of student services professionals at minority-serving California colleges.

**Findings.** This research found three impacts on minority-serving California community colleges because of the SCFF and three ways student services at minority-serving California community colleges could mitigate any negative impact on first-generation college students. In addition, this study found that there is no shared understanding of the funding formula or the implication of the funding to minority-serving California community colleges.

**Conclusion and Recommendations.** This phenomenological study provided critical feedback on the SCFF from student services professionals. The findings from this study concluded that minority-serving California community colleges will be impacted by the SCFF, and although there is no shared understanding of the formula, the student services

professionals interviewed were able to share their perspectives that there are things that student services could do to mitigate any negative impact to first-generation college students. The researcher offered recommendations that allow student services leaders to take positive actions toward mitigating any negative impacts on the colleges and first-generation college students while building institutional cohesion and collaboration and centering students in the approach to meeting the metrics by holistically approaching the metrics rather than addressing them piecemeal.

*Keywords:* Accountability, first-generation college students, minority serving institutions, performance-based funding, student-centered funding formula, student services, student services professionals, equity

## DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to the two most important women in my life, my partner who carried me on this journey and my mother who provided the foundation to make me the man I am today. I also dedicate this dissertation to my sons.

To the love of my life, Vallarie M. Ketter, you have always believed in me, supported, pushed, scolded, and loved me through this process. Since the very first day of this journey, you brought me onto campus on that 1st day and stuck with me through all of the highs and lows. As you took your own CBU journey, you were right there writing your own papers and reading late at night to complete your master's degree. I remember how full of pride I was when you finished your master's, turned to me, and said, "Babe, you got this." Even in the moments when I didn't succeed in being a better partner, you loved me and encouraged me. When I didn't acknowledge the sacrifices you made to see me complete this, you stood with me and loved me through it all. Your love has truly sustained me, and I love you beyond myself and with every breath in my body.

To my amazing mother, Sarah B. Mills, you have taught me the value of family, hard work, honesty, and integrity and to always put God first in my life. I am fortunate to have the love of a mother who has always loved me and supported me and has never left my side. I am honored to be your son as you have always cheered for me, encouraged me, and loved me unconditionally. There truly are no words to express my gratitude.

Finally, to my sons, George and Cameron, I had the opportunity to grow up with the expectations of great things for my life without it being burdensome. Everything I do is to set that same roadmap for you. There is nothing you cannot do, and I hope that you see me carry out this journey not to pressure you but to encourage you to seek your

dreams with the passion of someone desiring to change the world. It is my prayer that you grow up to be men of integrity and good moral character because you come from light and must never let that light be dimmed.

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## CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

### **Background**

Education is claimed to be an opportunity for those who are less fortunate to carve out a better future. Community colleges play an essential part in providing education to many people as they seek to achieve their dreams of making a better life for themselves and their families. The task is daunting, and to be successful, they need several things. They need great faculty and staff, they need students, they need the community to embrace them, they need a mission and vision, and they need resources. Funding colleges is a complicated process, and policymakers have for years spent much time trying to figure out the right funding formula and are still searching for the right way to do it.

The California Community Colleges System is the largest system of higher education in the United States (California Community Colleges Chancellor's Office [CCCCO], 2016). There are 115 colleges in the system, and each one serves different communities, even within the same region. There is a particular distinction among colleges in which some are focused on serving minority students such as Minority Serving Institutions (MSIs). Funding all of the colleges in the system has been based on enrollment as a way of reinforcing the state's commitment to accessibility and making it possible for some level of equitable distribution of how money is spent on each student across the state. In 2008, a devastating budget cut rocked the system so that by 2013, the conversation about changing the way colleges are funded took on steam. According to the Baca et al. (2012),

Deep cuts to categorical programs reduced by roughly half the available funding to critical student services such as counseling, advising, assessment, and tutoring.

Cuts in base apportionment funds totaling over 8%, forced colleges to reduce thousands of course sections, barring access to hundreds of thousands of potential students. (p. 10)

Among the challenges prompting the discussion, Acfalle (2015) wrote that graduation rates' stagnation and rising demand for a more educated workforce have accelerated the discussion about the merits of performance-based funding as a serious alternative to the state's current practice. In 2019, California's new Student Centered Funding Formula (SCFF), a performance-based formula, was officially launched. However, concerns about performance-based formulas such as the SCFF still need to be explored.

### **Statement of the Research Problem**

The problem under investigation is the use of a SCFF by the California Community Colleges System to fund its colleges, a process that has the potential to reinforce existing equity concerns (CCCCO, 2016). Specifically, there are metrics in the SCFF that could have an impact on first-generation college students at MSIs. For these MSIs, the impact could change the landscape of the colleges and the communities they serve. This study addressed how this change will impact minority-serving California community colleges from the perspective of student services professionals and the consideration for how first-generation college students will be impacted amid the state's equity push. Community colleges are already the least well-funded aspect of higher education and are increasingly challenged to be accountable for those funds and the resulting outcome. Yet for all the talk by policymakers about accountability in higher education funding that can yield better outcomes by moving to performance-based funding, SCFF has the potential to produce negative consequences, including limiting

equity in state funding (Mullin & Honeyman, 2008) and moving community colleges away from their open-access mission (Hermes, 2012).

Kim and Fording (2010) found that it is often the case that when performance management practices are instituted, poor and minority people are disproportionately impacted. According to the California Poverty Measure, poor people are those who do not have enough resources (\$35,650 for a family of four) to meet basic needs (Danielson et al., 2022). Minority refers to “all non-white students/people of different backgrounds to include African American, Latino, Asian, and others” (Warmack, 2011, p. ). For this study, poor and minority people constitute those who do not have enough resources as defined by the California Poverty Measure and who are also non-White. Elliott (2019) found that all too often, predominantly White institutions (PWIs) benefit from this policy putting minority-serving colleges at a disadvantage to continue to have adequate funding to maintain their mandate of being the open-access institutions that will serve the millions of minority students who go to community colleges to get into higher education and improve their outcomes. This study investigated the impact of performance-based funding on first-generation college students at California community colleges that are MSIs from the perspective of student services professionals.

The SCFF funds districts using a base allocation tied to enrollment, a supplemental allocation to benefit high-needs students, and a student success allocation based on outcomes. The SCFF directs state funds consistent with the Vision for Success and creates stronger financial incentives to support the implementation of Guided Pathways (CCCCO, 2016). The Vision for Success established goals to (a) increase the number of degrees and certificates earned by students, (b) increase the number of

students who transfer to 4-year colleges and universities, (c) decrease the average number of units accumulated by students earning degrees, (d) increase the number of students in career technical education (CTE) programs who find employment in their field of study, (e) reduce the equity gap by 40% within 5 years and close it entirely within 10 years, and (f) reduce regional achievement gaps and fully close the regional achievement gaps within 10 years (Booze, 2019). Essentially, this new formula now funds schools based on three factors: 60% for full-time enrolled students (FTES); 20% for financial aid eligibility, nonresident fee exemptions, and fee waivers; and 20% for progress on student success indicators (graduation, transfer, retention, etc.). All of these goals are tied to the funding formula because outcomes colleges must meet to secure full funding. As well-meaning as these goals appear, there are potential shortcomings, which include the following:

- Changing who is served by colleges could have an unintended (or intended) outcome.
- Metrics in the funding formula could have an impact on colleges serving minority students.
- Incentives could be reduced for colleges to serve “undesirable” students.
- Inequalities are perpetuated that the formula is designed to address.
- Minority-serving colleges are treated the same as predominantly White-serving colleges.

Norman-Major (2011) wrote that as scholars called for the inclusion of equity as a pillar of public administration, they argued that it was not enough to have economical and efficient services if there was no consideration for who was being served. Frederickson



(2010, as cited in Norman-Major, 2011) stated that “the most productive governments, the most efficient governments, and the most economizing governments can still be perpetuating poverty, inequality of opportunity and injustice” (p. 23). While including performance measures (such as degree attainment, transfer rates, financial aid completion, course completion, etc.), this equity model incorporates both enrollment and performance but fails to consider fully the extent of these metrics on the populations served at various colleges. Assuming this is unintentional, it presents an equity dilemma for institutions that must balance the need to meet metrics with the need to stay open. The policy calls for greater accountability from colleges to produce capable graduates but fails to recognize and account for the differences in students and their ability to meet these metrics or the prevalence of students at a particular campus who traditionally underperform on the metrics.

### **Purpose Statement**

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to examine the new SCFF’s impact on a selection of California community colleges that serve minority students from the perspective of student services professionals at these colleges by reviewing artifacts and literature on performance-based funding formulas to understand the equity implications of the formula for first-generation college students. This analysis is especially important because California community colleges are making strides on the state mandate to address issues of equity. Taking advantage of available literature and data that colleges are required to collect, this study integrated the theory and practice of equity in designing a model to meet the outcomes of the research.

## **Research Questions**

The following research questions guided this study:

1. How are California community colleges that serve minority students impacted by the new SCFF from the perspective of student services professionals?
2. How can student services mitigate or eliminate any unintended impact(s) of the SCFF, at California community colleges that are MSIs, for a first-generation college student?

## **Significance of the Problem**

This study is significant in that the results could highlight the level of impact of the new SCFF on minority-serving community colleges in the state of California and how student services play a role in supporting first-generation college students to meet the performance metrics. Also, the study provides an opportunity to analyze the theory behind performance-based funding, specifically through a critical race theory lens. In addition, the results could shine a light on the appropriateness of the metrics in the SCFF that the state decided to use in the formula.

It is anticipated that although there are concerns from stakeholders that may be political or driven by other motivations, this study will contribute to the continued discussion on the efficacy and equity concerns of performance-based funding (Brewer & DeLeon, 1983).

## **Theory Analysis**

Three theories drive this study: resource dependence theory, principal-agent theory, and critical race theory. Each of these theories lends an important perspective to the study.

## **Resource Dependence Theory**

The resource dependence theory originated in 1978 by Jeffrey Pfeffer and Gerald R. Salancik with their publication of *The External Control of Organizations: A Resource Dependence Perspective*. They proposed the theory to be used as a framework for understanding the performance-based funding formula and, to an extent, the intended and unintended outcomes for colleges (Barnetson & Cutright, 2000; Harnisch, 2011). The resource dependence theory is built on the assumption that public institutions depend on the resources allocated to them by the state, and as such, institutions will respond with what could amount to a radical organizational change when their resource allocation is at risk. In the resource dependence theoretical frame, all organizations exist as part of interdependent networks of organizations. The interdependencies and dependencies within these networks shape each organization's prospects for survival. Essentially, the theory explains that organizations depend on other organizations to varying degrees. To alleviate these risks, individual organizations seek to minimize their dependence, which produces new patterns of dependence and interdependence (Pfeffer & Salancik, 1978). Thornton (2015) asserted that performance-based funding formulas like the SCFF allow for a portion of annual allocations to be placed at risk by disbursing those allocations only if performance goals are met. Resource dependence theory thus assumes that public colleges and universities will seek to design or eliminate any program or service necessary to improve the specific performance outcome metrics needed to continue to receive funding or improve existing funding. This theory aligns with the research because it examines the dynamics of the dependence of community colleges on the resources of the state.

## **Principal–Agent Theory**

Scholars today are using the principal-agent theory to frame their work to move forward with the discussion on performance-based funding (Hillman et al., 2014; Hillman, Tandberg, & Fryar, 2015; Hillman, Tandberg, & Sponsler, 2015; Lane, 2007; McLendon et al., 2006; Shin, 2010; Tandberg & Hillman, 2014; Tandberg et al., 2017). Hillman, Tandberg, and Fryar (2015) noted that “performance funding policies often mirror a basic principal–agent relationship in which the state policymakers, as principals, seek better ways to specify the contract with their agents, the public college in the state” (p. 15). The principal–agent theory is based on a principal who engages an agent to accomplish the principal’s goals. Frequently, the principal and the agent work in a collaborative setting but with differing interests, which could lead the agents to act in a manner that is not in the interest of the principal for whom they are supposed to act. In their seminal work “Theory of the Firm: Managerial Behavior, Agency Costs, and Ownership Structure,” Jensen and Meckling (1976) asserted that “if both parties to the relationship are utility maximizers, there is good reason to believe that the agent will not always act in the best interests of the principal” (p. 5). Kivistö (2008) noted that in an attempt by the principal to increase the compliance of the agent, an agreement must be created, and the efficiency of that agreement is dependent on the inclusion of incentives. The stakeholders in higher education are varied and all play important roles. Essentially, the institutions serve as agents with multiple principals, including the state, legislators, governing boards, accreditation, and other professional associations. All funding models are the agreements that states enter into with institutions, and performance-based funding is the newest contract that states are deploying to hold institutions to their agreement. The

theory aligns with this study in that the principal (state) and agents (colleges) are trying to achieve goals in a way that seems divergent but must come to an understanding of how to move forward.

The California Board of Education and legislators have turned to performance-based funding through the SCFF to serve as an incentive to California community colleges to accomplish goals regarding improving graduation rates, improving transfer rates, increasing CTE and employment after completion, reducing students' time to completion, and closing equity gaps. The logic is that although enrollment has been the funding model, schools have focused on enrollment while neglecting outcomes, such as graduation and transfer, and instituting a performance-based funding model would remedy that issue (California Community Colleges Student Success Taskforce, 2012).

### **Critical Race Theory**

Patton (2016) informed the work in framing critical race theory for higher education and posited that the higher education system in America “functions as a bastion of racism/white supremacy” (p. 317). Concerning MSIs, Patton argued that MSIs have not reaped the benefits from generations of wealth that elite colleges enjoy, and state and federal legislative mandates have only provided perfunctory supportive resources to these institutions, deliberately putting race and racism at the center of the debate and seeking to eliminate the built-in inequalities of racism by calling it out explicitly. Rooted in legal studies, Sterner (2019) proposed the application of critical race theory in education to focus on race and outcomes-based education. The application of critical race theory in this study is also rooted in finding evidence that MSIs are where minorities can succeed

in public higher education, so any action that could jeopardize their success could be evidence of institutional structural racism.

Elliott (2019) pointed out that the application of critical race theory in education examines policies such as performance-based funding and how the role of policies like this reinforces the dominant culture. This is an important perspective that speaks directly to Patton's (2016) propositions on critical race theory in higher education:

- Proposition 1: The establishment of U.S. higher education is deeply rooted in racism/white supremacy, the vestiges of which remain palatable.
- Proposition 2: The functioning of U.S. higher education is intricately linked to imperialistic and capitalistic efforts that fuel the intersections of race, property, and oppression.
- Proposition 3: U.S. higher education institutions serve as venues through which formal knowledge production rooted in racism/white supremacy is generated. (p. 317)

MSIs fit this framework and their application will help to understand the relationship between MSIs and the state.

### **Definitions**

**Accountability.** According to Elliott and Jones (2019), Accountability means making sure what the public and state and federal governments spend on higher education protects students and families from fraud and abuse, and ensure all members of the public have access to high-quality education. Accountability also means investing in colleges committed to providing access and opportunity, being transparent about what is happening in

higher education, and taking action against colleges and universities where earning a degree is rare and unlikely to pay off. (p. 1)

**First-Generation College Students.** Students whose parents never enrolled in postsecondary education (Chen, 2005; Horn & Nuñez, 2000; Pascarella et al., 2004); when neither parent has completed a 4-year college degree (Davis, 2010).

**Minority Serving Institutions (MSIs).** A certain subgroup of community colleges that have the unique mission to serve student populations that have traditionally been disadvantaged or excluded from higher education based on their racial or ethnic identities. Over one fifth of community colleges nationwide qualify as MSIs. MSIs include Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs), Hispanic Serving Institutions (HSIs), Tribal Colleges and Universities (TCUs), Alaska Native and Native Hawaiian-Serving Institutions (ANNHSIs), Native American Serving Nontribal Institutions (NASNTIs), Predominantly Black Institutions (PBIs), and Asian American and Native American Pacific Islander-Serving Institutions (AANAPISIs; Li et al., 2018).

**Performance-Based Funding.** A state higher education fiscal policy that uses a formula to calculate a portion or all of an institution's funding based on outcomes known as metrics, also known as performance funding and outcomes-based funding.

**Student Centered Funding Formula (SCFF).** Funding formula enacted by the state of California to fund community colleges that use a base allocation reflective of enrollment; a supplemental allocation based on AB 540, Pell, and California Promise grant recipients; and a student success allocation based on numbers of degrees and certificates, number of transfer students, number of students completing transfer-level

math and English in their 1st year, number of students completing at least nine CTE units, and number of students who achieve regional living wages.

**Student Services.** Program providing academic, professional, and personal support services, such as, but not limited to, advising/counseling, financial aid support, mentoring, cultural experiences, and tutoring (Coleman, 2015).

**Student Services Professional.** Student services professionals are individuals who work in the field of student services/student affairs. They are employed by a college/university, the Department of Education, lenders, or other entities that provide services to students in a university setting (Baker-Tate, 2010). Ward (1995) defined student services as “the name given to the combined programs, services, offices, and personnel in higher education associated with out-of-class experiences” (p. 13).

**Equity.** Acknowledging and addressing social and racial injustices that have resulted in some groups being privileged over others in educational resources for institutions, students, and communities to promote educational opportunities and success.

### **Organization of the Study**

This chapter introduced the topic and laid out the background of the research, provided a statement of the research problem, declared a purpose statement, provided research questions, outlined the significance of the study, and provided definitions of key terms. Chapter 2 provides a literature review section of the history of the research topic and reviews the existing literature. Chapter 3 covers the methodology used to conduct the research. Chapter 3 also reviews the purpose statement and research questions; introduces the research design to include the population being studied, the sample used for the study, instruments used in the study, the data collection, and the analysis strategy; outlines the



limitations of the study; and concludes with a summary of the chapter. Chapter 4 addresses the research, data collection, and findings. Finally, Chapter 5 highlights the research findings, conclusions, and recommendations.

## CHAPTER 2: REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

When it comes to funding institutions of higher learning, there have been more and more calls for greater accountability. Even a cursory review of the literature shows that there is a growing trend toward more accountability, focus and equity, and transparency. In California in particular, community colleges are a big part of educating the population. The California Community Colleges System is the largest in the United States and has based funding the 115 colleges in the system on enrollment as a way of reinforcing its commitment to accessibility and making it possible for some level of equitable distribution of how money is spent on each student across the state. Because of the economic downturn in the mid-2000s, there were massive budget cuts to the system, so by 2013, the conversation about changing the way colleges are funded gained momentum in part because of declining student outcomes. Acfalle (2015) wrote that graduation rates' stagnation and rising demand for a more educated workforce have accelerated the discussion about the merits of performance-based funding as a serious alternative to the state's current practice. In 2019, California's new Student Centered Funding Formula (SCFF), a performance-based formula, was officially launched. However, there are still concerns about performance-based formulas like the SCFF including dissuading colleges from actively recruiting and enrolling students from groups deemed less likely to succeed (Kelchen, 2019).

The new formula was guided by what the state called its Vision for Success. The Vision for Success established goals to (a) increase the number of degrees and certificates earned by students, (b) increase the number of students who transfer to 4-year colleges and universities, (c) decrease the average number of units accumulated by students

earning degrees, (d) increase the number of students in career technical education (CTE) programs who find employment in their field of study, (e) reduce the equity gap by 40% within 5 years and close it entirely within 10 years, and (f) reduce regional achievement gaps and fully close the regional achievement gaps within 10 years (Booze, 2019).

Policymakers in designing this formula were making the point that the investment in colleges demanded better results. It is the addition of performance metrics to the California community colleges' funding formula that this study focused on. This study does not address the enrollment section of the formula but briefly addresses performance-based funding and explores the push for accountability that is driving performance-based funding practices.

### **A Brief History of California Community Colleges Funding**

The California Community Colleges System is interwoven with the fabric of the state as evidenced by the fact that it is the largest system of higher education in the United States. California is the first state to have established a community/junior college institution through legislation in 1907, opening Fresno Junior College in 1910 after postgraduate courses in high schools were authorized in the 1907–1908 academic year (Agatha, 2017). In 1917, the state legislature began providing funding based on a \$15 per average daily attendance model (Mullin et al., 2015). As the number of colleges grew, more funding was applied, including the inclusion of a state–federal fund of \$2,000 applied to the increased average daily attendance of \$100 on an equal matching basis (Agatha, 2017). In the 1947–1948 academic year, a foundation or base funding was established to serve as a benchmark for what opening a college would cost, and over time

more pieces were added, including district tax, student attendance, basic state aid, and a district contribution (Agatha, 2017).

The Donahue Higher Education Act of 1960 created the California Master Plan for higher education forming the basis for the higher education system in California that defined University of California (UC), California State University (CSU), and community college enrollment structures (Douglas, 2007). Marginson (2016) observed that although the plan has been hailed worldwide and formed the framework of public education across the world, there are aspects of the plan that California has not committed to, in particular access. Equality of social opportunity through public higher education now seems much further off than in the first 2 decades of the plan's expanding provision (Marginson, 2016). For community colleges, the structure indicated that it would fund any student capable of benefiting from the college (Mullin et al., 2015). Once those enrollment structures were solidified, the legislators turned back to the funding to add more nuance to the funding streams. Among the new sources included in the funding was a property tax inclusion coming out of the increased revenue generated from property taxes as property values increased. The subsequent outcry by the increase led to the creation of Proposition 13, which had a dramatic impact on how colleges are funded including paving the way for California colleges to charge a low enrollment fee (Agatha, 2017).

The 1970s brought yet another shift as property values increased causing a significant rise in property taxes. Frustrated and angered by this, public outcry led to the passing of Proposition 13 in 1978. Proposition 13 called for a limit on the property tax increase to 1% of the assessed value of homes during the purchasing period. This

immediately saw a decline in property tax revenue in the state by almost 60% (Agatha, 2017). This drastic decline in revenue had an immense impact on how California would design community colleges funding models for years to come (Mullin et al., 2015).

But as revenues fell as a result of Proposition 13, colleges were faced with harsher realities. As a result, Proposition 98 was introduced. This new proposition amended the state constitution to create a minimum annual fund for K–12 and community colleges guaranteeing the total amount an institution received in the prior fiscal year adjusted for cost-of-living adjustment and increases in enrollment (Agatha, 2017). The 2000s saw more budget reductions resulting in a huge increase in the cost of enrollment. In addition, from 2008 to 2014, colleges reduced staffing at an alarming rate to reduce costs. This is a classic case of what happens in the application of resource dependence theory in which institutions dependent on government resources react drastically when resources are threatened. The literature on resource dependence does not take a deep dive into race and equity, which came to play in the cost-cutting measures when staff with minority backgrounds were losing jobs, and minority students were not seeing representations of themselves in the faculty and staff on college campuses. This is why Elliott (2019) looked at the theory from a power perspective in which decisions have powerful implications for colleges beyond funding. This also contributes to the implications of how race impacts public policy. Recognizing this was a problem for a state that is heavily reliant on community colleges to educate its workforce, in 2011 the Student Success Task Force Initiative was created with the immediate goal of addressing degree attainment, closing equity gaps for underrepresented students, and refocusing policies and future investments to support these priorities (California Community Colleges Student Success

Task Force, 2012). Eight recommendations were forwarded by the task force to address its goals: (a) increase student readiness for college, (b) strengthen support for entering students, (c) incentivize successful student behaviors, (d) align course offerings to meet student needs, (e) improve the education of basic skills students, (f) revitalize and reenvision professional development, (g) enable efficient statewide leadership and increase coordination among colleges, and (h) align resources with student success recommendations. Two major outcomes of the task force's recommendations were the implementation of the new funding formula and the California Guided Pathways Project aimed at increasing the number of students who attain degrees and certificates at California community colleges. The recommendations affecting funding changes led to the creation of the current scorecard metrics and laid the groundwork for performance-based funding.

The task force in its search to find what works looked at performance-based funding in the larger group and a smaller working group on finance. The task force gathered input from stakeholders and practitioners from across the country who had implemented performance-based funding as well as renowned national researchers who had examined different funding models. Even as the state was engaged in this work, a lot was going on behind the scenes. Since 2012 and through 2017, colleges have enjoyed liberal cost-of-living adjustment and improved state revenues resulting in increased funding for categorical programs and one-time funds received for past revenue deferrals (Scott, 2016). This influx of funds coincided with the passing of Proposition 30, the Sales and Income Tax Initiative bringing in over \$50 million in revenue to restore funding to California community colleges. This kind of cash infusion was bound to bring with it

scrutiny, and the Student Success Task Force recommendations were dusted off to start working on a redesign of the state's funding policy. The weak economy of the late 2000s and 2010s had already increased the spotlight to legislator's interest to see that colleges were funded more efficiently and thoughtfully.

The task force had recommended performance-based funding with the underlying premise that by funding colleges based on performance, college professionals would develop a focus on student success and seek to adjust activities and investments to yield the highest possible performance and the desired outcome (California Community Colleges Student Success Task Force, 2012).

Rumblings of a move to increase accountability led to the inclusion of performance metrics into the formula that culminated in the 2019 implementation of the SCFF. The California Community Colleges Chancellors Office (CCCCO, 2016) described the allocation process under the new funding formula as having (a) the base allocation focused on access and student enrollment as determined by full-time enrolled students (FTES); (b) the supplemental allocation focused on student equity as determined by the number of low-income students enrolled; and (c) student success focused on student outcomes, which are measured by the number of students who transfer to 4-year colleges and universities, completions, and employment (CCCCO, 2016). Table 1 shows the breakdown of how each area is funded. The formula keeps enrollment as the foundation of funding but adds the element of low income and student success. Low income is measured by the number of students eligible for financial aid, and student success is measured by the number of students graduating, transferring, or finding gainful employment tied to CTE (CCCCO, 2016). Each college, acting as an agent of the state

(principal), must take appropriate measures to ensure that it meets the criteria in each area to secure funding.

**Table 1**

*Student Centered Funding Formula and Percentages*

Allocation type	Target focus	FY		
		2018–2019	2019–2020	2020–2021
Base	Full-time enrolled students	70%	65%	60%
Supplemental	Low income	20%	20%	20%
Student success	Student success	10%	15%	20%

### **Performance-Based Funding**

Most states typically use enrollment figures to fund their colleges. California community colleges are funded based on enrollment as a way of reinforcing their commitment to accessibility and making it possible for some level of equitable distribution of how money is spent on each student across the state (Acfalle, 2015). Performance-based funding is a state budgeting model that ties a portion of the appropriations to colleges based on student progression and outcomes (Li et al., 2018). Beginning in the 1940s, government agencies have used budgets based on functions to provide funding to institutions of higher education (Phillips, 2002). With educational institutions wanting to be free from the political wrangling that goes on with budgeting, they were losing the ability to advocate for themselves (Millet, 1974).

A further examination of performance metrics or indicators is important, and there are several used by the new funding formula. The existing literature on performance metrics has indicated that there are four kinds of metrics (Dougherty & Reddy, 2011). Thornton's (2015) analysis described the metrics:



1. *Metrics for general outcomes* measure the overarching outcomes at the college like degrees conferred, graduation, and job placement.
2. *Metrics for progress outcome* which are essentially retention metrics, measuring progress towards the completion of goals. Some of these progress metrics include completion of developmental education courses, unit/credit progress checkpoints completion, measuring of dual enrollment.
3. *Metrics for subgroup outcomes* are intended to discourage the negative effects on equity and access. They include low-income and at-risk students, first-generation students, non-traditional adult students, and minority groups.
4. *Metrics for high-need subjects* intended to measure alignment with state workforce and economic development goals. They may be adjusted depending on the demand in the state and may include fields like nursing, STEM retention, and graduation as well as job placement rates. (p. 20)

Each metric adds a different dimension to how a college could approach meeting the metrics of the formula and its impact on the college. Each college must examine the metrics and assess its ability to meet the metrics in a way that addresses the demands of its students.

The history of performance-based funding is such that its presence as a tool to fund higher education has come in waves—surfacing and disappearing in different states. States design their performance-based funding models based on their particular economic, educational, and work force needs and weight their metrics based on these needs. Dougherty and Reddy (2011) proposed two basic areas in defining performance-based funding: performance-based funding 1.0 and performance-based funding 2.0. The

kinds of performance-based funding formulas that appeared between 1979 and 2000 are referred to as performance-based funding 1.0, and performance-based funding formulas starting in 2007 are referred to as performance-based funding 2.0. Smith (2015) wrote that funding and criteria for formulas in the 1.0 model are based on how institutions perform or achieve metrics, such as enrollment, retention, and completion. Whether a 2-year institution or a 4-year institution, the formula remains the same without consideration for other factors, such as the mission of the college or the service area, or the population they serve. In the 2.0 model, consideration for the college's mission is expected in addition to metrics beyond enrollment such as outcomes.

### **Advocating for Performance-Based Funding**

Public education advocacy is a big business, and with the push for performance-based funding, it is thriving because major stakeholders want to imprint how it is funded. Ultimately, states decide to employ a performance funding formula for colleges, but this is heavily influenced by groups in and out of education (Hurtado, 2015). Hurtado (2015) argued that “the ground for performance-based funding has been made fertile by the efforts of several organizations that have worked to bring the ‘completion agenda’ to the forefront of America’s education initiatives through educators, legislators, and policymakers” (p. 48). Nonprofit organizations in particular have been pushing this because of concerns regarding graduation and barriers to success. This point was stressed in *The Chronicle of Higher Learning*:

That influence has yielded its biggest payoff at the state level. As states make deep cuts in higher education budgets, Gates and Lumina [foundations] have helped to redirect the public dollars that states do spend into efforts to raise

college completion. The hidden hand of these foundations, felt indirectly through grantees like Complete College America and Jobs for the Future, is pushing new state efforts to tie college budgets to metrics like graduation rates. (Parry et al., 2013, p. 1)

Nonprofit foundations focus on outcomes to drive change. Mostly funded by the Gates Foundation and focusing on what they call “five game-changers” to help students succeed, Complete College America makes completion statistics digestible for the public, thus spotlighting the issue (Hurtado, 2015, p. 50).

Other proponents follow the lead of groups like Complete College America to push for performance-based funding. Agatha (2017) argued that colleges have little financial incentive to build their operations to focus on getting students to graduate. B. L. Wood (2007) pointed out that “the policy is incentive needed for higher education institutions to seek improvement and for policymakers seeking fiscal responsibility” (p. 20).

What has become clear is that as accountability became a focus of budgeting, community colleges were spotlighted because they were focused on access and not quality. By including performance metrics, the issue of quality could be addressed to justify the funding of these institutions. Colleges were already asked to report on performance, so moving from simply having a report of performance to including that performance in determining how colleges are funded did not seem an illogical next step. The problem though is that there is very little connection between performance and funding, and although the indicators may be the same across institutions, policymakers who push for performance funding do not commit to basing funding on performance

(Acfalle, 2015). The literature evaluated in this chapter covered the dimensions of performance-based funding from accountability to policy implementation to impact on outcomes.

### **The Push for Accountability and Performance-Based Funding as a Policy**

Funding colleges based on performance has become more of an issue in public higher education because the public and business/private benefactors demand more for the investment. Though there may be slight variations from state to state, enrollment is central to funding colleges. Bogue (1980) argued that there are limitations to focusing on enrollment because it does not incentivize colleges to improve performance based on quality but rather on quantity. In more recent years, the rise in the push for performance-based funding has been because of concerns of inadequate student retention and completion rates, increasing college costs and student levels of debt, and some major economic downturns, which typically necessitate fiscal prudence and a call for greater accountability (Li et al., 2018). Cowan (2013) challenged the concept that measures of accountability have essentially come from the state and federal political sphere by demonstrating that higher education associations for years have focused on recording and reporting their efforts.

California community colleges were funded based on FTES before the implementation of the SCFF. According to the Public Policy Institute of California, the state spent 12% of its general funds on higher education in 2017 though in comparison to the 1976–1977 fiscal year, this was a decrease of 6% (Cook, 2017). With policymakers wanting to design the best policy to fund education, accountability is one area that plays a

major role in their decision. Elliott and Jones (2019) provided the best definition of accountability:

Accountability means making sure what the public and state and federal governments spend on higher education protects students and families from fraud and abuse, and ensure all members of the public have access to high-quality education. Accountability also means investing in colleges committed to providing access and opportunity, being transparent about what is happening in higher education, and taking action against colleges and universities where earning a degree is rare and unlikely to pay off. (p. 1)

The payoff for the investment in education needs to yield dividends for the student and the public at large. From a purely business perspective, it is inefficient to invest without the expectation of an outcome, and in the 1980s higher education outcomes were pushed forward to hold colleges accountable.

Zumeta (2011) provided six factors influencing the need for greater accountability in higher education:

1. Growth in the size and expense of public higher education simply made it more salient in state budgeting, especially during recessions where unemployment peaked at a higher level than the current downturn.
2. That recession led many in the US to look towards business-based methods, some imported, of quality improvements and cost control.
3. It is during this period that commission reports began showing complaints about workers' skills leading to the push for colleges to demonstrate what

graduates “know and, can do,” reflected in substantial measures of employer concerns.

4. Scholars of the state government have noted how much more professionalized many legislatures have become in recent decades with longer sessions, better-educated legislators and professional staffs, and of course, much more data and capacity to analyze it. These developments have enabled legislators frustrated with aspects of higher education (e.g., its cost) to dig more deeply and more effectively into them.
5. Ronald Reagan had come to power as governor of California in the late 1960s on a crusade to “clean up the mess at Berkeley” and so was an early leader in the movement for closer scrutiny of higher education.
6. During the Reagan years, the federal government became more involved in an unprecedented way in critiquing higher education’s costs, noting that the federal government pays for many students’ tuition bills with grants and loans and so is a major stakeholder. This perspective represented a big shift for the federal government to be worried about the internal decision-making of academic institutions. (pp. 137–139)

With government focus, policymakers were communicating to the public that they wanted assurances that taxpayers were yielding the desired effect.

As more states began to include some version of performance-based funding in the way they funded colleges and universities, national policy-making groups and other nongovernmental organizations also began to pay attention. In particular, performance funding has been used in groups, such as the National Conference of State Legislatures,

The American Association of State Colleges and Universities, Complete College America, and philanthropic groups such as the Lumina and Gates Foundations (Acfalle, 2015). All of these groups are putting the focus on holding colleges accountable.

Educational stakeholders in the 1970s and 1980s demanded that institutions be held more accountable for the millions of dollars being spent on education. Hurtado (2015) observed that policy implementation, accreditation bodies, and financial oversight were but a few of the ways managerial oversight began to sneak in and exert pressure on institutions. Hurtado continued that in the context of strategic management efforts aimed at getting institutions to better focus on equity, the oversight started to seem more like the state-level quality issues that were introduced by state boards and legislators emphasizing the quality review process. No matter the kind of oversight, a key factor in common in every state with a performance-based funding formula for its higher education institution was the goal of being able to quantify the return on investment from resources provided to the higher education institutions.

### **Impact of Performance-Based Funding**

Conceptualizing the funding of colleges in relation to their performance seems to be here to stay. It fits a broader design of a focus on performance management in the United States. Many states use performance management to help control their budgets and increase efficiency in spending. The observation, however, is that “performance management policies have been found to create a ‘performance paradox’ resulting in unintended consequences” (Umbricht et al., 2015, p. 649). Kim and Fording (2010) found that it is often the case that when performance management practices are instituted, poor and minority people are disproportionately impacted. The immediate impact for

community colleges is the direct approaches through which funding based on performance programs can create changes in institutional performance (Dougherty & Reddy, 2013). Although the institutions are changing, the students for whom the outcomes are going to be the most impactful are often the ones feeling a different kind of impact. This impact can be intended or unintended based on the institution and the leadership structure of the institution.

Acfalle (2015) found that the institutional changes that come about as a result of performance-based funding manifest in three ways: (a) altering academic policies, programs, and practices; (b) altering student services policies, programs, and practices (e.g., registration, financial aid, 1st-year retention programs, counseling and advising, and job placement services); and (c) altering developmental education and tutoring. For any college, these are seismic changes that can alter everything from the way faculty teach to whom is served and may disregard other important factors such as those external to the college, which are just as important to pay attention to.

The implied assumption of performance-based funding is that colleges need to be incentivized or coerced to try to graduate or transfer more students, but performance-based funding fails to realize that retaining students can be best explained by the opportunities and challenges that students experience away from the college (Umbricht et al., 2015). Dougherty and Reddy (2011) made the point that “research literature does not provide firm evidence that performance funding significantly increases rates of remedial completion, retention, and graduation” (p. 43). Although California is mindful of equity concerns, more still needs to be done to address those concerns relative to SCFF,



especially for student services, so that colleges serving first-generation and low-income students do not experience a significant negative impact.

### **First-Generation College Students**

For many people, getting an education is a major step in advancing their opportunity to secure their futures. Although education does not guarantee anything, it opens doors that may not be open to those who do not have the credentials to advance in an organization. The attainment of a college education is seen to have a positive economic impact, and many researchers have found that having a college degree improves the economic impact of those from impoverished backgrounds and enhances many other areas of well-being (Francois, 2012). More employers are seeking to hire individuals with college degrees, and institutions are paying attention to local job markets and working to provide the kind of education to fill the local job markets. Colleges now include employment and salary projections as part of their recruiting of students. Community colleges play a major role in helping individuals in their pursuit of higher education. In California, 115 community colleges form the largest, highest education system in the United States. As open-access institutions, they attract individuals from all walks of life and provide opportunities to earn college degrees and certificates. First-generation college students are among the millions who take advantage of the open access of community colleges to move themselves and their families out of various social ills.

First-generation students typically experience a disproportionate impact concerning many of the success metrics colleges look for (graduation, retention, persistence, course completion, etc.). In comparison to those students who come from

second or multigeneration college homes, first-generation college students face an uphill battle in their pursuit of educational success. Yet the population of students in college who identify as first-generation continues to grow. Moore (2020) pointed out that for first-generation college students, there is a disconnection between how prepared they are for college and how unprepared they are for college success.

This is not something that is only now surfacing. For decades higher education administrators have known that first-generation college students come to colleges unprepared, and yet supporting these scholars so that they can become successful is what institutions still struggle with. Graziella and Inkelas (2006) observed that as more first-generation students begin to attend college, they become noticeable because concerns about their instructive aspirations and attainment within the college setting are spotlighted. Colleges enjoy touting outcomes so they can attract the cream of the crop, and for first-generation students, this places them at a disadvantage in getting into college.

Drive or motivation is an important aspect of life no matter where a person comes from. Hidi and Harackiewicz (2000) asserted that students from disadvantaged backgrounds lack the drive to be scholars thus making it clear why they show low to no interest in college that manifests in their underperforming academically or discontinuing because of other priorities that take precedence. First-generation college students are coming into the college environment without the tools to navigate the intricate network of the college ecosystem, and although many of these students want to be successful, the inspiration to do so is often missing, especially when the students have so many barriers before them (Moore, 2020). First-generation students understand how important it is to

get an education because of the perception that it will lead to higher levels of income, social status, and overall well-being than their parents, who did not have the opportunity to pursue the college dream, had. According to Horn and Nuñez (2000), the aspirations of first-generation college students to pursue higher education correlated to the level of their parents' education; only 29% of those identified as first-generation students aspired to get a bachelor's degree, and 40% of those students with one parent possessing a bachelor's degree expected to earn one themselves.

All of the prevailing barriers do not bode well for first-generation college students and their impact on performance-based funding. Francois (2012) found that these students are usually tracked in high school into vocational paths or lower level coursework where they have limited access to a college guidance counselor. According to Spectrum News 1 (n.d.), "It is estimated that more than 40 percent of California community college students are considered to be the first generation in their family to pursue a college education" (para. 6). These students are less likely to begin college within 8 years of completing high school, are generally older, and have lower family incomes (Francois, 2012). Many of these students exhibit characteristics associated with attrition, such as being a minority, being low income, being underprepared for college, having low test scores on standardized tests such as the SAT, being employed full time, having dependents, attending part time, discontinuing college often, and living at home (Ishitani, 2003). These factors play a role because although first-generation students are a major part of a college's student body, they are not necessarily making a mark on success metrics, especially degree completion (Resilient Educator, n.d.).

Student achievement in college is closely associated with its educational expectation. College expectation shows in the form of preparation and planning for college. For students to get to the point of course completion, graduating or any of the success metrics that schools want and are now part of the funding formula, they must have an expectation of what that success will be for them. Habits like confidence in their achievement and the ability to build relationships with professors are major factors that impact first-generation students. The literature has suggested that many first-generation college students do not know what to expect when it comes to college and are therefore unprepared for what happens once they get there (Terenzini et al., 1996). Lee and Bowen (2006) asserted that many college students who come from low-income backgrounds and form a large portion of the first-generation college population are not likely to have the social networks in place to navigate the college environment with the kind of institutional knowledge that will come in handy for their success. To compensate for that lack of network, the community college option is usually the best one because it keeps the students close to home and to the only network they know, their friends and family. The student services units of community colleges must be aware of this relationship to be an effective partner for these students.

### **Role of Student Services**

In an attempt to maintain their open-access nature, community colleges try to improve accessibility by providing and addressing possibilities to break the geographic, economic, expectational, and motivational barriers to the opportunities offered. Some of these services include low or reduced tuition, disability assistance, counseling, and so forth. Collectively, these units are called student services or student support services, and

the representatives in student services are mandated to serve academically disadvantaged students (Hawk, 2010). Lopez (2020) pointed out that student services consider “the academically disadvantaged to be those students who are first-generation college students who are ethnic minorities, have disabilities, are of low socioeconomic status, or are on academic probation” (p. 26). Lopez observed that there is a correlation between first-generation and low-income community college students and their ability to persist and be successful if they are properly informed of student services and other resources on a college campus. The better informed a student is about the services and resources available both on campus and off campus, the higher the student’s persistence will be.

This is significant because a majority of the students use student services resources. Kelley (2010, as cited in Lopez, 2020) found that upwards of two thirds of students served by student services are identified as low income, first generation, or students with disabilities. Students receiving services provided by student services units are more disadvantaged than the student population as a whole, not only in regard to the criteria used for eligibility but also in other ways that are interrelated with their disadvantaged background (Lopez. 2020). Cooper (2010) found a correlation between student services and academic outcomes. One of the strategies community colleges use to increase persistence and academic success for first-generation students lies in student services (Cooper, 2010). When colleges spend time in their recruiting and making sure that first-generation college students are aware of the student services supports that are designated to support them early on, they tend to stay consistent, engaged, and motivated to complete their goal, leading to a successful outcome (Garcha, 2021).

The Community College Survey of Student Engagement (CCSSE) provides additional insight into the impact of student services. According to CCSSE, “The more actively engaged students are—with college faculty and staff, with other students, with the subject matter they are studying—the more likely they are to persist in their college studies and to achieve at higher levels” (Center for Community College Student Engagement, n.d.). Support for students is one of the benchmarks of CCSSE because it calls for colleges to commit to the success of students. Unfortunately, there is very little research on the role of student services on academic achievement. A student services unit that is supportive, welcoming, and has an inclusive culture is ideal for enhancing the academic and social experiences of first-generation students from the beginning (Garcha, 2021). In many cases, receiving supportive services from student services can be the catalyst for a successful academic career for a student.

What is known about first-generation students is that they need resources. Student services play an important role in first-generation students’ success because they provide the resources and support needed for these students to continue their education. Student services professionals are also important because they feel relatable to first-generation college students. Garcha (2021) wrote that for most first-generation college students, there is a feeling of loneliness in their educational journeys because they are the first in their families to attend college, and this feeling of loneliness holds them back from relating to their peers and faculty.

There has been extensive research on the efficacy of participation in student services to improve persistence, retention, graduation rates, GPA, maintenance of good academic standing, and the fulfillment of goals for first-generation college students

(Garcha, 2021). Best practices for student services calls for the provision of superior structure; qualified, diverse, and well-trained staff; and a relationship to the course content the student is taking (J. L. Wood & Palmer, 2014). The relevant research on the effectiveness of student services on first-generation students has shown that these services play a fundamental role in improving academic achievement for them.

Unfortunately, many student services programs do not evaluate their impact on student success. A further best practice to fix this issue calls for the student services programs to have an evaluation strategy that measures the impact that the program is having on success metrics, such as retention, academic achievement, transfer, graduation, and so forth. Garcha (2021) proposed that California community colleges must further commit to supporting first-generation college students to improve their overall success, and programs such as Extended Opportunity Programs and Services (EOPS) and others that focus on first-generation college students must use the best practices to maintain continuity and consistency in the participation of these students.

### **Theoretical Conceptual Framework**

The connection between first-generation college students and student services needs to be paid attention to. Unfortunately, a major challenge that many colleges including MSIs face is funding, and within colleges, student services units face further challenges with resources, funding, and networking (Ciobanu, 2013). Biddle and Berliner (2002) stated that “public school funding comes from federal, state, and local sources in the United States” (p. 49). Still, because nearly half of those funds come from local property taxes, the system generates significant funding differences between wealthy and impoverished communities. Such differences exist among states, among school districts

within each state, and even among schools within specific districts. Colleges and students in affluent communities enjoy resources that are designed to keep them successful, but colleges and students in impoverished communities have to keep scrambling for resources. First-generation students are typically found in less affluent communities where there are scarce resources to begin with. With this understanding, the theories guiding this research illuminate the problem of the SCFF.

The literature review from this point on takes into account the study's three theories to explain how student services professionals at minority-serving community colleges perceive the new funding formula impacting first-generation college students. The theoretical framework by which this study analyzed the research is based on resource dependence theory, principal-agent theory, and critical race theory. From a public administration perspective, these theories are grounded in the six pillars of public administration practice.

### ***Equity Implications***

Rawls's (1971) seminal work described the importance of creating institutions and policies that promote a just and fair society for those at the bottom. Because of the recognized concern with respect to equity, the California Community Colleges System has implemented an initiative requiring colleges to respond to measured equity gaps that also account for who is being served. Policymakers across the state of California have shown with the introduction of equity plans for institutions that they are mindful of the importance of this pillar of public administration. The fourth item on the American Society for Public Administrators (n.d.) code of ethics is to "**Strengthen social equity.** Treat all persons with fairness, justice, equality and respect individual differences, rights,



and freedoms. Promote affirmative action and other initiatives to reduce unfairness, injustice, and inequality in society” (ASPA Code of Ethics section). In education, this is something that educators have continued to grapple with. This means that for public servants at public colleges and universities, decisions and actions made must be done while looking through an equity lens, and at the state level, policy decisions must be made that have equity as a foundation, especially as it relates to funding.

To further operationalize the phrase social equity and build on John Adam’s seminal work on employee treatment, The International City/County Management Association offered an excellent definition. It defines social equity as “the active commitment to fairness, justice, and equality in the formulation of public policy, distribution of public services, implementation of public policy, and management of all institutions serving the public directly or by contract” (Wooldridge & Bilharz, 2018, p. 4). With this definition in mind, higher education administrators must consider whether policymakers actively sought to promote equity while deciding to move to a policy of performance-based funding. Although performance-based funding is said to promote accountability, “institutions that serve greater proportions of students of color are often implicitly disadvantaged under these policies” (Zerquera & Ziskin, 2020, p. 1153).

Bensimon and Chase (2012, as cited in Browne, 2019) offered a further clarification of equity in the context of higher education in which the term “refers to creating opportunities for equal access and success in higher education among historically underrepresented student populations, such as ethnic and racial groups who have been systematically disadvantaged by exclusionary practices” (p. 2). In the case of California, although there is an inclusion of “equity-based measures within these

formulas, it can be argued that many performance-based funding formulas in the USA privilege highly selective research universities and fail to adequately account for the heterogeneity of institutional types” (Zerquera & Ziskin, 2020, p. 1153). This is what constitutes an exclusionary practice. The performance or lose-funding approach that the policy takes flies in the face of the idea of equity. Asking all institutions to measure equity by examining for completion, for example, does not factor in that different colleges serve different students who perform differently in terms of completion, so by having the same measure, there is no equity but rather equality of the measure in that all institutions are measuring the same metric equally. Whether intentional or not, accountability cannot be promoted at the expense of equity. Most of the research has focused on the implications of the policy on outcomes and activities, but this study adds to the literature to better understand how these pressures and requirements interact with the perceptions of equity-focused missions in higher education at the policymaking and institutional levels.

In the context of this research, equity looms large because the institutions in the study served mostly students who came from underrepresented backgrounds. If the goal is to help these students succeed, the policy does not adequately address the historical nature of the inequities in higher education, which have already created a situation in which these groups are underrepresented. Already a pillar of public administration practice, equity allowed the researcher to ground the work in public administration. Each theory’s contributions to the study are detailed in the following sections.

### ***Resource Dependence Theory***

Resource dependence theory is guided by the principle that public institutions like community colleges are dependent on the resources allocated by the state, and in situations in which there is a potential threat to those resources, these institutions will most likely respond in a dramatically radical way to keep their funding. First-generation students need resources and form a connection with student services units to access those resources. Because the new funding formula calls for performance metrics that seem focused on low-income and first-generation students' outcomes, student services will be challenged to respond in a way that they can remain integral to the college campus while providing the equity base needed to support those students who are already disadvantaged. This theory frames the conversation by proposing that all organizations exist as part of independent networks of organizations and units within organizations. The dependencies and interdependencies within these networks shape each organization's (and units within the organization) prospect for survival.

To avoid the risks of dependence, individual organizations seek to minimize their dependence, which produces new patterns of dependence and interdependence (Pfeffer & Salancik, 1978). Elliott (2019) wrote that

spreading out dependencies can allow for more managerial discretion and control. Organizations, in turn, allocate their resources in ways that support these broader goals of decreasing dependence on any one resource provider. This will help understand how the institution's administration has attempted to pursue other funding and the impact of that pursuit on internal and external relationships. For example, departments that capture new external sources of funding may also win

disproportionate shares of organizational funds because of contributions to broader goals of increasing that organization's managerial discretion. (p. 58)

Student services programs are not immune from this even if they are categorically funded like EOPS and Disabled Services. These units are known to be the glue that latches first-generation students to a college campus. The California Community Colleges Chancellors Office has moved toward performance-based funding and reintroduced the concept of block granting, which essentially throws away the focus on target groups. Block grants are fixed allocations of money to provide benefits or services and differ from entitlement or categorical grants, which provide services to targeted eligible populations who have growing and diverse needs. This proposal will put student services in competition with instruction for already scarce resources.

The power dynamics on every college campus are already skewed toward instructions, and studies have shown that this frame highlights that power and social influence become important when resources are scarce. From this perspective, performance-based funding is shown to impact internal relationships on a college campus in which the power of a department is related to its ability to impact the funding metrics. Resource dependence theory will help establish the power dynamics on a college campus. In the community college context, some scholars have applied the resource dependence theory framework to research performance-based funding (D'Amico et al., 2014; Driskill, 2016; Li, 2017; McKinney & Hagedorn, 2017; Shin, 2010).

Although this framework does an excellent job of addressing concerns about power, it does so in the context of resources and does not address other complex factors. Elliott (2019) pointed out that interpreting power solely through the lens of monetary

capital fails to capture the political intricacies of a college campus. The resource dependence framework does not address all of the historical, social, and interpersonal nuances of the relationships on a college campus. More precisely, the framework does not address how MSIs can accomplish the task of educating the public or specifically the pervasive racism directed at MSIs and on college campuses in general as a major form of power, and how the framework influences power relationships in California community colleges. Personally, understanding this theory has influenced the researcher's processes in being an advocate for those in his professional sphere. Understanding is also needed to know that the dependence on state resources cannot be driven by processes but must include a humanistic approach in which an assessment and acknowledgment of individuals is just as important to decisions on how resources are expended. In addition, contextual to this study, this theory highlights the friction between the state and colleges, especially MSIs; these institutions already have an overreliance on state funding, and because of this reliance on state funds, MSIs have very little power in terms of helping to structure policies to benefit their communities. The theorists Pfeffer and Salancik (1978) understood that this relationship is about power and influence and for higher education, it continues to drive policy. From a foundational public administration perspective, this theory grounds the research based on the politics–administration dichotomy in which there is a clear distinction between the politicians who make laws and the institutions that must abide by them and whereby colleges are funded so that they can efficiently implement the mandates of the state.

### ***Principal–Agent Theory***

The principal–agent theory was proposed by Ross (1973) and Mitnick (1973) and later expanded upon by Jensen and Meckling (1976). The theory was recognized as the perspective from which to study performance-based funding, and many scholars turned to the theory to frame their study. Focusing on the relationship between a principal who has given authority to an agent who acts on the principal’s behalf to perform a task—in this case, educate the public—the theory assumes that both principal and agent want to take full advantage of the relationship for their interests, forcing principals to monitor agents (Tandberg et al., 2017). This is another power dynamic that is at play. Principals put these in place for agents to follow, and agents wind up creating the same situation for those they serve. This emphasizes Wilson’s (1887) politics–administration dichotomy. Rosser (2014) defined a clearer depiction of the politics–administration dichotomy:

Politics is state activity in great and universal things, and administration, on the other hand, is state activity of the state in particular and small things. Politics lies mainly in the responsibility of statesmen, whereas administration is the task of technical functionaries. (p. 102)

Wilson hoped that the separation of the two would create conditions for them to be effective in their realms. Unfortunately, that is not always the case because of competing interests manifesting as politicians creating barriers for administrators.

Although institutions (agents) separate the politics from the administration internally, units within the institutions also do it. Student services, and indeed the colleges themselves, are monitored in the form of required reports and budgets to boards or the state chancellor’s office. The theory is helpful for understanding in part the power

relationship between the state and a community college. The theory is used as an analysis to understand what the state chancellor's office expects from community colleges in terms of meeting the mission of the college. Interestingly, what is unique about principal-agent theory in the context of community colleges is that the colleges are created by the state and then take on a pseudo-autonomous bureaucratic role, yet colleges like other government entities cannot break from their arrangement with the principal (government). Unlike other government agencies, colleges are treated differently on several levels of control (Elliott, 2019). This creates a challenge for the colleges (agents) over time. For minority-serving colleges, their status creates a special situation in the principal-agent theory. McGuinness (2011) observed that the unique history, politics, and culture of MSIs impact the state's budgeting and finance relationships. This relationship dynamic is the reason performance-based funding must not be addressed in isolation between the state and community colleges in general and MSIs in particular.

The relationship between MSIs and the state does not exist in isolation. The fact that this particular agent in the principal-agent theory is focused on minorities must not be lost in the discussion of performance-based funding and its impact not only on these institutions but also on student services in particular helping first-generation students connect to the larger institution. This dynamic challenges the principal-agent relationship to be mindful of the implication on different populations and communities and highlights how public policy made in this relationship must consider race.

There are a few considerations in this study of MSIs. Lane (2007) observed that in a relationship such as that of institutions and the state, governments create the agents and then take a seemingly hands-off approach to the daily bureaucracy of the institution. The

reality is that the principals' hands are never really off. Although minority-serving community colleges may want to act in their interests, the state sets the rules (Elliott, 2019). Minority-serving community colleges know their students, but if the rules call for a level of production that may be difficult, they must still respond to the state's demand.

### ***Critical Race Theory***

Buras (2013) described critical race theory as a conceptual framework for the study of race and law arising in the legal field in response to limitations of the race analysis done in the mainstream. Diem et al. (2014) observed the public policy research on performance-based funding, which leading "scholars are interested in understanding how it emerged, what problems it was intended to solve, how it changed and developed over time and its role in reinforcing the dominant culture" (p. 1072). With the ever-growing achievement gap along racial and socioeconomic lines, an understanding of critical race implications in the design of performance-based funding must be understood. Contextualizing this theory to public administration, the equity/fairness theory espoused by Rawls (1971) calls on institutions to commit to promoting fairness, justice, and equity in the formation of public policy.

Patton's (2016) work proposed that looking through a higher educational lens, critical race theory holds that America's higher educational system "functions as a bastion of racism/white supremacy" (p. 316). By this logic, public education policy is rife with racial undertones that feed racial discord. This theory only reinforces the dominant cultural perspective of the policy. Elliott (2019) wrote,

Critical Race Theory advances five main tenets. First, racism is central/endemic to American life. Second, Critical Race Theory challenges dominant ideologies



such as neutrality, colorblindness, and meritocracy. Third, Critical Race Theory values the experiential knowledge of people of color as legitimate and integral to understanding issues of racial equity. Fourth, Critical Race Theory challenges ahistoricism and advocates interdisciplinary perspectives and methods. Finally, Critical Race Theory mandates a social justice agenda for eliminating all forms of oppression. (p. 60)

People looking at performance-based funding through this lens provides them additional insight into the research. It forces people to see that the policy serves as a reinforcement of the dominance of White culture while forcing minority groups to seek to meet standards they are already at a deficit of meeting.

The first tenet that must be reconciled is that race is a part of American life and infiltrates every aspect of society. The fact that MSIs are across both universities and community colleges is a clear indicator of that. Patton (2016) noted that MSIs are not impervious to the pervasive racism/White supremacy of U.S. higher education because of inequitable state funding, shallow federal support, the interpretation and racial undertones of “elite and selective institutions as White and wealthy” and the exclusion from generations of wealth that elite colleges benefit from (p. 331). It will be interesting in a future study to analyze the power relations at play in the development and design of California’s SCFF.

The second tenet calls for the challenge of the dominant ideology regarding concepts, such as neutrality, color blindness, and meritocracy, and the third tenet calls for institutions to seek to value people of color and their experiential knowledge as legitimate and integral to understanding issues of racial equity. Although the California Community

Colleges system has made significant moves such as funding equity-focused work, there is still much to be done. Much of the equity-focused work is intended to impact populations, such as first-generation, minority, and low-income students. This is intended to challenge the dominant ideology, and with student services playing a role on college campuses, the heavy minority makeup helps in getting critical work done to support these students. Ladson-Billings and Tate (1995) asserted that one of the central tenets of critical race theory in education is finding evidence of whether students of color are successful or not successful. For MSIs, where minority students have a higher chance of being successful, this calls for a better way of recognizing this value and rewarding it.

The fourth and fifth tenets essentially call for a paradigm shift in interdisciplinary methods and perspectives, and putting forth a social justice agenda is a call to action. Solorzano and Yosso (2000) observed that although there is research on educational outcomes, the primary design used in the higher education ecosystem is White and male-dominated, and race and gender are used as secondary areas of analysis. This call to action urges the use of a social justice lens to use data to challenge policies and practices through data-driven results, question data practices that are racist, and point out inequities in minority groups.

### **Summary**

Community colleges, which have acted as the main gateway for underprivileged and marginalized groups, were developed based on public outcry for access to postsecondary education but were unfortunately funded, overseen, and implemented by elitists who have historically sought to keep the underprivileged from selective universities. Guided by the principal-agent theory, resource dependence theory, and

critical race theory, the study's review of the literature included a brief history of California community college funding, a review of performance-based funding and the use of performance-based funding as a response to accountability, the push for accountability, an examination of first-generation college students, and a review of the impact of student services. Demands by the state and other stakeholders for accountability have influenced a singular view of funding students with the introduction of performance outcomes. Viewing funding from the perspective of outcomes may cause differences to be more pronounced, skew the interpretation of findings, and/or perpetuate inequalities that are meant to be eliminated. Research in higher education needs to explore the impact of MSIs, especially student services units at these institutions, with an equity-minded approach to highlight differences and encourage understanding and discourse among practitioners to address any significant impact from the implementation of performance funding.

## CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

This study used a phenomenological qualitative design, which was suitable to understand how the complexity of the Student Centered Funding Formula (SCFF) is experienced at Minority Serving Institutions (MSIs). A phenomenological approach is best used to “study the first-hand lived experiences of individuals going through the experience under inquiry” (Francois, 2012, p. 7). In this study, the perspectives of student services professionals who experienced the new SCFF were examined. Because the study involved data from multiple sources, it offers an approach that is all-encompassing and leans toward incorporating a design that has a specific approach to data collection and data analysis (Yin, 1994).

The phenomenon in this study was the SCFF in the context of accountability with stakeholders, including state policymakers, the California Community Chancellor’s Office and its staff, experts in the field of higher education, advocacy groups, and other foundations. The study explored the perception of the SCFF from the perspective of student services professionals about the impact on first-generation college students. Implications of critical race theory were relevant to understand the dynamics of the population of student services professionals and first-generation college students as well as for the MSIs.

### **Purpose Statement**

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to examine the new SCFF’s impact on a selection of California community colleges that serve minority students from the perspective of student services professionals at these colleges by reviewing artifacts and literature on performance-based funding formulas to understand the equity

implications of the formula for first-generation college students. This analysis is especially important because California community colleges are making strides on the state mandate to address issues of equity. Taking advantage of available literature and data that colleges are required to collect, this study integrated the theory and practice of equity in designing a model to meet the outcomes of the research.

The extent of the impact of SCFF on colleges can determine whether they will gain or lose students in the system or district. Understanding the extent of this impact and examining possible ways to address it will be critical to college leaders as they plan and create new initiatives, expand or clarify goals, seek transparency, improve resource allocation, and ultimately serve their community.

### **Research Questions**

The following research questions guided this study:

1. How are California community colleges that serve minority students impacted by the new SCFF from the perspective of student services professionals?
2. How can student services mitigate or eliminate any unintended impact(s) of the SCFF, at California community colleges that are MSIs, for a first-generation college student?

### **Research Design**

To conduct this study, the research was approached with a qualitative research design in mind. A qualitative research design was selected because it is aimed at producing the kind of knowledge that clarifies the nature of an experience or action (Aunai, 2018). A qualitative research design was also used because it emphasizes the experiences of people and takes a broader view of the phenomenon to understand it.

Aunai (2018) reiterated that “aside from people’s experiences, qualitative research also allows studies to focus on organizational processes to understand the nature of something, an action, or an experience” (p. 41). Creswell (2014) argued that qualitative research focuses on “understanding the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem” (p. 4). This study was designed as a qualitative research using the phenomenological approach and research questions focusing on the perspectives of student services professionals. Another characteristic of qualitative methods of inquiry is that they allow the researcher to gain insights specific to the industry in which a study is conducted. This is valuable because the responses gathered may be ones that are unanticipated by the researcher going into the study. Denzin and Lincoln (2008) pointed out that without the use of qualitative research methods, the rich and diverse explanations of a phenomenon may remain undiscovered. In addition, qualitative research questions include mainly open-ended questions, and the researcher can probe further as participants respond to the question, thus forming a more detailed and robust response.

Interviews were conducted with student services professionals from four community colleges that were MSIs to understand the impact of the new SCFF on first-generation college students. In addition, a vast array of available public data informed this study and this methodology chapter addresses the plan to organize and analyze the extent of the impact of the SCFF on first-generation college students who are typically minorities and from low-income backgrounds. For this study, the extent of the impact is defined as the ability of the formula to affect enrollment, course completion, success, degree attainment, and transfer rates for low-income and minority students. Learning from the data what the impact is and taking the necessary steps to address the impact are

critical to how colleges serving low-income and minority students can survive if the extent of the impact is found to be negative.

The chapter also includes a definition of the research methodology, an identification of the sampling method, the data collection procedure, and the data analysis strategies.

### **Population and Sample**

For this study, several options of sampling designs were considered, but the best option was to use a nonprobability purposive sampling design to conduct the study. Creswell and Creswell (2018) indicated that participants who are selected through purposive sampling must have experienced the same phenomenon and possess personal accounts of the phenomenon related to the study. The researcher felt that purposive sampling was appropriate for this study because the participants were selected based on their first-hand knowledge of the SCFF and how student services played a role in meeting the outcome metrics. Researchers can draw specific information from participants rather than generalized information capitalizing on the specific information that is contextual to where the data are collected. Purposive sampling involves consideration of prospective participants' knowledge of and experience with the research topic (DeVault, 2019).

There are advantages and disadvantages to the use of purposive sampling as is the case with all sampling. An advantage of using purposive sampling is that the target sample can be obtained quickly. Other types of purposive sampling assist the researcher in collecting comprehensive, rich, and contextual data. Because each phase of purposive sampling builds on the other, the researcher can draw from a wider range of nonprobability sampling to draw a conclusion. A disadvantage of using purposive

sampling is that there is usually a high level of bias and a lower level of reliability, an area that the researcher paid close attention to. Aunai (2018) pointed out that purposive sampling has an inherent inability to generalize research findings and is vulnerable to error and judgment, complicating the researcher's ability to make conclusions about the findings.

Schools were selected by considering the number of colleges in the California Community Colleges System and working within the system to identify and gain access to colleges designated as MSIs. Another reason this study used nonprobability sampling is that the research was an exploratory survey that focused on a smaller sample of California community colleges. Working with the variety of colleges in the system and designing a process to identify colleges that were in the study helped prevent any confirmation bias. They included stakeholders in Contra Costa County close to the researcher. The selected colleges were MSIs specifically designated as Hispanic Serving Institutions with a 3-year average Latino population of 33% in the Costa Community College District (CCCCO, 2016). The study was not intended to be a comparison study but rather to assess the perspectives of student services professionals, and the researcher hoped that any observed differences would be further studied to add to the literature on the issue of how colleges are responding to the new funding formula. The student services division of these colleges consisted of several departments, including Financial Aid, Admissions, and Records, Counseling, Disabled Students, Extended Opportunity Programs and Services (EOPS), and so forth. Each college's student services division had a minimum of 25 staff members, which provided the researcher with a pool of 100 potential participants for the study with the goal of a minimum of 60. However,



saturation changed the need for such a large number of participants. The participants included chief student services professionals, deans and managers, and other essential staff (classified professionals). Participating districts/colleges were sent information and a consent form outlining the details of the study. The participants were notified by email, and the initial contact was made to chief student services officers to release participants to be part of the study. Electronic signatures were required from the participants for them to participate in the study.

To guide the work with both the institutions and the individuals in the sample, the study adhered to the Belmont report. The report is the federal government's attempt to create a summary of basic ethical principles aimed at resolving ethical problems when conducting research involving humans (Office for Human Research Protections, n.d.). Part B of the report outlines the basic ethical tenets as respect for persons, beneficence, and justice. The participants in this study were treated with these principles in mind deserving of respect for their autonomy, safeguarding their well-being, and treating them equally regardless of their status on their campus. Individual names were not used unless expressly agreed upon, and participants were provided with a confidentiality statement that they were required to sign to participate in the study.

### **Instrumentation**

Although the researcher was the primary instrument for this study, the methodology employed in this research included quasistructured interviews with the participants at the identified institutions and document analysis. The interviews were scheduled for 60 min and conducted either in person or via Zoom. The interviews were recorded in audio format for transcription later by the researcher. Responses were coded

alphanumerically, and only the researcher knew the identities of the participants.

Examples of the alphanumeric code for each participating site were MSI-1, MSI-2, and so forth, and individual participants received a coding similar to P1, P2, and so forth, unless a participant or institution expressly agreed to have their identity revealed. All identifiers that could connect the institution or participant were removed to ensure privacy. The interview questions addressed the participants' background, role in meeting the metrics, perception of how student services impact the funding metrics, and perception of the new formula.

Documents were purposely selected by the researcher from multiple sources for their importance to the context of the study, which included documents from the state chancellor's office that helped the researcher understand the SCFF as well as institutional documents that outlined how the colleges are meeting the performance metrics. The Student Success Scorecard, the Student Success Metrics tool, and college plans were used to collect data for the colleges. The researcher reviewed documents from each college that addressed the outcome metrics.

The key performance/outcome measures of the SCFF were key in helping the researcher understand the extent of the impact it will have on colleges. The state and proponents of performance-based funding highlight that the implementation of this kind of funding holds colleges accountable for the resources they receive and the delivery of outcomes. The concept of accountability is therefore useful in helping educators identify variables to determine the extent of the impact. Elliott and Jones (2019) best defined accountability: "Accountability means making sure what the public and state and federal

governments spend on higher education protects students and families from fraud and abuse, and ensure all members of the public have access to high-quality education” (p. 1).

The operational measurement of accountability can be found in the metrics proposed by the California Community Colleges Chancellor’s Office by examining student success, equity, student services, efficiency, and access (CCCCO, 2016). Student success is measured from the state’s Student Success Scorecard that records degree/transfer completion rates, math and English remedial rates, and career technical education (CTE) completion rates. Equity is measured by completion rate among race/ethnicity subgroups. Student services measures the number of students who have an academic plan. Efficiency is measured further by the number of full-time enrolled students who help meet the outcomes of the college. Access is measured by the number of students who participate in the system.

### **Data Collection and Analysis**

In-depth interviews and artifact surveys were the primary mode of collecting data for this qualitative study. To begin, an announcement flyer that offered a brief description of the purpose of the study, research questions, and how to contact the researcher was sent to the colleges selected for the research. The researcher also used California Baptist University’s Institutional Review Board (IRB) template (Appendix A) and an informed consent form (Appendix B) that included

- a statement that the participants were being asked to participate in a research study,
- an explanation of what the study was intended to determine,
- expected duration of participation,

- use of audio/video recording for ease and accuracy,
- description of the extent of confidentiality,
- the researcher's contact information and California Baptist University IRB contact information in case of concerns, and
- a statement declaring participation was voluntary.

After the interviews were completed, they were transcribed and cataloged. The responses were coded and categorized, and data were analyzed to identify top themes. Similarly, artifacts were analyzed with emphasis on the outcome metrics that were found in artifacts, such as the strategic, enrollment data, completion data, equity plan, reports, and so forth. To understand how first-generation students were impacted by the SCFF, all student services reports addressing the issue were examined. This level of analysis of interview and artifact data offered a greater contextual understanding of the study and furthered the discourse on the impact of the SCFF.

### **Limitations**

The following are the limitations of the data for this study:

1. The study was limited to community colleges in Contra Costa County. In addition, it only included two of the three community colleges in the county. This study can be replicated at any of California's 133 total MSIs. They include 61 Hispanic-Serving Institutions (HSIs), 27 Asian American and Native American Pacific Islander Serving Institutions (AANAPISIs), 41 institutions that are both AANAPISIs and HSIs, 3 institutions that are both HSIs and Primarily Black Institutions (PBIs), and 1 institution that is both an AANAPISI and a PBI. Over 70% of these institutions are California Community Colleges—around 88

California Community Colleges throughout the state. (Boland et al., 2018, p. 1373)

2. The research gathered information from student services professionals only. However, input from instructional faculty is relevant to the metrics.
3. The study was limited to California community colleges that were MSIs. It did not address MSIs that were in the 4-year institution ranks.
4. Although the participants provided responses relating to first-generation college students, the students themselves were not part of the study.
5. The time constraint to complete interviews was limited because some participants were in leadership positions with busy schedules.

### **Summary**

This chapter began with a reintroduction of the study followed by a restatement of the purpose statement and research questions and a description of the nature of the study. The chapter also described the research design used for the study, including the nature of the approach, strengths and weaknesses of qualitative research, and its appropriateness for this study. The chapter also described the sample, including the criteria for participation, sample and sample size, and the strategic reasoning for using purposive sampling. Also included in the discussion California Baptist University IRB's protection of human subjects process; a description of the data collection process, the interviews, document collection, and analysis; a brief discussion of the coding process; and the data analysis plan. The chapter concluded with an acknowledgment of the limitations of the study.

## CHAPTER 4: RESEARCH, DATA COLLECTION, AND FINDINGS

### **Overview**

Chapter 4 outlines the details of the analysis of the interview questions conducted of classified professionals at California colleges that are designated as Minority Serving Institutions (MSIs) on their perspectives of the state's new Student Centered Funding Formula (SCFF). The data collected and analyzed were instrumental in helping to establish emergent themes from the perspectives of student services professionals at minority-serving community colleges in California. The chapter includes an exploration of the analysis method used on the data collected and how the interview questions formed the structure for the study. To learn about the perspective of student services professionals at California community colleges that serve minority students, a qualitative research method was used with student services professionals from two minority-serving community colleges.

### **Purpose Statement**

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to examine the new SCFF's impact on a selection of California community colleges that serve minority students from the perspective of student services professionals at these colleges by reviewing artifacts and literature on performance-based funding formulas to understand the equity implications of the formula for first-generation college students. This analysis is especially important because California community colleges are making strides on the state mandate to address issues of equity. Taking advantage of available literature and data that colleges are required to collect, this study integrated the theory and practice of equity in designing a model to meet the outcomes of the research.

## **Research Questions**

The following research questions guided this study:

1. How are California community colleges that serve minority students impacted by the new SCFF from the perspective of student services professionals?
2. How can student services mitigate or eliminate any unintended impact(s) of the SCFF, at California community colleges that are MSIs, for a first-generation college student?

## **Research Methods and Data Collection**

The sample of student services professionals at the MSIs in this study represented the staff constituency groups on a college campus—classified staff, faculty, and administrators. The following interview questions were used to gather demographic information from the sample population:

### **Participant's Background**

1. Please start by telling me your name. Probe: What is your title and/or position?
2. How long have you been in your position?
3. What is your understanding of the SCFF?

### **Role in Meeting Metrics**

4. What metrics in the SCFF have first-generation college students been successful in meeting? Why?
5. What are some of the most difficult challenges you have faced in your position in supporting meeting the performance metrics?

### **Perceptions About Student Services**

6. How might student services practices/strategies align to support the metrics of the SCFF?
7. What factors do you think contribute most to student success from a student services point of view?

### **Perceptions About the SCFF**

8. What are your thoughts about the SCFF? Probe: What has the college done or is doing to prepare to meet the performance metrics?
9. The SCFF provides additional funding to campuses to support student enrollment for underrepresented students. Research indicates that underrepresented students require high-touch student support services to be successful. What is student services currently doing to support underrepresented students whereas high-touch student support services refer to very personalized, individual support services?
10. Are there any performance metrics for which your office is responsible for producing or significantly impacting? Probe: Please identify the performance metric and a description of the role of your office in meeting the metric outcome.
11. What do you think the college can do to ensure that it receives the maximum funding under the SCFF?
12. What could student services do to mitigate any negative impact on first-generation college students as a result of the SCFF?

### **Postinterview Comments and Observation**

13. What advice or recommendation would you provide to manage student services in support of meeting the student-centered funding metrics?



14. Thank you for taking the time out of your schedule to meet with me. This concludes the questions I have for you. Is there anything else you would like to share about your perspective as a student services professional that you think would be relevant to this study?

The study was conducted as a qualitative research because the goal was to analyze the perspectives of student services professionals on the impact of California's SCFF at community colleges that serve a mostly minority student population. Mills and Gay (2019) wrote that "qualitative research seeks to probe deeply into the research setting to obtain in-depth understandings about how things are, why they are that way, and how the participants in the context perceive them" (p. 13). This statement is appropriate in helping to clarify the use of qualitative research. The open-ended questions in the interview allowed participants to respond more broadly and with their perspective of the funding formula they perceived to have an impact on the college. The analysis of their responses helped determine keywords and themes that helped determine their individual and shared perspectives of the funding formula.

The researcher came into this study with some assumptions that were important to point out but were bracketed so as not to be introduced during the interview thus influencing the participant's responses. The assumptions were as follows:

1. The researcher assumed that MSIs would be negatively impacted by the funding formula.
2. The researcher assumed that student services professionals were either not informed or had a limited understanding of the implication of the funding formula.

## **Participants, Data Collection, and Interview**

To protect the confidentiality of participants and the organizations, the community college campuses are represented by code. The participants were student services professionals with a range of experiences and statuses. The participants were identified through consent to a recruit notice signed by each college and through the researcher's connection to the colleges because he worked at one college for 12 years and was working at the other at the time of the study. Using convenience sampling, a sample group of 40 potential participants were contacted to participate in the study from the overall target population of 133 student services professionals at the two colleges. With a timeline of 5 months to conduct the interviews, an initial email was sent to the 40 potential participants, and four subsequent emails followed to those who did not respond in 3-week intervals from July to November. Five emails were sent to those who did not respond along with at least two phone calls to all of the potential participants who did not respond. Having reached out to the potential participants who had not responded within the 5-month window, the researcher concluded that the pool of participants had been saturated, and adding new participants would not yield a different result. Eighteen participants signed up to participate in the study.

Because of the COVID-19 pandemic, all interviews were scheduled and conducted via a Zoom video-conference call. Each video-conference interview was allocated to last 60 min. The average interview time ranged from 36 to 55 min in duration. All 18 participating student services professionals' interviews were recorded via Zoom and audio transcribed by the Zoom audio transcribe function built into a web-based application for note-taking reference. The Zoom transcripts were then retranscribed using

Transcribe Me! platform to further build on the notes. The interview protocol (see Appendix C) was framed to specifically address improvement recommendations. The mix of participants offered a range of both experiences and perspectives in this qualitative research.

The education and experience levels of the student services professionals varied. Thirteen of the 18 participants had obtained a graduate degree, four had completed an undergraduate degree, and one had completed some form of postsecondary education. The length of work experience of the participants in their current position ranged from 10 months to 18 years, and 13 of the 18 participants had more than 5 years of experience in their current position (see Table 2).

**Table 2**

*Participating Student Services Professional Demographics*

Participant identification	Participant job title	Campus location	Length of time in role	Seniority level	Education level
C-0001	Counselor	4C1	17 years	Faculty	Graduate
C-0002	Coordinator	4C1	13 years	Classified	Undergraduate
C-0006	Coordinator	4C1	6 years	Classified	Undergraduate
C-0007	Counselor	4C1	18 years	Faculty	Graduate
C-0009	Counselor	4C1	8 years	Faculty	Graduate
C-0010	Coordinator	4C1	3 years	Classified	Some college
C-0011	Manager	4C1	10 months	Administrator	Graduate
C-0012	Manager	4C1	8 years	Administrator	Graduate
C-0015	Dean	4CC1	3 years	Administrator	Graduate
L-0001	Dean	4CL2	8 years	Administrator	Graduate
L-0002	Dean	4CL2	8 years	Administrator	Graduate
L-0005	Counselor	4CL2	8 years	Faculty	Graduate
L-0006	Dean	4CL2	10 years	Administrator	Graduate
L-0007	Coordinator	4CL2	7 years	Classified	Undergraduate
L-0008	Coordinator	4CL2	2.5 years	Classified	Undergraduate
L-0010	Counselor	4CL2	8 years	Faculty	Graduate
L-0012	Manager	4CL2	5 years	Administrator	Graduate
L-0016	Coordinator	4CL2	4 years	Classified	Graduate

The range of roles and responsibilities, years of experience, and educational level were all critical in assessing how each participant responded to the interview questions. There were five counseling faculty members from the two campuses involved in the study. There were also six classified staff members and seven administrators in the study.

In addition to the demographic information gathered from the interview question, another demographic data point of interest was the gender makeup of the participants. This was an important data set to consider when talking about student services in particular. Bauer-Wolf (2018) wrote,

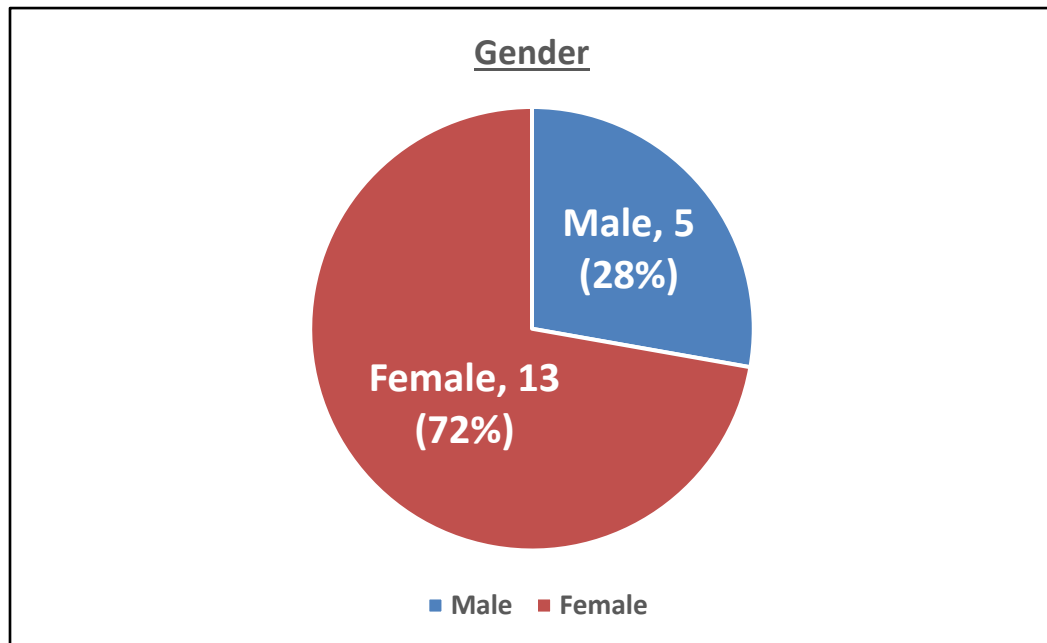
The student affairs field is demographically more diverse than other college professions and relatively lacking in pay-equity issues ... data collected on student affairs professionals found that about 71 percent of positions are held by women. In contrast, about 58 percent of positions across higher education more broadly are occupied by women. (Student Affairs section, paras. 1, 2)

Of the 18 participants, 13 were females and five were males (see Figure 1). This mirrored exactly what Bauer-Wolf observed in her study.

Each participant signed an informed consent that was included in the introduction email along with the Participant's Bill of Rights and a confidentiality statement. After each interview, the Zoom recordings were transcribed using the Zoom transcription, and then retranscribed using Transcribeme! platform for professional transcription. The transcribed document was received within 48 hr and was then verified against the audio file for accuracy. The final piece was uploading the transcribed files into MAXQDA for coding of themes and analysis of keywords, phrases, perceptions, and statements captured to identify emergent themes.

**Figure 1**

*Gender of Study Participants*



The researcher reviewed in detail the written transcripts and audio to make sure that any unclear statements, words, or responses were highlighted and put to the side. The researcher not only analyzed the individual responses but also analyzed the responses concerning the research questions.

### **Interview Question 3**

*What is your understanding of the SCFF?*

The researcher established that the SCFF is a performance-based formula that California is implementing as a result of the call for greater accountability. When the researcher asked participants about their understanding of the formula, there was a range of answers that showed varying degrees of understanding—some surprising considering that campuses should have been engaged in conversations about this, and staff should have had at least a basic understanding of the formula (see Table 3).

**Table 3***Participants' Responses to Understanding of the Student Centered Funding Formula*

Participant	Participant's understanding	Position
C0001F	"It's money that is allocated to serve students"	Faculty
C0002C	"Specific levels of output that we will get funding for"	Classified
C0006C	"Funding will be based on the output"	Classified
C0007F	"Funding based on FTES"	Faculty
C0009F		Faculty
C0010C	"A base funding plus supplemental funds based on the success"	Classified
C0011A	"The funding that we receive is going to be heavily based on the outcome"	Administrator
C0012A	"Based partially on enrollment, and then partially on financial aid metrics, and partially another part on other achievement metrics"	Administrator
C0015A	"Accountability in enrollment and how it affects funding"	Administrator
L0001A	"Attempt to move away from funding based on FTES to linking to outcomes tied to Vision for Success"	Administrator
L0002F	"A combination of FTES plus other metrics (Pell, Completion, etc.)"	Faculty
L0005C	"Focusing on how best to get your students to reach goals"	Classified
L0006A	"Accountability and fiscal responsibility"	Administrator
L0007C	"Based on success numbers"	Classified
L0008C	"Based on outcomes"	Classified
L0010F	"Less focused on performance and more focused on the whole student"	Faculty
L0012A	"Move to performance funding"	Administrator
L0016C	"Pegged for student success"	Classified

*Note.* FTES = full-time enrolled students.

An interesting finding by the researcher was the level of understanding. Although most of the participants could articulate a basic understanding of what the formula was for such a critical policy with huge implications, there was no consensus on what it is. There was an understanding that accountability is central to the formula, but the performance implication was not shared by all. Interview Question 3 aligns with both research questions because it points to how student services at MSIs understand the formula and gives the researcher an understanding of how they would approach any mitigating strategies based on their understanding of the formula.

#### **Interview Question 4**

*What metrics in the SCFF have first-generation college students been successful in meeting? Why?*

Interview Question 4 was developed to assess what metrics student services professionals felt first-generation college students were successful in meeting. This question aligns with Research Question 1 because it identifies how first-generation college students perform on the performance metrics overall, and the perspectives shared were interesting. Participant C0001 shared,

I'm sure they have been successful in all capacities. I have not seen any real data, but I'm sure that the students that I have dealt with, that I've seen from the beginning and I've been able to get them all the way through to transfer based on the old programming.

Participant C0002 added that with her unfamiliarity with the data, she thought it would depend on the institution. Another Participant C0006 responded,

I think the metric of learning progress/completing units is helpful for first-semester college students. And I want to say employment. These other things in terms of momentum and successful enrollment, I think are things we have not, especially the enrollment piece, haven't quite mastered yet for our first-generation college students. I think that we have been successful in learning progress/completing courses in that we have programs like EOPS. We have career counseling courses that help students figure out their major. And I think of myself as a college student, like, first-generation orientation to college was helpful for me. Having the support at EOPS, and that team helped me progress in my, learning. Having additional support like technology support, financial support, help with the learning progress, having classes like Pace, and things that speed up taking courses are short-term interventions. Things like that I think are helpful. Programs like Coop help students continue their learning.

Participant C0007 took a different approach to this question and shared that for her program in particular

the first thing that comes to mind is COVID when we reduce the number of units for our students. And I saw an increase in engagement and less stress that the students had to go through. So, the decrease in units actually benefited the student population of EOPS that we were working with more so than ever, and I actually felt like it was more realistic for our student population.

Participant C0007's perspective was that this policy shift made first-generation students she worked with more successful in completing units. Similarly, Participant C0009 felt,



The career, I think the nine or more [units toward], if it's in its totality of the career education units, I think we have a good number of students who do the career technical route, like the medical assisting program and the business office technology program. We do have CalWORKs students. We do have a lot of low-income students. And so, it's going to be more practical for them to study something that puts them right into a career. They don't have the privilege, financial privilege, of flailing around with a bachelor's degree.

Participant C0010 offered,

I believe that the certificates and the career education units have been largely certainly the metric our students have been more successful at, partly because students haven't been encouraged to do more, to go further, and can be a little bit intimidated sometimes by all of the processes, and also things like English and math, which can be quite intimidating at a college level for everybody. But if you've never been told or expected that that's what you're going to do, and that could be a little intimidating.

Participant L0001 stated that the question was a tough one to answer and then began to speak to other aspects of the formula that led him to speak on the performance metrics:

I feel awful saying this. No, they're not that successful in meeting these.

Basically, the supplemental allocation metrics around student type, right? The formula essentially is like this, you get money for these types of students and you get money for students who have these outcomes. That's my take on it. Right, and that's the overall formula. You get your biggest chunk for FTEs and then there's sort of the equity percentage and then there's the outcome percentage. And so,

when it comes to the equity percentage, we got a bunch of first-gen students who are Pell Grant recipients or AB 540 recipients. So, like there's that group of students that are successful in meeting that component. So, colleges that have large numbers of first-gen students are going to have a large number of Pell Grant recipients and are going to get funded well when it comes to that. But unfortunately, the equity percentage is a very tiny slice of the overall and the outcomes percentage. For the outcomes portion of it, well, so that's a tough question to answer because I feel like I could answer [by saying], are there outcomes that first-gen students are more successful at than comparing first-gen students to themselves? Like, you know, they're going to be more successful at outcomes that are earlier on the path, like English and math completion. But when you compare first-gen students to not first-gen students, right? Like they're not going to be as successful necessarily when it comes to that metric. I do have to say, I mean, I don't have the specific data because I think in part because these data elements have changed so much and it's never even really been enforced. We've been talking about this from the beginning. I don't have specific data about how specific student populations are performing when it comes to the student centered funding formula.

Participant C0011 said, "As far as our school, what I've seen that we've been recognized for is enrollment and completion of English requirements. That's what I'm aware of."

Participant C0015 admitted,

I'll be honest with you that most of my attention right now has been focused on financial aid because in a lot of ways, yes, I'm in charge of enrollment. I think it's

a hard question. When it comes to those metrics, I want to believe that FAFSA, GMAC, and Pell grants are hopefully the easiest ones for students to meet.

Participant C0012 shared,

If I'm being honest, I don't think that they successfully meet any of the three metrics. I think we know pretty well that our first-generation college students, especially at the community college level, tend to enroll more part time. They tend to struggle with FAFSA completion because it's a confusing long application. And I think that we also know that they tend to struggle with completion, right? Whether that be a certificate or degree completion or completion of transfer requirements. So really, I think historically and for a long time, especially our first-generation students just really anecdotally from what I've seen and things that I've read, they actually struggle with all three of these components. So I don't think I can say that any one of those components that they have been successful, at least not in terms of, like, the majority of first-generation students being quote, unquote successful at any of these things. Think, in my perspective, they struggle in all three of those areas.

Participant L0002 took a roundabout approach in his response by sharing that although he had not looked at any real data, there were concerns that he had:

My concerns are that many of the metrics that are being measured, like for example, getting financial aid and Pell Grant work, is that a lot of first-generation college students don't have the social capital in terms of their surroundings to know how to apply for things, to know that those possibilities even exist. And the same thing goes for some of the degree and certificate attainment in the sense that

many of our colleges in the state still require students to apply for those things after they've completed the coursework. And again, if you don't have the social capital or the support to know that you need to apply for those things, you can either be delayed in getting your degrees or certificates or not get them at all because you just didn't know that that was something that you had to do.

Participant L0005 said,

I don't see currently a program designed specifically for first-generation college students. So if we have one, I'm unaware of it, but I haven't seen anything that's set up specifically for first-generation college students to receive services based on being first-generation.

On the other hand, Participant L0006 did not have a response for the question. Participant L0007 responded,

To be truthful, our study has been more along the lines of ethnicity as opposed to first-generation college students. So, our college has been looking primarily at Latinx students, African American students, and African American male students. So those are the things that we look at and really not too much of anything else. Those have been our primary focus about how we can increase the retention of those groups as well as the graduation and transfer rate of those two populations.

Participant L0008 spoke in terms of support programs that helped students be successful in meeting the metrics:

Without taking a deeper dive into what the numbers say or things of the like, I would say the equity that's provided to them through programs such as the EOPS and CalWORKs allows them at least to have the financial backing and funding

that they may not be afforded otherwise if they come from blighted communities or things of the like.

Participant L0010 took a similar approach:

They've been successful in getting to passing the first college-level math courses as far as math and English classes. But I'm going to put that with the caveat of if they're attached to special programs or learning communities. Most students that are first-generation, if they're not attached to a learning community or a special program, they really struggle with those first milestones being the college-level math and the college-level English classes. I also believe that if there are learning communities and special programs, that they have been able to be successful at completing their educational goals, whether that be a certificate or an actual degree, or a transfer. So, when they are attached to these special programs and learning communities, they have higher success.

Finally, Participant L0012 did not know off the top, and Participant L0016 shared that growth in enrollment for first-generation college students was what she felt they were successful at.

### **Interview Question 5**

*What are some of the most difficult challenges you have faced in your position in supporting meeting the performance metrics?*

Interview Question 5 aligns with Research Questions 1 and 2 because it identifies the challenges institutions face in meeting the metrics and, specifically, what student services saw as challenges to meeting the metrics. In response to Interview Question 5, all of the participants were able to identify clearly what the challenges were that they

were facing. Of the participants, 55% indicated that the challenges they were facing in supporting meeting the metrics were related to access or resources. Table 4 shows the themes and participant results.

**Table 4**

*Interview Question 5 Themes and Participant Results*

Theme	# of participants	% of participants	Participants
Interview Question 5: What are some of the most difficult challenges you have faced in your position in supporting meeting the performance metrics?			
Access/resources	10	55	C0001, C0006, C0007, C0009, C0011, C0012, C0015, L0002, L0005, L0008
Engagement	6	33	C0002, C0010, L0001, L0007, L0010, L0016
Data	3	16	L0006, C0001, L0012

Ten participants shared that their challenges were centered on access/resources money, staffing, or simply accessing the college. Participant C0001 shared, “First and foremost, where’s the money?” Participant C0006 opined,

Students are struggling just to apply to college. It’s not the easiest application to understand. I work with a population of adults and former foster youth, usually in the ages of 18 to 24, and formally incarcerated adults and youth, and just getting through the application is one of the biggest hurdles.

For the six participants whose challenges focused on engagement, Participant C0002 shared,

Not being involved in these conversations and looking at the bigger picture, it's kind of hard to align some of the work in the career center that really aligns and supports a holistic experience as opposed to just a small piece of the pie.

Participant L0006 similarly said,

Administrators normally tend to come to us and they say this is the plan. They've already come up with ideas and now they want the people on the ground to implement them without giving the people who are on the ground and having contact with the students a voice in those decisions.

Participant L0016 took the engagement angle from a student's perspective: "I think some of the challenges that I've incurred are, one, students trusting the system, trusting the process, and being able to see what they're being told, even though it doesn't necessarily happen with instant gratification."

The three participants whose challenges in supporting the college meet the performance metrics focused on data, their concerns were very clear. Participant L0006 declared that the challenge was

timely access to data and also accurate data. I think also a discussion of disaggregating data once it's in hand and to have a real meaningful discussion of it. Where people are transparent about it and looking at what the data is really pointing to and having discussions about what changes can be made with some measurable outcomes for the changes made.

Participant C0001 added, "Where is the data ... to do certain things around transfer?"

## Interview Question 6

*How might student services practices/strategies align to support the metrics of the SCFF?*

Interview Question 6 collates a shared approach to supporting the metrics from student services and aligns with Research Question 2, which answers how student services could mitigate any negative impact on first-generation college students. Eight participants, or 44%, felt that some sort of campus-wide cohesion was needed. Table 5 shows the themes and participant results.

**Table 5**

*Interview Question 6 Themes and Participant Results*

Theme	# of participants	% of participants	Participants
Interview Question 6: How might student services practices/strategies align to support the metrics of the student-centered funding formula?			
Cohesion	8	44	C0002, C0006, C0012, L0002, L0005, L0006, L0007, L0010
Communication	6	33	C0001, C0006, C0010, C0011, L0007, L0012
Resources	6	33	C0007, C0009, C0015, L0001, L0002, L0008
Engagement/accountability	1	5	L0001

Participant C0001 shared, “First of all, we are not on the same page. That is the most important thing, that nobody knows what anybody is doing on any given day. There hasn’t been important leadership, there has not been a team approach.” Participant L0002 said, “It goes back to student success teams and their broad deployment.” Participant C0012 more bluntly said, “It is so imperative that there needs to be a campus-wide approach.”



Six participants mentioned that communication was also a way to align student services to support the metrics. Participant L0007 shared, “I think one of the things is that we need to have better communication among our departments and that the departments themselves need to be involved in these decisions.” Participant C0011 pointed out that a strategy could be “really like making sure that faculty are accountable to sharing information through whatever other methodologies we choose.”

Pulling resources together was also a strategy shared by 33% of the participants. Participant C0007 talked about having the right student services staff to student ratio to help support meeting the metrics. Participant L0001 said, “We need to actually have some infrastructure to help students explore their career of interest and major. That second piece helps students get to a degree.” Because success is a major performance metric, Participant L0001 also shared that accountability was essential to support the metrics:

I do think that there's value in holding student services accountable for these outcomes. I think one piece is from kind of almost like an approach standpoint. We do a lot of transactional stuff in student services and I don't think we talk enough and put enough resources into doing transformational work. And I think that having an outcomes-based model has the potential, it doesn't automatically do this, but I think a college can use it as a way to really try and have student services more involved in transformational work with students' degree attainment, for example, and career services. Helping students explore, and identify careers, and linking them to their major is going to have an impact on degree attainment, and it impacts ed plan development and the like. But there's a way of approaching

it that says, oh, students need a declared major, just make sure that they fill out the form. Right? And then there's the approach of no, we need to actually have some infrastructure to help students explore their career of interest and major. That second piece helps students get a degree. And so I do see the outcome piece is having the potential to impact that I think that there's also and again, this is just my perspective over now like 15 years. I think we historically approach student services almost like from the beginning going forward, like, the student comes to us, what do they need and then what do they need next and then what do they need after that? And I think that by having an outcomes-driven model, it again sets up the potential to kind of work backward and say, where are we losing students kind of lost momentum framework, right? We're going to put energy as a college to get to that.

#### **Interview Question 7**

*What factors do you think contribute most to student success from a student services point of view?*

In response to Interview Question 7, the participants again offered a range of responses. This interview question aligns with Research Question 2 because the responses provided insights on how student services could mitigate any negative impacts on first-generation college students. Table 6 shows the themes and participant results.

**Table 6***Interview Question 7 Themes and Participant Results*

Theme	# of participants	% of participants	Participants
Interview Question 7: What factors do you think contribute most to student success from a student services point of view?			
Cohesion/environment/engagement	11	61	C0002, C0006, C0007, C0010, C0012, C0015, L0002, L0005, L0007, L0008, L0010
Resources	9	50	C0009, C0015, L0001, L0002, L0008, L0005, L0007, L0012, L0016
Clarity	5	28	C0001, L0001, C0011, L0006, L0012

Participant L0001 offered a nuanced response focused on clarification and cohesion:

From a student services point of view, I'm going to answer that question based on this moment we're in now, which I think is really different than how I would have answered it if you asked me this a few years ago. I think that students' ability to access clear and concise information to complete the tasks they need to do and to access services, I think that it's very difficult for them to do right now. I was talking to a colleague earlier about how hard it is to make a counseling appointment in kind of a remote context and then the communications you get based on that. I think our ability to fix that is so important with 60% of our instruction online. Yeah, the way I think about that question is different now than I would have a couple of years ago. Students need to be able to what I think is most important to student success right now, quite honestly, is that we need to find a way to present students with the action steps that are relevant to where they

are right now and create a very easy way for them to take that action. Whether that is like, you qualify for free tuition, click this button in this text message and you are automatically done, right? You got your free tuition, or if you need to update your ed plan. I have many dreams. One of my dreams is that students wouldn't have to apply to graduate and get a degree and figure out that's an example of it, right? Like, it's a difficult process for a student to graduate from college, and how cool would it be and how much more impactful would it be just both for students, right?

Participant C0001 similarly said,

Having streamline. If people have streamlined approaches, you have to have some things that are streamlined. You have to have points of contact. You have to have a team approach. Honestly. I think having—almost having—a case management approach and I know people don't want to hear it. But I think having a case management approach that aligns Financial Aid, EOPS, Admissions and Records, Transfer Center, Career center.

The work of student services largely focused on offering support, and Table 6 highlighted that student services professionals recognize other factors as critical to student success. Sixty-one percent of the participants shared that cohesion, environment, and engagement (collectively called *belonging*) were important to student success.

Benbow and Lee (2022) wrote that

research has shown that students who feel like they belong on campus—and who feel their institution is fulfilling promises made during the recruitment and admissions process (referred to as “institutional integrity”; Braxton et al., 2011)—

are more likely to thrive in college, whether through interpersonal connections, investing effort in meeting educational goals, or using student services. (p. 595)

Student services professionals are holding themselves to this institutional integrity and recognize it as crucial to student success.

Participant C0006 said, “From the very beginning, marketing when the student comes to campus, is it that a welcoming environment.” Participant C0007 explained,

This has come out from the RP group of students feeling valued and nurtured in the six factors for their success. I think those definitely help. I see that in my work where students are like, thank you for calling me back, or thanks for checking in on me. Thank you for walking me to this office or sharing this resource. When they feel connected to the campus, when they feel nurtured, when they feel that, when they feel like we’re invested in their education, they’re successful with that. Which is something I don’t see in even the Vision for Success. Like, as we know from the RP group when students feel those success factors, they’re better, and they do well in college. But I don’t think that the [state’s] Vision for Success focuses on the student holistically. It’s just like, get them through these classes, make sure they progress, make sure they graduate, make sure they’re aware of careers, make sure they graduate.

Participant C0012 said,

I’ll speak from my own experience as a first-generation college student. And without a doubt, the thing, if I had to name one thing that contributed the most to my ability to be successful, was the one-on-one connections that I made.

Participant L0002 said,

So I do think, and some of this stuff has written up in the Student Success Redefined research, but I think belonging is absolutely critical. So many of our first-gen students, because they haven't been exposed to higher education, and their families are going to have impostor syndrome. And so, you know, potentially they could be superwicked smart, they could have a ton of grit, but then they get to our colleges and feel out of place.

Fifty percent of the participants recognized resources as a contributing factor to student success. Participant C0009 said, "Support. And first and foremost, they need the resources." Participant C0015 said,

One of the biggest areas that I've noticed in my time that I've been here is the lack of focus on retention. ... We got to keep them in the door and have them focus on their academic goal. If we don't have the resources to be able to do that, if the college doesn't pay attention to that, we're going to lose out.

### **Interview Question 8**

*What are your thoughts about the SCFF? What has the college done or is doing to prepare to meet the performance metrics?*

Interview Question 8 focused on the thoughts of student services professionals on the SCFF and what their college was doing or had done in preparation to meet the performance metrics. The two parts of this question resulted in interesting responses as shown in Table 7 and align with Research Questions 1 and 2 because the responses highlighted how the California community colleges designated as MSIs are impacted and what student services professionals said about their thoughts regarding whether the formula helps inform how they could mitigate any negative impacts.

**Table 7***Interview Question 8 Themes and Participant Results*

Participant	Response	Response to what has or is being done
Interview Question 8: What are your thoughts about the SCFF? What has the college done or is doing to prepare to meet the performance metrics?		
C0001	“Can be a good thing”	“Don’t know”
C0002	“Not sure yet”	“Don’t know”
C0006	“Lack of performance gets you punished”	“Guided pathways”
C0007	“Difficult for communities like ours”	“Don’t know”
C0009	“Can see the possibility of hurting the college”	“Don’t know”
C0010	“Nervous but hopeful”	“Guided pathways”
C0011	“Doesn’t take account of resources/investment needed”	“Not sure”
C0012		“Not sure”
C0015	“Creates a lot of urgency”	“Guided pathways”
L0001	“Great in theory”	“Guided pathways”
L0002	“On the face of it, it’s not a bad thing”	“Aren’t doing enough”
L0005	“Don’t know”	“Guided pathways”
L0006	“Allows for growth”	“Regular conversations”
L0007	“Don’t feel connected to it”	“Guided pathways/ Transfer”
L0008	“Positive outcomes”	“Regular conversations”
L0010	“I really don’t have any thoughts”	“Guided pathways”
L0012	“Benefits colleges that are already successful”	
L0016	“The idea is detached from the population”	“Regular conversations”

Participants C0001, L0006, and L0008 expressed some positive thoughts about the funding formula. Participant C0001 expressed positivity but also cautioned when she said,

I think the implication, I mean, I think again, it can really be good if you have good practices, policies, and procedures in place that are going to be across campus. If you don't, it could be a disaster when you're looking at more money. And I think we're on the end of not going to be able to receive a lot of money because we don't have anything to show for what we've done, or we have very small portions.

Participant L0006 said,

I like the idea of having more accountability. I think that it's difficult to tell a student that we are a 2-year institution when they're taking 5 and 6 years to get degrees on average. That's painful. It's painful also to watch. I think it's also critical to have some structural, systematic way of giving students a more meaningful, impactful, and time-efficient service. I like the idea that it's system wide.

Forty-four percent of the participants took a more concerning approach to their thoughts on the formula. With an awareness of the community served at her college, Participant C0007 shared that the "formula kind of is difficult for working-class students in community colleges." Participant C0009 said,

It could hurt the college because we have so many students that come in now from Richmond as our feeder school, and these are very impoverished students. They come from high schools where they haven't had a good academic background. So, they're coming in sometimes with 10th-grade English and math.



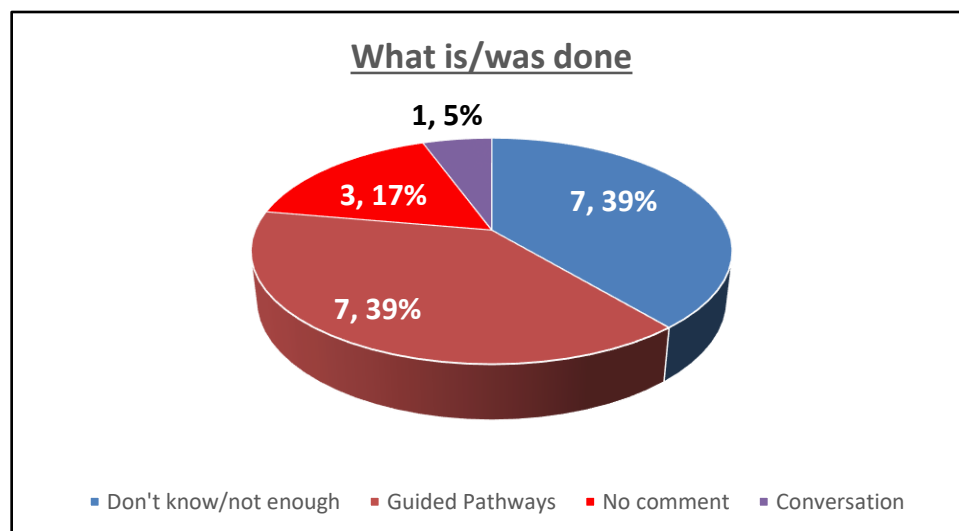
Participant L0001 said,

In theory, I don't think it's a bad thing to have an outcome-based model. But again, what I worry about is what I struggle with is that it's rewarding the colleges that are doing well and it's punishing the colleges that are struggling. And to me, the colleges that are struggling and maybe have harder work to do are the ones who need the dollars to do that work. I think about us as an HSI and we're looking at this funding cut. When the skiff drops in, we're like trying to imagine, I don't know how big of a cut it would be, but like, let's say it's a cut to student services. Like, oh my goodness, we already can't do what we know we need to be doing.

The second part of the question was to find out what colleges were doing or had done in preparation for the funding formula. Seven participants, or 39%, shared that they either did not know what was being done or had been done or mentioned guided pathways as something being done in preparation for the funding formula (see Figure 2).

**Figure 2**

*Percentage of Participants' Responses to Preparation for the Student Centered Funding Formula*



### **Interview Question 9**

*The SCFF provides additional funding to campuses to support student enrollment for underrepresented students. Research indicates that underrepresented students require high-touch student support services to be successful. What is student services currently doing to support underrepresented students whereas high-touch student support services refer to very personalized, individual support services?*

The funding formula specifically calls out underrepresented students as a population targeted for recruitment. This population requires above and beyond support from student services to be successful. Interview Question 9 asked what student services were doing to support this population. Seven participants, or 39%, mentioned learning communities as something student services were doing to support underrepresented students (see Table 8 themes and participant results).

Learning communities are a critical tool to support student success. The purpose of these institutions' learning communities was to assist first-generation, low-income students' expectations for performance and benefits (Thayer, 2000). Many colleges are designing them to provide a community for their students and especially first-generation and low-income students.

**Table 8***Interview Question 9 Themes and Participant Results*

Theme	# of participants	% of participants	Participants
Interview Question 9: The student-centered funding formula provides additional funding to campuses to support student enrollment for underrepresented students. Research indicates that underrepresented students require high-touch student support services to be successful. What is student services currently doing to support underrepresented students, whereas high-touch student support services refer to very personalized, individual support services?			
Categorical programs (EOPS/DSPS/other)	12	66	C0001, C0002, C0006, C0007, C0009, C0012, C0015, L0002, L0006, L0008, L0010, L0012
Learning communities	7	39	C0006, C0011, C0012, L0001, L0005, L0010, L0012
Resources/noncategorical	5	27	C0002, C0010, L0006, L0007, L0016
Not sure/not enough	1	5	L0002

*Note.* EOPS = Extended Opportunity Programs and Services; DSPS = Disabled Student Programs and Services.

Participant C0012 said,

Thinking about my own experience as a first-gen student, it was that very personal touch that I think made the biggest difference for me. And so in terms of what we're doing at [our college] to try and incorporate that into our processes, some of the things that I see that we're doing is we have a new FYE coordinator, so she's going to be able to work with 1st-year students in more of a cohort type of program.

Participant C0006 added,

From what things that I've done and that I've seen that works well are examples like the ESL Summer Bridge program. Where it's a small cohort that's being

introduced to faculty and staff on campus early. Helping them transition from adult school to college and walking them through, even though it's a 4-week summer program to set up for the students to enroll in the orientation to college class.

Other participants recognized that although having learning communities was great, there was an important element to having a successful one with leadership.

According to Eaker and Gonzalez (2007), leadership is necessary to build and sustain learning communities, and one college highlighted that strength on its campus.

Participant L0001 shared how past leadership at his college had set it up for success with learning communities:

Part of [the] legacy and the biggest student services is our work with learning communities. We have about a thousand students a year that are in our five learning communities. These are cohort programs where students are in linked courses and have success, a dedicated counselor, program staff, and activities going on throughout the year. A number of the programs are cultural thematic content and activities going on and are really intentionally trying to support students from underrepresented. Historically underrepresented student identities, particularly Black students and Latinx students. Our Guided Pathways kind of success team model is about how we take this and scale it to all students. So that is, I think, one big thing that we do.

Participant L0012 shared, "Our learning communities, which are, I think, our best model of high-touch student support services."

Categorical programs were mentioned as perhaps the number one thing student services were doing in support of underrepresented students. For this study, categorical programs are

established by the California legislature to provide state-mandated minimum standards to a targeted group of students who are either disabled, disadvantaged, or have financial need. Thus, it provides funding to serve students without any cost to the District's general fund. The goal of categorical funding is to ensure access and maximize the potential for success of otherwise at-risk students.

(South Orange County Community College District Faculty Association, n.d., What is it? Section, para. 1).

Twelve participants (66%) referenced categorical programs as something student services were doing to support underrepresented students. Participant C0001 recognized that more could be done while also speaking about what was being done:

I don't think we are doing a great job period, because it is too much. I think there are good things that happen in EOPS, there are good things that happen in DSPS, again because you guys have federal and state stuff that you have to deal with.

Similarly, Participant L0002 said, "I think with some rare exceptions, like EOPS, at least in my experience in the last few years, student services have largely been unaltered and are not doing enough to support underrepresented students."

Participant L0006 said,

So we have a number of categorical programs that exist from EOPS, CARE, CalWORKs, and DSPS. Then you also look at vets, for example. We have that as another area, Foster Youth, and also services for foster youth students. And with

the exception of Foster Youth, those programs have dedicated counseling and typically dedicated areas, mesa, for example, being another one. These are areas where there's a counselor assigned to them and coordinators too so that between counselors and coordinators and other staff, they get wrapped around holistic support services. And there's accountability with report out, not just to the state, but also locally as to what the impact to the students are.

Participant L0012 shared, "I think our college does things in two ways. I think that our college supports state-driven student support programs for underserved, high-need student populations. So, we have the EOPS program."

Participant L0016 talked about noncategorical student services programs and what they are doing to support underrepresented students:

So we have a lot of programs; well, remind students can be a part of a lot of programs. And in these different programs, as I said, I see a lot of intrusive case management. So, going from a model of just regular cohort status to case management where we're looking at each student as an individual, especially those of underrepresented populations. I think that once we completely figure out how to engage students after the pandemic or whatever climate we're currently in, and we can master how to get them both virtually and in person back on campus, we'd be doing a lot more high-touch and intrusive case managing.

Participant L0010 offered her perspective and concern regarding leadership:

In the welcome center, we've done a lot more outreach to students, a lot of it's more converting from students who started the application to students who are enrolling, applied but not enrolled. And you know, at some point, we will be

doing more case management, I'm hoping. But unfortunately, I don't know a whole lot about [that]. I haven't heard a lot about doing that. High touch, one-on-one reaching out to students. I think capacity is an issue. Who's in charge of that? Who's going to do it and make sure the right people are doing it?

#### **Interview Question 10**

*Are there any performance metrics for which your office is responsible for producing or significantly impacting? Please identify the performance metric and a description of the role of your office in meeting the metric outcome.*

In response to Interview Question 10, which is aligned with Research Question 2 by identifying the metrics that student services professionals can impact along with their role in getting this done, five participants, or 27%, said that their work was responsible for producing or impacting course completion. However, their role in impacting or producing the metric varied.

To be clear, the metrics are essentially about the students completing their goals, so these individuals and institutions are a critical piece to that. Community colleges are great partners in moving completion forward. Motivated by serving underrepresented, low-income, and minority populations, community colleges have proven to be great partners in moving forward the college completion agenda (Harmon, 2012). The responses from the participants, and indeed the metrics are about moving this agenda forward, are shown in Table 9.

**Table 9***Interview Question 10 Results*

Participant	Metric 1	Metric 2	Role
C0001	Transfer	Degrees	Academic counseling
C0002	Career/employment		Career planning
C0006	Career/employment		Career planning
C0007	Transfer		Academic counseling
C0009	Degrees		Academic counseling
C0010	Enrollment	Financial aid	Support
C0011	Enrollment		Support
C0012	Financial aid		Administration/support
C0015	Enrollment		Administration/support
L0001	Transfer	Enrollment	Administration/support
L0002	Financial aid	Degrees	Administration/support
L0005	Course completion	Course completion	Academic counseling
L0006	Graduation		Administration/support
L0007	Course completion		Retention support
L0008	Course completion		Retention support
L0010	Course completion		Academic counseling
L0012	Transfer	None	Administration/support
L0016	None		None

Interestingly, all the participants who said that their work impacted course completion were from a single institution. Participant L0007 shared,

We are responsible for impacting retention. So, retaining students from each semester, we do a lot of early alerts. We assist other departments in providing needed supplies, like, for instance, biology. They needed additional supplies.

They thought everyone having some models would be very beneficial to them

being more successful in classes. So, we assisted in providing the funding for that.

Participant L0010 said, “Educational planning of course which I believe is definitely important because they have a map for the student to kind of follow.”



Three participants focused on the enrollment of underrepresented students.

Participant C0010 shared,

Getting students into the application process, and then through the application process, and then once they've applied, making sure that connecting with them to find out if they haven't enrolled, why not? What can we support you with? Make supporting them through that process ... We've simplified things quite a bit, but I'm working on actually simplifying things more so that students can really get through that process with less confusion.

Participant C0011 talked about building partnerships with community agencies to get students enrolled. Participant C0015 shared something that was indeed worrisome when it comes to the metrics: "[We need to] create processes that will help us find more students that meet the metrics of the particular measures that we're looking at." This statement by Participant C0015 has serious implications for who gets recruited to the college.

Transferring was also a major area that four participants (22%) felt their work contributed to or impacted. Participant L0012 said she is responsible for

calling a campaign each year of students who are first-time college students who have not registered for or completed transferrable level math or English yet. Also, through the coordination of the learning community, we onboard 90 first-time students every academic year, and part of their program requirements is to complete transfer-level math in English in their 1st year. We have an 89% success rate in English and math in year 1 for that program for transfer. We coordinate transfer exploration and preparation activities for the entire college university

tours, including tours of HBCUs, Southern California, and other schools inside and outside California. We communicate with all transfer-ready students and support them in the transfer application process. And then for nine or more CTE units, we develop work experience courses that are part of career education CTE disciplines so that students can take a work experience course, and those units count toward their CTE degree or units there.

### **Interview Question 11**

*What do you think the college can do to ensure that it receives the maximum funding under the SCFF?*

Interview Question 11 aligns with Research Question 1 by detecting what the study institutions were planning or planned to do to address any possible impact on funding. Fortunately, what has been most common in states where performance-based funding was implemented is the enactment of hold-harmless provisions (Smith, 2015), which is currently the state of California colleges. However, with the formula looming, colleges need to consider how they can ensure their institutions are fully funded. Table 10 shows the themes and participant results.

**Table 10***Interview Question 11 Themes and Participant Results*

Theme	# of participants	% of participants	Participants
Interview Question 11: What do you think the college can do to ensure that it receives the maximum funding under the student-centered funding formula?			
Stability/cohesion	5	28	C0001, C0007, C0009, C0012, C0015
Innovate/improved processes	5	28	C0006, C0010, C0011, L0001, L0002
Focus on the student	4	22	L0005, L0006, L0008, L0010,
Not sure/other	4	22	C0002, L0007, L0012, L0016

For 28% of the participants, the issue of stability or campus cohesion was central to making sure that their college got maximum funding. Participant C0001 said,

Number one, the college has to have I mean, the college has to have some stability. It has to have some really good leadership, and it has to have some really good intentions. I don't think our campus we have some intentionality, but it's not intentionality. That is everybody's on board with that intentionality. We're not all focused on a certain issue. Everybody has their own whatever, so that's the first thing. How do we get the campus to be intentional and to see how their piece of the puzzle is an important piece of the puzzle? So that's number one. Number two is that you have to be able to have some kind of mechanism of CRM to collect the data and to train people to be able to know how to identify what data we're looking for.

Participant C0007 said, "I think localizing data on campus would be one of the ways that we start centralizing district policy around that." Participant C0009 shared,

“Get a precedent that stays for a few weeks. We’ve had so much turnover, it’s very hard to actually get anything done. I think with so much chaos, we don’t have any good leadership. Our leadership keeps changing.” Participant C0012 responded,

To answer that kind of generally, I think we need to get away from doing our work in silos. Right. This has been talked about a lot. How can we get the student services side and the instructional side of the house on the same page about what our goals are and everyone’s role in accomplishing those goals? I think that we end up having a lot of ideas in student services and we do a lot of things, but how can we loop the instructional side into it? Because again, we don’t see these students every day. We don’t even see them every week. We don’t even see them every month. But you know who does? The faculty. Right. When the students are in their class, they’re seeing them at least once, maybe twice a week. Right. So, I think that we need to find a way to kind of bridge the two sides of the house so that we’re all working on the same plan together and understand why that’s important.

Participant C0015 shared,

If I were to use a magic wand, I would basically have all our faculty, rally the faculty, to understand what the SCFF means. How it affects them and how it affects scheduling. Academic schedule for their classes. Talk about the curriculum and how we can improve the curriculum so we can get students out faster. Have departments take responsibility a little bit for helping students progress forward into their academic plans

Of the participants, 28% responded that to secure maximum funding, the college needed to innovate or improve processes. Participant C0006 said, “We’re going to have to rethink everything, and I think we’re going to have to be bold to try different things. I don’t think we can operate the same way based on the metrics of the student funding formula.” Participant L0001 took a similar stance: “We need to redesign how we do business. If you’re going to completely redesign how we’re funded, which is like the foundation of how we exist, then we need to redesign how we do business.” Participant C0010 said,

I really think that case management is going to be a huge piece of that and making sure that everybody, but particularly faculty, because they see it, most, are connecting students to services when they see that students are starting to withdraw, not turning stuff in, not showing up for class, those kinds of things, finding out what are the issues.

Participant C0011 offered that colleges should really continue to invest in making sure that all the pieces of the platform are connecting. Systems integration comes up a lot for me always just because of the amount of time and effort that it takes to jump from system to system to hunt down information that’s needed that could be the time that is spent supporting students because it’s beautiful in the system.

Participant L0002 added,

One of the first things I think colleges need to do, and I think this is something I’d like to see my college do as well as other colleges in the district is taking a holistic approach to staffing. So again, I think a lot of this is going to come down

to staffing. And what I've noticed is that the colleges rarely, if ever, look at staffing holistically.

Four participants (22%) felt that focusing on the students was how their college could get the maximum funding available under the SCFF. The literal student-centered approach is what these individuals felt was the solution to securing funding. Participant L0005 said,

Listen to the students, and I don't mean listen to the students that are on, just the ones that are in the spotlight. The student government, the honor students. I mean, really taking the time when students are doing our application and understanding that they are first generation.

Participant L0006 took it further and said,

I think a really thorough articulation of the life cycle of a student, I think, is important because then it shows where the money is going to be needed, what specific services will be delivered, what outcomes are desired, and having a way to measure those, I think that is in a timeline. That is what we are pushing toward now. That timeline is making everyone say, okay, so when does the rubber actually meet the road? What can my college do?

Participant L0008 talked about making sure that the work was from recruiting: "Not only recruiting students who kind of mirroring the four tiers of the guided pathways initiative."

Participant L0010 said,

We need to make sure that we are looking at what our students need overall and not just trying to make sure that we meet the matrix of the funding. Because the funding formula is [not] a one size fits all, and that's not necessarily what's

needed for everybody. Everybody can't be just grouped into a generalized program or generalized idealization of a program and said, yeah, that works for me. Some people can, but some people need more.

Four participants (22%) indicated that they did not know or had another response to the question. Participant C0002 bluntly said, "Don't think I can answer this question. I don't think I have enough knowledge of it." Participant L0007 indicated with skepticism that this was a question she struggled with:

This is a really interesting question. ... We [already] do all these interventions, these workshops, these calling campaigns, these emails, advertisements, commercials to get out to the feeder high schools that we're here. And then the big question we were asking today is, how do we know that these things that we're doing are actually causing an impact? How can we make a correlation between, our actions and is it giving us the outcome that we want?

Participant L0012 spoke to the need to address one metric in particular, responding that they "think that we can take better advantage of available transfer model curriculum for associate degrees for transfer." Finally, Participant L0016 said,

Focus on what we have. And I say that because, as I mentioned before, with the acknowledgment of any deficit, there is a great focus on what we need. But if we focus on what we have, we can strengthen and encourage the students that we do have.

This response suggests that colleges should try to work with what they have rather than institute new programs or policies to try to meet the metrics.

## Interview Question 12

*What could student services do to mitigate any negative impact on first-generation college students as a result of the SCFF?*

Interview Question 12 aligns with Research Question 2 and sought to draw participants to think about the funding formula and how their work could mitigate any negative impacts. This was important for one college in particular where the institution's strategic plan emphasized having staff empowerment by working to ensure that staff felt that their work was critical to the mission of the college. Table 11 shows the direct quotes by participants.

**Table 11**

*Interview Question 12 Responses*

Participant	Mitigation from student services	Position type
C0001	"Somehow we need to function as a holistic team."	Faculty
C0002	"Clarifying options"	Classified
C0006	"Free tuition"	Classified
C0007	"Training"	Faculty
C0009	"Focus on the student"	Faculty
C0010	"Better case management"	Classified
C0011	"Staffing"	Administrator
C0012	"Get ahead of the metrics"	Administrator
C0015	"All teams understand the metrics"	Administrator
L0001	"Engaging/communicating with students"	Administrator
L0002	"Figure out whom to serve"	Administrator
L0005	"Hold people accountable"	Faculty
L0006	"Focus on impact"	Administrator
L0007	"More responsive services"	Classified
L0008	"Address needs"	Classified
L0010	"Not sure"	Faculty
L0012	"Prioritize student services funding"	Administrator
L0016	"Transparency"	Classified



Two themes, improving organizational processes and structure and becoming a student-ready campus, were identified from this question. Brown McNair et al.'s (2016) seminal work *Becoming a Student-Ready College: A New Culture of Leadership for Student Success* pointed out that to affect impactful change

to be ready for the students you will have, you can begin to address the processes you use to govern yourselves, particularly the processes that rest in whole or in part in the hands of faculty and staff right now. (p. 40)

Eight of the interview participants (44%) provided responses that fit the first theme, improving organizational processes. The argument for this theme is that the internal processes and structures on college campuses are not geared toward the students. Often, these processes and structures are written to comply with state and federal regulations that are removed from the students served on college campuses. In the specific case of the SCFF, institutional processes that created barriers for students must be removed for student services at minority-serving colleges to mitigate any negative impacts on first-generation college students. Participant responses connected to this theme are as follows:

Somehow, we need to function as a holistic team. I think that somehow, we have to have case teams, teams to be able to keep the high touch that we need. I think we need to have teams that include counselors, financial aid, admissions and records, and the welcome center. Just the right hand not knowing what the left hand is doing so somehow team approach, management approach. I know that other campuses do that stuff, or even when we're looking at Guided Pathways, how we're looking at on the student services and instructional side, again, using counselors and instructional staff, there's a couple of us that do nursing and do

one division and another counselor does another division on the instructional side. And how do we have that cohesiveness so that students can think that it's not us and them and they're over there? But that's I think that's, you know, and from beginning to end, we used to do some things like that. How do we bridge everybody in our departments to see the bigger picture, and not the individual so much? (Participant C0001)

First-generation college students are in survival mode. And so, the process to get a CTE-related degree can trip them up, especially if they're trying to get to a degree, but at the same time, life is happening for them. If those students aren't engaging in any of this, that will impact the funding for the college, I think in part because they are first-generation college students making sure that they are aware that when we talk about college, it's not only about a 4-year route, that other options for them can provide them with livable wages. And the reason why I'm saying this is because I have seen students when they come to the college, they're put into a transfer route, but when they are done with their associate degree and they're ready to transfer, they're either single parents, they can't afford it, or they just don't know how to do it. (Participant C0002)

I think we are definitely in, like an educational revolution right now. So, access for students has to change. Like how we go about teaching and disseminating services. I think that is going to be important in years to come. Training, any kind of training, informed trauma training, and then also may be working with our contracts so that we get the support we need to be better professionals. (Participant C0007)

That's a bit hard because I think and I don't want to speak for another department, but I think Financial Aid really needs to do some case management around the college. Promise grants, Pell grants, AB 540, those kinds of things. Reaching out individually to students who haven't applied for those things or are stuck somewhere. And I think in terms of completion, really doing the case management. Again, I don't want to speak for another department, but if there are students who are close to getting a certificate, reach out to those students and [saying] hey, did you know you only have one more class and you can get a certificate? Did you know you have five more classes for you to get your AA? (Participant C0010)

Just because I know that in some cases it's going to be unlikely to be able to get more manpower but that means that we need to be able to do more with the manpower that we have, and the systems need to be able to support that. So that is the number one thing that comes to mind is making sure that we're really maximizing the system usage. Things that we should be able to do and can do to make sure that we have the time and space to support students with the manpower that we're able to garden. (Participant C0011)

Hold people accountable. Hold counselors accountable. Hold the administration accountable. Hold professors accountable. Our students often will say, "I emailed the instructor. He never emailed me back." You know, and then there's no response time recommendation requirement. Students have this chain of emails for trying to tell an instructor that their canvas is unavailable. ... You know, you

can't say we're here for the students and you don't even respond to an email.

(Participant L0005)

I'm not sure how really to answer that question because again, individualized plans for every person. I'm not sure if that's going to be possible with the structure of the way it is right now, but at the same time, if we can get as close to possible, that'd be great. (Participant L0010)

I think the college can prioritize funding to student services and continued funding for student services as a way of ensuring that support for term-to-term persistence and how education planning and course planning support contributes to the maximum number of degrees awarded and maximum transfer outcomes. I think the more hands-on support that's invested in student services will only lead to increased output of the college. (Participant L0012)

I think that transparency comes in again, because how would they know of any negative impact other than having conversations and keeping quality services? I think those will be the main two things. Talk to them, figure out what they need, and provide the services that we can keep the integrity of the college and the quality of the services that we provide. (Participant L0016)

The second theme identified from Interview Question 12 was becoming a student-ready college. Many colleges have for years included an assessment of college readiness as central to their recruitment and assessment of preparedness for college. The idea is to find a student who comes to the college ready to learn and who has excellent potential to handle academic rigor. Over the past few years as more focus has been placed on equity, there is a realization that many other factors affect the readiness of a student, including

the student's background, first-generation status, low-income status, high school, and so forth. In today's equity-focused environment, the question cannot be whether the student is college ready but rather is the college student ready.

According to Brown McNair et al. (2016),

Being a student-ready college requires more than a mission or diversity statement that touts philosophical ideals of inclusiveness. Being a student-ready college even means more than expressed commitments to inclusion and student centeredness. A student-ready college is one that strategically and holistically advances student success, and works tirelessly to educate all students for civic and economic participation in a global, interconnected society. At student-ready colleges, all services and activities—from admissions to the business office to the classroom, and even to campus security—are intentionally designed to facilitate students' progressive advancement toward college completion and positive post-college outcomes. Student-ready colleges are committed not only to student achievement but also to organizational learning and institutional improvement. At student-ready colleges, all principles and values are aligned with the mission of the institution, and those beliefs are shared among members of the broader campus community. Student-ready colleges offer a holistic approach to leadership that empowers all members of the campus community to serve as leaders and educators. (p. 13)

This shift in approach to how the college views and prepares for students is what 50% of the interview participants expressed in the following responses to Interview Question 12:

I think what I heard [another college] doing their first semester fall is free for students. I think we can do that and have requirements. Yes, your first semester is free, but you have to enroll in orientation to college. You have to have English in your 1st year. I think one of the things that we can do at [our college] to help students with momentum, we know our students tend to take classes at a half-time rate because they work. We should be blowing up our work experience program so students can get that extra credit since we know they're working anyway. But if we're being funded on how many units a student takes, let's not try and cram 12 units the traditional way. Let's make them full time through cooperative education. So, I think we need to explore those types of alternatives. And that's one thing I haven't seen our campus, at least since I've been here, talk about, like, boosting up work experience so that students can qualify for the maximum amount of financial aid, so they do get that work experience and that learning opportunity. And, while I don't think Coop is part of student services, I think they can work hand in hand. (Participant C0006)

We have to stay focused on our students and our student's needs regardless, and maybe do a lot more and have a lot more knowledge of where to get money to help our students because sometimes giving them even though this isn't the answer, but that does help them solve some problems. (Participant C0009)

I guess the first thing that comes to mind is getting ahead of the curve, right? I mean, we are on hold harmless right now, but we know that this is coming, which again, I do see that we're doing. I mean, lately, our enrollment has been better. We've got folks that are working on our scheduling issues. [My dean] has been

working with me and [our marketing director] about getting together, about financial aid outreach, and marketing. And so, I think really that's going to be the biggest key is to try and get ahead of it. Other things that we can put into place now before the SCFF is fully a thing that can make sure that we don't see that happen. Because honestly, it's a scary thought to think of where the cuts would happen if we lost the funding that we're projected to lose under SCFF. I don't know what the college's plans are in the event that it happens. But I mean, certainly, at our college, we have a lot of first-generation students and so it almost feels inevitable that if we don't find a solution to increase those metrics, they're going to be impacted because there will be fewer resources which means certain programs can be scaled down and really what we need to do is scale up. So, I didn't really answer the question because the real answer is I don't know what we would do. But I think what we can do is to keep doing what we're doing and trying to find new ways to reach our students. (Participant C0012)

I think making sure that all of our teams understand the importance of the SCFF, and I think that's an important thing and how it will affect their day-to-day work. So, I think it would be important for everyone in student services to, number one, understand and educate them. We have a lot of new teams here, and I think something I would like to see is our administration talking more about SCFF. I think our managers as I said, have a good sense of what's coming, but I think the line staff has to understand why it's so important. (Participant C0015)

That's a hard question, I don't know. I mean, when the funding gets cut, student services funding gets cut first. And over 90% of our funding is in people and the

vast majority of those people are in instruction. We should be telling students, no, don't do English early. Wait. Right, but we believe that by doing that in high school and getting students college experience and units and everything that goes along with all those predictors, they are going to be coming to the college post high school, better prepared, more likely to come right to college period and to us and propel towards completion a lot better. So, I think that's an example of something that we are trying to do. I think we are also really putting a lot of our effort, again, because so many students are online, in these communication strategies. Like going to students, we're putting a lot of work into it; we call it student-facing communication as kind of an umbrella, but focused communication on specific student populations with not just to their college email, but clear action steps to help them move along that continuum. And so, like a lot of work going into student-facing communication, like I said, calling campaigns, call banking to students, saying you didn't roll in math in English this fall, it's really important to do it in your 1st year for your success. We want to make sure that you sign up for those in spring. Let me help you out. Right, those kinds of things. I think we're putting a lot of effort into communication, particularly because the majority of students, quite frankly, just aren't on campus. (Participant L0001)

I think for us to mitigate the negative consequences of any policy, we have to look at who will be serving and who are we not serving, and how we get that population in. And part of that is going to mean, frankly, we may say to certain populations, I'm sorry, we don't have any services available for you right now. And that's a hard thing to do. I'm not suggesting that it's easy, but a lot of those



students that aren't first gen, that come from White families, that come from wealthy families, are going to get that service elsewhere if they can't get it from us, right? There are private college advisors out there that are going to help them, parents that have gone through the system, friends, or any number of things. Whereas the student that comes from an economically depressed area, who's first-gen, they're not going to have those extra supports. And so, again, I'm looking at it like that person who doesn't need me as a counselor is probably going to be successful one way or the other. Whereas the first-gen student that doesn't even know counseling exists; that's the student I need to focus on to help with the funding formula. (Participant L0002)

Be very studious about the impact of changes as far as not just watching numbers but also talking to students. I think focus groups are important. I think having student involvement in the planning process, and the design process at the outset is critical as opposed to finding out what they felt about some services, and some changes afterward. That's a change I think in design that is critical and again, it comes back to difficult conversations, transparency, and also to kind of shift the paradigm from an extra that we have to do to, this is about the institution being efficient, period. It's supposed to serve all students, not just some. I think a paradigm shift here is critical from having this boutique activity and thinking it's an above-and-beyond or additional service. No, this is a central part of the college's mission, that it's not delivered on. (Participant L0006)

Provide more timely services, maybe offer them more often? If we're doing workshops that have to do with the completion of applications and transfer

application tutorials, we need to start maybe providing them earlier. We should have them available the 1st week in classes for tutorial services; we should offer more and earlier outreach efforts so that we can get students enrolled in classes earlier so that they're able to get their supplies or financial assistance earlier. So we need to have better, I guess, calendars type of things. We need to plan out for the year, and we need to have some collaboration across departments.

(Participant L0007)

Food insecurities and addressing that component is a huge facet. So, a lot of times we would have events where we're able to offset the food insecurities that these students suffer. Also, our foundation can be present as far as students that are having housing concerns. So really paying attention to the food and the housing component and how that relates to the education piece. Case in point. If a student is famished, not meaning that they didn't eat lunch, meaning that they haven't eaten for a couple of days, then it's hard for them to concentrate on the task at hand as far as being the best version of themselves within the confines of their classroom. If they're hungry or if they were not in a situation where they got a good night's sleep the night before, they're sleeping with one eye open because they're confined to a shelter. Just giving them options as far as those two components and how they relate to the education piece as well. Because it is reciprocal in my opinion. (Participant L0008)

### **Interview Question 13**

*What advice or recommendation would you provide to manage student services in support of meeting the student-centered funding metrics?*

Interview Question 13 garnered feedback for managing student services with the formula and aligns with Research Question 2. Transparency and systems, with 67% of the participants, was the dominant advice for managing student services, making it clear that the student services professionals at the colleges in the study had concerns about transparency, which they expressed in their responses. Table 12 shows the themes and participant results.

**Table 12**

*Interview Question 13 Themes and Participant Results*

Theme	# of participants	% of participants	Participants
Interview Question 13: What advice or recommendation would you provide to manage student services in support of meeting the student-centered funding metrics?			
Transparency/systems	12	67	C0001, C0002, C0011, C0012, C0015, L0001, L0002, L0006, L0007, L0008, L0012, L0016
Collaboration	2	11	C0006
Focus on the student	4	22	C0009, L0005, L0010, L0016
Staffing	3	16	C0010, C0015, L0002
Not sure	1	5	C0007

Participant C0001 said, “I think in terms of managing, you have to know your budget, and that’s a big piece of the puzzle too, having a budget, managing the budget, and having players be part of that budget conversation.”

Participant C0002 shared,

I think it’s important that we see that we are all working towards one goal and that everybody has equal parts and equal importance. And what I mean by this is that obviously managers are making certain decisions. They’re allocating funds.

There's a lot of value placed on faculty because they do the teaching. However, there's also a lot of value in the work that is being done by classified—the people who are at the ground level. So, for me, one thing that I've had a challenge with as I said, is I don't know how to contribute to these efforts because I haven't been put in a place where I can sit through a meeting to hear how can my work align and support this goal? So, I think just making sure that everybody is aware of this and that everybody plays a part.

Participant C0011 explained,

Just because I know that in some cases it's going to be unlikely to be able to get more manpower but that means that we need to be able to do more with the manpower that we have and the systems need to be able to support that. So that is the number one thing that comes to mind is making sure that we're really maximizing the system usage. Things that we should be able to do and can do to make sure that we have the time and space to support students with the manpower that we're able to garner.

Participant C0012 said,

To answer this, I think I want to go back to kind of the thought I had earlier and expand on it about kind of rethinking student services just kind of in general.

Right. I think for a long time at a lot of colleges, you know, we've had our different departments and our different offices, right? There is Financial Aid, there's A & R, there's Counseling, there's DSPS, there's EOPS, and we all kind of do our work separately. I think what might be interesting to try as a recommendation is how we rethink the way that student services functions in

terms of bringing students in and getting them through the enrollment process and the idea of having these types of classified positions that are like an advisory role or something of that nature. Where it's one person who maybe can be assigned to students by the cohort that has knowledge and expertise enough to get a student through the entire enrollment process. Applying to the college. Enrolling in classes. Applying for financial aid. All of those steps to success. Right? So how can we get a restructure of the student services division so that we have these types of folks and more of them, right, that can work with every newly recruited student to get them through the entire process.

Participant C0015 thought that what was needed was to really rally the troops. I think the responsibility lies on the managers, but to have a more effective response to what's going on with this, everybody needs to know and understand how it impacts their daily work. I mentioned faculty earlier, but I also think the line staff has to understand why this is so important. The only way that they will be able to get more staff in their units, in their department is if they understand, hey, we raise these metrics, this means more staff for us. And I think that will create some more motivation from the staff to continue working.

Participant L001 said, "I'm going to answer that question based on where we are now, which is in hold harmless." Participant L001 continued,

You got to invest if you want to see an outcome. Like, our enrollment is going to plummet if we don't invest in boosting enrollment. Our outcomes are going to plummet if we don't invest in them and we have the chance now, while we're in hold harmless now. We don't know what's going to happen, we got to do it right.

We shouldn't be kind of strapping ourselves or ratcheting ourselves back based on what we think is going to be our funding 2 years from now. Like we have a chance to change what our funding will be 2 years from now, really invest right now. So that's something that is missing from our college that I think we are quite frankly misguided on.

Participant L0002 said,

So, I would say the first thing that as a manager I would want to do and have my management team do is sort of look at a cross section of the metrics and how students of color and first-gen students at my college are doing within those metrics, right? Look for those gaps. We do this somewhat in the equity plan, right? Looking for disproportionately impacted students. And then this is going to be the hard part. And this is where I think the failure of our administrative side of the house, adapting bargaining agreements. The work is we have to have hard conversations with our staff and our faculty and student services about where we need to refocus our energy.

Participant L0006 explained,

I think having them [the metrics] out, having clearly stated, having clear expectations about timelines, giving people a chance to understand them, see the impact, but also have a conversation about how their changes, the changes they're going to make in their own level, will be redirected toward the larger goal, but also understanding how that benefits them as professionals as well as students. I think part of the challenge is that we're looking to do this for students, but I think

everyone wants to come to work, and feel like they're going to have a greater impact than they had the day before.

Participant L0007 said,

Listen to us, invite us to some conversations. We need to feel like we're part of the process. So, I think that we need to be more involved in some of these campus conversations about what are they anticipating or discussing, or thinking about so that we feel that we're heard. So, I think that makes it a lot easier to say we don't feel disenfranchised.

Participant L0008 said,

The suggestion I would make to managers is to make sure that their subordinates are continuously aware of the student learning outcomes, the metrics, and more importantly, the weekly, monthly, and semester goals that align with confirming and continuing the funding.

Participant L0012 recalled,

I think I'll go back to my first recommendation. I think some kind of data and live dashboard resource for student services to kind of more accurately dive into which students are close to meeting. A metric that we can do kind of more proactive communication with and think would be really helpful.

Participant L0016 concluded,

I don't know if it's possible, but I would also encourage management from the top down to do things to boost employee morale, because employee morale translates again in the services that are offered and with the student population that we work with, especially those of like first-generation because they're already so fragile

from various life obstacles. I would say in some ways, we need to step outside of our silos, outside of our box of, oh, this is my job or this is not my job, and be able to help the student holistically and be supported in helping students holistically.

Of the participants, 11% thought that collaboration would be a good recommendation for managing student services. Participant C0006 said, “You have someone partnering, someone from student services outreach, partnering with the business department to get recruit students to apply.” Also, Participant C0012 felt the need to

flip our current student services models on its head and rethink how can we get to that point where we have more people comfortable and knowledgeable of the entire enrollment process and then utilizing those people in a kind of cohort fashion to work with new students that they are the point of contact with this cohort group of students to get them through the enrollment process. And then you went through the role process.

Finally, Participant L0016 said, “We need to step outside of our silos, outside of our box of, oh, this is my job or this is not my job, and be able to help the student holistically and being supported in helping students holistically.”

Four participants, or 22%, felt that focusing on the students was the recommendation they were going to make to manage student services. Participant C0009 shared,

So I think making sure that the requirements don’t outweigh the need of the student. Again, it is the above all, not harm the human being. We are here to serve



a human, and we're here to serve a certain population. We want the population that we have and we want to be supporting this particular population because we think that it serves the country and society to be empowering these students.

Participant L0005 said that because of the student population at her college, focusing on those target populations would be critical because the students are all different and the services must reflect that. Participant L0010 recommended,

Do what we can to make sure that we meet the requirements for the funding formula, but also make sure that we're keeping our honest focus on students and what they need because sometimes we get caught up in the funding formula and we're not really looking at what our students need, our student population.

Finally, Participant L0016 offered, "We need to step outside of our silos, outside of our box of, oh, this is my job or this is not my job, and be able to help the student holistically and being supported in helping students holistically."

Three participants, or 16%, who referenced staffing as a recommendation made it clear that staffing or the lack thereof was indeed an issue that needed to be looked at.

Participant C0010 said,

I think really making sure that each department is well staffed and well trained in what they need to do, but also in how to reach out to students, how to help students, really that sort of customer service piece of it. And making sure that all of the departments are connecting together.

Participant C0015 offered, "The only way that they will be able to get more staff in their units, in their department is if they understand, hey, we raise these metrics, this means more staff for us." Finally, Participant L0002 said,

I think the failure of our administrative side of the house, adapting bargaining agreements to. The work is we have to have hard conversations with our staff and our faculty and student services about where we need to refocus our energy.

#### **Interview Question 14**

*Is there anything else you would like to share about your perspective as a student services professional that you think would be relevant to this study?*

Interview Question 14 was designed to allow participants to freely address or share their thoughts, opinions, and overall perspective on the subject. They were able to share anything that came to mind that they perceived to add value to the research. Although not all the participants answered this question, the few that did shared thoughts, some of which may have been covered previously but expanded upon:

It's important that our student services recognize that even though there are people in positions that have dean titles, there are people that are faculty and staff that have insight, that have perspective because they're the ones who are working on the ground with the students. And a lot of times those conversations or just being able to hear a person because I don't like you, or because of whatever is missed, and that's what is the most valuable thing is the people who are on the ground. Staff, counselors, are the ones who are on the ground with the students. To be able to have these deeper, more intentional conversations, we have to feel as though we're valued. We have to feel that our voices are heard that our perspective and our experience and that we're sharing the narrative of our students. And that is incorporated and again, student centered. How are we

servicing the student and how are we hearing their voices in this? (Participant C0001)

My biggest thing with the Student Centered Funding Formula is that if we find schools aren't meeting their metrics, instead of penalizing them and reducing their funding, I think giving them the resources, I don't just mean financial resources, to meet their metrics is important. And I think our chancellor's office needs to think of things in that way. If schools are struggling, let's find out why they're struggling, and let's give them the resources to do that, whether that's people resources to help them plan through things and implement things, something where they're getting the support and not just sort of having to throw stuff on the wall and see how it lands. (Participant C0006)

We need data, and we need localized data on campuses. That might be a localized data office so that we have data to support it. And we don't have to go through the rigamarole of district or state or whatever. We have maybe certified data specifically at our campus in an office where that information can be disseminated so that we can do more advocacy that is measurable. And I want to say, like, from an empirical standpoint, because we're not able to do it, it just looks sloppy. And we continually put ourselves in a position of feeling vulnerable when we do the advocacy for policy at the state level. (Participant C0007)

Made me deeply concerned. (Participant C0009)

I think one thing that I would be really interested in is to see more of the data to see if things are really changing, particularly with our school for things like

transfer-level English and math, you know. How are our students doing?

(Participant C0010)

I can just say that there are good and bad things about for-profit institutions. One of the things that's really good is their ability to track data and track interactions and track impacts of that. And I really hope that some of the best practices that exist that are just out there, that are what we're competing against, that we're able to kind of pull in some of the best practices that make sense to better serve student success. (Participant C0011)

I think probably the last thing I would just say is that I think it's important that student services professionals continue to kind of keep themselves educated on what's going on both legislatively and what's going on with the demographics of the students that they're serving. (Participant C0012)

I think what's been most confusing has been the budget. I think when it comes to budget when it came to using the integrated budget of SEP. I [also] know there were multiple different kinds of categorical funding that came to the colleges. I think the state could have done a better job at helping the colleges identify, hey, these are the grants, and these are the money that could be used towards preparing for SCFF. (Participant C0015)

I think I said this earlier, but student services in a community college context are very transactional based. I mean, we call it services that should give it away, right? There is supposed to in a university context, they talk about student affairs or student development. Right. And it's much more significantly funded because they do developmental work and transformational work outside of the classroom

with students. We are so underfunded as a system to begin with and then within student services specifically, that you look at where the bulk of staffing is, and it is in admissions and financial aid because there's just a lot of paperwork to process and those are not areas that are doing lots of developmental work with students. So, I think it's difficult for student services to see themselves in a model like this and to understand the impact that student services really can have. Because if you work in A & R, your role in the completion of an ADT is like evaluating that transcript when it comes in, evaluating that degree position when it comes in. (Participant L0001)

All I would say, I think, is I'm concerned that the California community colleges are doing too much instead of trying to do the things we do well or trying to do the things we do better. Right. I really feel like the system office needs to do more. They need to do a listening tour and visit us. Do something not unlike what you're doing here. Talk to individuals about how they feel about their jobs, how they see themselves impacting the funding formula, really being, like, hardcore on colleges that haven't done anything differently. And I know it's easy to use the funding as a stick, but again, the one group on campus that has an impact on the funding formula besides student services, which is instruction, is the most protected. So, in other words, if the funding formula were to negatively impact the college, the group that we would need to do more to retain students, to do more to help students persist beyond student services is not incentivized to change. They're going to get paid the same no matter what, and they're least likely to lose their jobs than anybody else on campus. (Participant L0002)

I do wonder about land grant institutions. I mean, when you talk about land grant institutions and folks who just don't need that funding because funding comes from the Maserati around them and the multimillion dollar home, it's a different perspective. I don't know how to level the playing field becomes with that group because you got privileged folk who and we have disproportionately impacted groups there too but still, you have a huge base of resources. It rings differently for them when you think about the consequence of not delivering on outcomes. I read a report where some of the institutions that are filled with money don't respond to correctives and the scare of any kind of sanctions. They have the money to build buildings. Donations come, and oftentimes they are less on track with mandated requirements for like, building maintenance and whatnot. Because they figured, well, there's no impact really on you and me as an institution state. That's where I get a little concerned. I don't know what their accountability is for how their numbers will look when it comes to those people who are most impacted disproportionately. (Participant L0006)

### **Summary**

Chapter 4 described the findings from the semistructured interviews of student services professionals from participating California community colleges that serve mostly minority students. Eighteen participants voluntarily participated in this phenomenological qualitative study on the impact of California's SCFF on colleges that serve minority students. The participants responded to the interview questions from their perspective as student services professionals and based on their roles in student services. The chapter included quotes from the participants from the interviews.

Among the number of things observed from the study was the fact that among student services professionals across all levels, their perspectives varied and there was no shared understanding of what the SCFF is in its totality. In some cases, even executives who are in critical roles of decision making could not articulate a clear understanding of the formula. In the following chapter, the overall themes relative to the research questions are explored and discussed, and suggestions are made for which further research may be conducted to bring greater clarity to this area.

Based on the responses gathered and the themes pulled from the responses, there is a need for even greater concern at minority-serving California community colleges about the impact of the SCFF for first-generation college students. There are concerns with transparency, organization, processes, leadership, and fiscal responsibility to name a few. There is a challenge also with trust, which results in the various student services units working counter to each other rather than with each other. It is natural for people to withdraw when they feel threatened, and this is what has happened at colleges, where instead of units working toward a shared goal, they dig in because there is no shared goal that everyone believes in and that drives the institution.

## CHAPTER 5: FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The aim of this chapter is to present the findings and conclusions of the research conducted on the impact of the Student Centered Funding Formula (SCFF) on first-generation college students at Minority Serving Institutions (MSIs) in the California Community Colleges System. Recommendations for future studies are also discussed in this chapter.

### **Purpose Statement**

The purpose of this phenomenological study was to examine the new SCFF's impact on a selection of California community colleges that serve minority students from the perspective of student services professionals at these colleges by reviewing artifacts and literature on performance-based funding formulas to understand the equity implications of the formula for first-generation college students. This analysis is especially important because California community colleges are making strides on the state mandate to address issues of equity.

### **Research Questions**

The following research questions guided this study.

1. How are California community colleges that serve minority students impacted by the new SCFF from the perspective of student services professionals?
2. How can student services mitigate or eliminate any unintended impact(s) of the SCFF, at California community colleges that are MSIs, for a first-generation college student?



## **Interpretation and Emergence of Universal Themes**

Six universal themes emerged from the responses collected in the interviews with the 18 participants. The themes are discussed in the subsequent sections and were used as guidance for translating meaningful answers to the research questions and helped solidify the findings of the study.

## **Major Findings**

The following findings are from participant responses to the interview questions derived to answer the two research questions for this study. In the following sections, each theme is interpreted according to the context related to the research questions.

### **Research Question 1**

The first research question asked, “How are California Community Colleges that serve minority students impacted by the new SCFF from the perspective of student services professionals?” Themes related to Research Question 1 included financial aid, data, and enrollment and retention.

#### ***Theme 1: Financial Aid***

To help understand the impact of financial aid, one must understand its importance to the conversation of performance-based funding. Although the SCFF includes a supplemental allocation based on the number of students receiving a California Promise Grant, Pell Grant, and students covered under AB 540, there is a direct link to performance metrics, such as course completion, degree attainment, and so forth. Bettinger et al. (2019) argued that “causal impacts of financial aid have been predominately restricted to short-term college attendance and bachelor’s degree completion outcomes” (p. 65). This is important in the context of MSIs. Nationally, Free

Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) completion rates for California are at 53% (Data Insight Partners, n.d.). First-generation college students depend on the FAFSA more than any other group but have a difficult time completing it and end up without the support they need to be successful, which impacts the funding for colleges that are MSIs (Carrasco, 2022).

Four participants indicated that their school was impacted negatively by low FAFSA completion and needed to increase financial aid outreach to recruit enough students to meet funding criteria. Participant C0015 said,

It takes some money to create those programs and staff these programs. So, I think the intention of it is to help students complete Pell Grants. So, we're talking about trying to get more FAFSA, more Dream Act students, more Pell eligibility in there. But in all honesty, if we don't have the resources to find those students, right, if we don't have a marketing plan to outreach to those students, if we don't have the staffing to reach those students, that becomes more of a struggle because now it creates more work for staff to identify those students.

Participant C0012 said,

I think the struggle is making the FAFSA seem less intimidating, though we have no control over the actual form itself. But also, I think the FAFSA being intimidating or burdensome is the number one issue. I would say, it is part of the misconception that students have, that they need to be full time to qualify for financial aid. So, a lot of students don't think they need to fill out the FAFSA if they're not full time. That continues to be a myth that we have a hard time kind of dispelling across our campus. Because of this, for resources to be successful in

terms of financial resources is very important, I think. And when students aren't aware of the eligibility requirements, aren't aware of where to go to get help filling out the FAFSA, and thus do not do so, a lot of times they may be impacted because they can only attend for so long before they run out of resources.

Participant C0006 said,

Just getting through the application is one of the biggest hurdles. Helping students apply for financial aid, whether it's the California Promise Grant or FAFSA, is also a hurdle. Once students complete those things, I think with my help, now there's a step of taking a placement test.

Participant C0010 said,

I don't want to speak for another department, but I think financial aid really needs to do some case management around the college. Promise grants, Pell Grants, AB 540, those kinds of things. Reaching out individually to students who haven't applied for those things or are stuck somewhere.

From these comments, the participants have recognized that financial aid completion will negatively impact the college in meeting the metrics for the funding formula. Participants found that because people from economically disadvantaged communities do not have an understanding of what financial aid is and have a distrust of institutions overall, they do not apply. In particular, communities with a large immigrant population do not engage because some of these individuals fear that doing so could jeopardize their ability to even make a living and support extended families in their home countries. In addition, the complexity of financial aid and the fact that student services

professionals often speak in financial aid jargon make it difficult and confusing for students at minority-serving community colleges to apply.

### ***Theme 2: Data***

New public management pushes the use of metrics and data as opposed to rules and regulations to create policy (Hill & Lynn, 2016). The challenge and a major source of consternation is that the community college data quality is historically poor. In terms of the funding formula, part of the concern is that the California Community Colleges State Chancellor's Office has been mired by data inaccuracies. This issue has resulted in the Academic Senate for California Community Colleges (2019) issuing a resolution calling for the state to improve the integrity and quality of data. On college campuses, the same thing applies. Unfortunately, with the leadership crisis in higher education, institutions may have a hard time with leaders who either focus on data or ignore the data (Brandon, 2020). In the current space that accurate data would be critical for funding, colleges need to be watchful of their data and make informed decisions based on accurate data.

Five participants said that their school needed to pay attention and be data driven as a result of the new SCFF or it could lead to negative implications. Participant L0006 said,

With the performance metrics, I think timely access to data and also accurate data is what's important. I think also a discussion of disaggregating data once it's in hand. To have a real meaningful discussion of it, where people are transparent about it and look at what the data is really pointing to and have multiple discussions about what changes can be made with some measurable outcomes for the changes made, as opposed to studying data to go "Wow." For just a general

sense of the basic story, I think that getting over that hump to have those difficult conversations about data, to move to a place where hard decisions are made. With so many different initiatives happening at the same time. Guided Pathways Implementation, comprehensive review, program review going on. There's a lot of difficulty with trying to position a conversation about this particular topic in a way that gives it, I guess, central focus.

Participant L0001 said,

We're looking at indicators that take students a significant period of time to achieve, like transfer. As an example, if you look at transfer velocity data, most students in the state of California do not transfer in 2 years or 3 years. You start to see it around 4 years. You really see it in that 5-, to 7-year period of, like, it took them 5 to 7 years to transfer. So, we're talking about something that involves, I think, massive change to an institution in order to have improvement. We want to improve the number of ADTs we offer because that's going to improve our funding. We do it because we want to serve students, but in the SCFF context, that's going to improve our funding. But when there's a lag time of 5 to 7 years for a student to actually transfer completely, that is going to take us a long time. It takes us a while to make massive changes, and then we got to wait 6 to 7 years just for the first group to be impacted because of sort of this longitudinal experience.

Participant C0001 said,

For transfer, there hasn't been a mechanism to keep data. ... I think it comes back to understanding what is it, meaning the formula. How do we continually have

conversations about it; where are the reports on it; how do we meet to look at year to year, what's working, and what's not working; who else do we need to bring into the circle to develop something?

Colleges have always communicated being data driven in their decisions and policymaking. There are a few challenges with how this is managed at community colleges. First, colleges often have the wrong people in charge of data collection and analysis resulting in inaccurate data collection or analysis. Without data researchers to provide the right data, colleges are working counter to the narrative of becoming data driven in decisions and policymaking. Second, because the wrong people are responsible for the data, that means that the data received is often faulty. Because of this, any decisions made as a result of the data collected are inherently flawed.

### ***Theme 3: Enrollment and Retention***

Through fall of 2022, only 17 of California's 116 community colleges had increased the number of students enrolled since the fall 2020 term. At 42 colleges, more students left in fall 2021 than in fall 2020, according to a CalMatters analysis of system enrollment data (Zinshteyn, 2022). Even in this hold-harmless period, this is a worrying issue for not only colleges in this study but also colleges throughout the system. This is not just because of the pandemic that enrollment numbers have declined. Unfortunately, with any economic downturn, people from low-income backgrounds typically are forced into the workforce to meet their needs. For example, enrollment in the community college MSIs began declining following the 2008 recession (Boland et al., 2018). The bottom line is without enrollment going up, minority-serving California community colleges could be negatively impacted because the students simply would not be there.

Five participants indicated that the new SCFF put a spotlight on student retention and enrollment because without those, community colleges cannot get to the outcomes of degrees, completion, and so forth. Participant C0015 said,

Retention is the cheapest way to keep our FTEs up. It is also the most neglected population of students, our continuing students, and our returning students. We can get the new students here. That's not a problem. It's clear our new student enrollment is up by 20% over last fall. But if we don't keep them here, if we don't track them, and if we don't get to a point where they are able to complete their academic goals, we're screwed. So, I think the most important thing that all of our colleges have to focus on is retention. We got them in the door. We got to keep them in the door and have them focus on their academic goal. If we don't have the resources to be able to do that, if the colleges don't pay attention to that, we're going to lose out.

Participant C0012 said,

Lately, our enrollment has been better. We've got folks that are working on our scheduling issues. [My dean] has been working with me and [our marketing director] about getting together, about financial aid, outreach, and marketing. So, I think really that's going to be the biggest key is to try and get ahead of it. I think we need to do some work around how can we communicate to potential students the benefits of full-time enrollment. All of these types of programs rely on full-time enrollment to offer the student all of these additional resources, like counseling resources, tutoring resources, and book resources. Because I think what deters a lot of students from enrolling full time is probably two things, right?

Time and money. So, if we can help students with one of those and say, hey, we have resources for you, if you attend full time and can provide that as a package for these students, a package of all of these supports that they're going to get if they enroll full time, then perhaps that can help us with increasing FTEs.

Participant C0009 said,

So, if the college is not graduating enough students, obviously that means that the funding formula will take away money from the college, which in turn will hurt first-generation college students who could potentially be coming to the school. So, we lose funding, the school will lose funding. And unfortunately, this is my perspective and I know it's on record, but if you're losing funding because the students you have aren't graduating, a direct impact of that is you start to look for students who will help you get your funding. So instead of recruiting the students who are in your neighborhood who need the support, you start to look for the students whom you're hoping will graduate and transfer insignificant enough numbers so that you can get funding appropriately.

Enrollment and retention are critical parts of how colleges can continue to receive funding. The old funding model called full-time enrolled students (FTES) depends entirely on enrollment. Full-time enrollment does not happen if students do not receive support to remain full time (retention). A major job of student services is to equip students with the support necessary to ensure retention. At minority-serving community colleges, because the students are typically commuters and nontraditional, their ability to be enrolled full time hinges in large part on the success of the available student services to deliver on-time services to students. Colleges have for years deployed a system



described as early alert to aid in the retention part of this. Unfortunately, and especially at underresourced colleges, the early alert is a misnomer. Early alert should not happen when the student is already on the college campus and struggling. It should happen before the enrollment process and involves building community with the students before they ever set foot on the college campus.

## **Research Question 2**

The second research question asked, “How can student services mitigate or eliminate any unintended impact(s) of the SCFF, at California Community Colleges that are MSIs, for first-generation college students?” Themes related to Research Question 2 include prioritizing student services funding, addressing basic needs, and improving interdepartmental communication and accountability.

### ***Theme 4: Prioritizing Student Services Funding***

Funding for community colleges is at an all-time high, and no other state has reinvested more heavily in education than California, increasing per-student spending by 15%, due in large part to Proposition 98, which establishes minimum spending levels for schools and community colleges (Cook, 2017). But even with the reinvestment, California’s 50% law, which requires community colleges to spend at least half of their budget on direct costs of instruction, makes it difficult to properly fund student services. According to WestEd and The RP Group (2012), “Under this law, resources that colleges commit to matriculation supports, such as counseling, orientation, and assessment, are not considered instructional costs” (Memo 2, p. 1). The reality is that there are far more faculty than classified staff on a college campus, so understandably, there will be more spent on instruction. But it is also important to give student services funding that will

allow them to do more with more and not more with less, which is what many colleges are doing now, resulting in tremendous burnout of classified staff.

Fifteen participants indicated that student services could mitigate or eliminate any unintended impact(s) of the SCFF at California community colleges that are MSIs for first-generation college students by properly funding student services. Participant L0012 said,

I think the college can prioritize funding to student services and continued funding for student services as a way of ensuring that support for term-to-term persistence and how education planning and course planning support really contribute to the maximum number of degrees awarded and maximum transfer outcomes.

Participant C0011 said,

I know it's really challenging based on what I shared about the staffing, but there's really an expectation to be available in some way, shape, or form when students need us. So, these traditional hours make it hard for certain populations of students to be able to connect and get what they need, even if it is virtual. Just because something is virtual doesn't mean that while you're on your job at a warehouse in the middle of the day that you can easily like hop online and get your internet. So really having some hours of support that are outside of traditional hours that are predictable. Whether it's like once a month on a Saturday.

### ***Theme 5: Addressing Basic Needs***

One thing is certain when it comes to first-generation or low-income students: they have many varied needs. Students are not a monolith for which one size fits all. According to the Department of Education, about 56% of all college students are first-generation college students who come mostly from low-income families, and 54% of the overall first-generation college population are ethnic minorities (Schuyler et al., 2021). The colleges in this study had more first-generation college students in their student populations than those families with parents who had completed college.

Ten participants said impacts could be mitigated by addressing social basic needs to ease students' progress. This included housing and food insecurity, family responsibilities, and residency status. Participant C0015 said,

I also think about students who don't complete their FAFSA or California Dream Act applications. I think about students who are identified as possible nonresidents or possible residents. If we don't get them to be residents or the equivalent of a resident, then we're stuck in the water. We're not able to get that student to apply for in-state residency, and therefore they're ineligible for state and institutional aid, right? So, those are the major ones, and that's just the first step. So, I think in general, I think it would be important for us to start looking at priorities and seeing how we basically take one project at a time. Like, our district is looking at how we classify resident students and finding a way for us to identify the questionable residency cases so that they go to our in our offices and we can identify those students and help reach those students as an example.

Participant C0007 said,

I will say this because I'm reporting from the Bay Area, and I want to say the housing issue, the disparity in housing, and the way housing affects families and employment. So, students have to work many more hours to keep shelter. And if we're looking at, like, the hierarchy of needs, housing is huge, and I think a lot of community colleges need to offer some form of subsidized housing. And then I look at mental health, of course, informed trauma, depression, anxiety, and I'm looking at our student population who suffers from a lot of that, and we need more wraparound.

The participants broadly recognized that their students are facing a range of basic needs concerns and that without student services working to help resolve some of them, these students, especially first-generation students, would remain impacted in several ways that would eventually affect their ability to meet the performance metrics. Unfortunately, the majority of a college's employees are in the faculty ranks and therefore receive the bulk of the funding. The researcher observed that the majority of the student services professionals at the colleges were people of color. The interview participants highlighted this fact in that of the 18 professionals who were interviewed, 22% were White and the remainder was an ethnically diverse mix.

#### ***Theme 6: Improving Interdepartmental Communication and Accountability***

This study showed that true collaboration, in which college leaders communicate with each other and hold each other accountable in support of student success, is not happening at colleges. Even more glaring was the fact that none of the colleges expressed any communication, internally or from their district office, about the funding formula or

its impact. In student services, this lack of communication could mean that departments were duplicating services instead of working collaboratively. The unfortunate reality of working in student services is that the work is often siloed, and each department is operating with its own ideas, agendas, and budgets (Sunga, 2019). All these departments have the goal of supporting students, but they do not organize to move and work collaboratively.

Seven participants said impacts could be mitigated by trying to improve interdepartmental communication and accountability. Participant C0001 said,

First of all, we're not on the same page. That's the most important thing, that nobody knows what anybody is doing on any given day. There hasn't been some important leadership. There has not been a team approach. Again, unfortunately, we have high turnover. So, it's this constant rotation of people coming in and out, but nobody, still there's a few of us that are still here, but we haven't been able to just meet and figure things out and have a conversation. That's the biggest thing.

Participant C0002 said,

I think that all the constituencies need to really come together and take a step back and really look at the mission of the college. The mission of the departments. And really think about how are we continuing to foster a culture of systemic oppression or bias. Or are we really moving forward to be equitable with all of our students? With some of our practices? Just in general? And I'm not talking about my current position right now, just in general, doing my research for my thesis as well, which focuses on career education. Immigrants accessing career education at community colleges. There seems to be a disconnect in writing.

Everything looks good, but when it comes to really implementing some of these state mandates, a lot of times it's up to an interpretation of the person who is in charge of leading that work.

Concerning the performance metrics, without a team approach, student services' ability to move the needle on the outcomes for minority students and first-generation college students will be significantly diminished and will take longer to be impactful. The mentality of student services to work in silos is a function of the fight mentality of minorities who have to fight to protect what they have. Many student services professionals who are minorities manifest this attitude of wanting to protect what they have for fear of losing it or having it taken away from them. For many student services professionals, the reference to students as "my student" is literal. Although this ownership is to be celebrated, it brings the student into the silo of the student service office that is supporting the student, and engagement in other services is often tied to the ability of the person whom the student is working with to connect the student to other services.

### **Public Administration and Policy Implications**

The purpose of this study was to examine the new SCFF's impact on a selection of California community colleges that serve minority students from the perspective of student services professionals at these colleges by reviewing artifacts and literature on performance-based funding formulas to understand the equity implications of the formula for first-generation college students. The aim of implementing a new funding formula from the state's perspective was to hold colleges accountable for the low-outcome rates of students throughout the community college system by tying a portion of their funding

to specific performance metrics. This study focused on the perspective of student services professionals on the SCFF and the implication for first-generation college students. Moreover, this study emphasized the educational equity frame promoted by Porter (2019) as a public administration pillar. The emphasis on the equity framework for this study was intended to underscore how the SCFF was regressive in its design for MSIs, specifically about the outcomes portion of the funding formula.

This study discussed and identified the perspectives of student services professionals at minority-serving community colleges on the impact of the funding formula, especially on first-generation college students. The colleges in the study do not have a singular approach to the formula, and student services professionals do not have a shared understanding of the formula. This realization, in part, confirms Sunga's (2019) assertion that student services work in silos; it also points out that the student services professionals agree that they must break those silos to mitigate any negative impact of the funding formula on first-generation college students. The analysis also showed that the performance metrics pose a challenge for these colleges. With that in mind, the following policy and administration considerations are put forth connected to the educational equity framework:

1. Educational equity leadership is a critical part of moving colleges forward to meet the metrics (Rodriguez, 2015). The leadership crisis in higher education is felt hardest at minority-serving colleges where the constant swirl of senior leadership impacts the ability of these institutions to make any real impact on serious policy issues such as performance-based funding metrics.

2. Educational equity in response to the funding formula must be closely watched.

B. L. Wood (2007) highlighted how an institution can respond to performance-based funding in a way that impacts educational equity. Not only did the focus of his study recruit a different kind of student, but it also placed a narrow focus on student success, especially on a single group.

### **Implications for Public Administration Leadership**

The researcher's key observation in doing this study is the public administration leadership implication. As already shared, there is a tremendous leadership crisis in higher education. This crisis is more pronounced at MSIs where leaders circle in and out within a 4- to 5-year window. Many of the participants in this study shared their frustration with revolving leadership as a concern for meeting the performance metrics. This is because the level of attrition of leadership is a concern for student services professionals who are critical to policy implementation (Baker-Tate, 2010). Gasman et al. (2021) pointed out that leaders at MSIs are

focused on the unique purpose of MSIs, a desire to “give back” or “pay it forward” in terms of their experience, a passion for helping underserved students, a commitment to ensuring people of color are in leadership positions, and an interest in solidifying the future of MSIs. (p. 7)

The absence of this leadership could be devastating for California community colleges that are MSIs. Without a commitment to giving back to the community they serve or seeking the interest of underserved students, the landscape of MSIs will shift dramatically to secure funding while ensuring that MSIs have no future in the higher education landscape.



### **Recommendation for Community Colleges and Student Services**

1. Involve the entire campus in response to the funding formula. Doing so promotes a shared understanding and ownership of the overall response of the institution and allows for the promotion of professional accountability. In addition, it generates a rich dialogue on the issue and builds a communal response with guidance from leadership.
2. Hold regular learning events (at least once a semester) that are informative and engaging (not a general, long, all-day session) with the different units in student services and with faculty.
3. Share concerns with key stakeholders including the state on the impact of the funding formula; the programs, services, and initiatives that were undertaken; and the challenges that increase equity gaps of performance. The goals would be to assist stakeholders in understanding the work that is being done (or not being done) to support meeting the performance metrics.
4. Build campaigns concerning financial aid that demystify financial aid and make it an institutional undertaking rather than financial aid only to make students' interaction with financial aid transformational and not transactional. Such an action would further boost the engagement of students because they no longer will see financial aid as a barrier but as an ally in the pursuit of their goals.
5. Prioritize all of the performance data and disaggregate appropriately. Institutional research offices or a strong collaboration with a district research office are necessary so that data can be collected and readily accessed and analyzed. Also, it

is important that as this is being done, communication to the entire college is happening so that the information is not in one place.

6. Watch out for blinders while responding to the formula, whether in student services or instruction. Studies have already shown that the reaction to performance-based funding is often a decision that focuses on something specific and leaves other areas vulnerable. The idea is to rise with the occasion rather than rise to the occasion.

### **Recommendations for Future Studies**

This study was conducted at two minority-serving California community colleges in the Bay Area. Although the topic of the SCFF is not exclusive to the Bay Area or these two colleges, future studies should replicate this research. The following are recommendations for future studies:

1. Further research should be conducted in other parts of the state at minority-serving community colleges specific to the SCFF.
2. Given the outsized role that teaching faculty plays in meeting the performance metrics, future research could be conducted from the perspective of the faculty specific to the funding formula.
3. In the end, students will be impacted by all actions taken by the colleges.

Generating students' input, especially first-generation college students, about their perspective on the funding and how they are affected by the performance metrics could be an area of further study.

4. Future studies should be conducted on the performance of minority-serving community colleges on each metric, especially how first-generation college students performed.
5. Future studies should include 4-year institutions and how the metrics impacted transfer enrollment from minority serving community colleges.
6. From this study, leadership was understood to be an important part of how colleges responded to any policy. However, the leadership challenges in education, and minority-serving community colleges in particular, pose a concern on their approach to the work of meeting the performance metrics. Therefore, further studies would be necessary to connect leadership to a MSIs' response to meeting the performance metrics of the SCFF.

### **Conclusion**

The research findings from this qualitative study captured the perspectives of student services professionals at minority-serving California community colleges on the impact of the SCFF on first-generation college students. The student services professionals' understanding of and thoughts about the funding formula were recorded and analyzed. In effect, the research participants revealed that there is no shared understanding of the funding formula on their campuses and that there are factors that will impact student services as a result of the funding formula. The study also revealed that there are things student services could do to mitigate any negative impact(s) on first-generation college students. The aim is that this qualitative research offers minority-serving community colleges the opportunity to better plan for the impact of the funding formula. It is the ultimate goal that this study galvanizes student services professionals at

minority-serving community colleges to take steps to mitigate the impact of the funding formula on first-generation college students as they continue their work of promoting student access and success.

### **Recommendation to Student Services Leaders and Professionals to Mitigate the Impact**

Based on the findings and conclusion related to the impact of the funding formula and how student services can mitigate any negative impacts on first-generation college students, the following structures can be deployed in line with the themes of the major findings that connect to the research questions.

For the first theme, financial aid, minority serving California community colleges must prioritize proper marketing and eliminate the use of jargon in clarifying financial aid to students, especially first-generation college students. Simplification of terms like FAFSA, Pell, unmet need, satisfactory academic progress, probation, and so forth would be the first thing to simplify. These terms are important, but they are also daunting for first-generation college students. Observation of professionals in Financial Aid shows them explaining to students in a way that leaves students with glazed eyes and feeling frustrated and disillusioned in their prospects of continuing to attend college.

The second theme of the data is important to the work of policymaking. From personal experience, the absence of the right data can lead to much confusion and in some cases violent reactions. To resolve this, these colleges must invest in institutional researchers dedicated to collecting and clarifying the data needed to meet the metrics. The analogy of “putting your money, where you mouth is,” is the most appropriate way of saying this. Colleges know that they are going to need data to design their strategies to

meet the metrics, so without the right personnel to do this, the same problems faced now will continue to persist. For the most part, research entails someone requesting a list from IT to come up with data and information that they want to see. A proper researcher or research team will go beyond requesting a simple list and look closer at what the list should entail.

The third theme, enrollment and retention, is the most important way that the research participants shared that colleges are impacted by the funding formula. Enrollment had already been a challenge for minority-serving community colleges because of the communities served by these colleges, and the priority was not about completing a degree but about helping to provide for the family. This is when retention comes into play. The colleges already know that transfer and degree attainment are a challenge for them because their students take up to 5 years on average to complete what is supposed to be a 2-year degree. Colleges must understand their community well enough to build programs that get the students into the job market quicker and better prepared. In addition, with regard to retention, the language about how colleges describe students who are struggling with retention and end up dropping or failing the class must change. Language is a powerful thing, and often, the community served by these colleges is one that is triggered by the word used to describe students struggling through college. The population in the community served is often one that is justice impacted so the word probation carries a different meaning for it. Personally, the researcher used the word to a student who had been formerly incarcerated, and the student's response was, "Does that mean you are my P.O.?"—equating the word to his interactions with a parole officer.

The fourth theme is prioritizing student services funding. The classroom is where the majority of students will spend their time in college. However, student services is a critical partner that must be invested in. The learning that happens on a college campus is not limited to what happens in the classroom but includes what happens across the various student services units. Minority-serving community colleges must view student services as part of the educational experience of students and work to ensure that funding priorities are met for student services through whatever mechanisms they have in place for resource allocation.

The fifth theme is addressing basic needs. Fortunately, California community colleges do have funding for basic needs from the state. Although these funds are available, designing the right programs is critical. Basic needs covers a wide range of societal ills from housing to hunger to mental and physical health. Student services leaders must work to design the right program for their community. Not every college will be able to address one of the main requirements of establishing a basic needs center, and every minority-serving California community college must strive to create the space to accommodate this. In addition, a comprehensive survey must be completed to establish an understanding of the needs of students. For example, the funding calls for the establishment of a food pantry, and the general response observed so far has been to stock pantries with the basics. However, not accounting for the growing immigrant populations at these colleges means that a whole group of first-generation and non-English speakers have to settle for food that is not part of their staple foods. This pays huge dividends to these students and encourages enrollment and retention.

The sixth theme is improving interdepartmental communication and accountability. There is nothing more important to a student services leader than striving for this, and it should be the easiest thing to do for how small student services are at minority-serving community colleges in California. However, it is one of the hardest things to do. Student services programs are jostling for students and prestige, and even if proper communication and accountability were in place, every program would be hailed for its work in improving student success. If departments have a particular thing they do well, could other departments benefit from deploying that same strategy? Would sharing that Financial Aid is doing a workshop on how to complete the financial aid application benefit other departments? Absolutely! Instead, students get a communication when they do not check their college emails as often as college administrators would like to think. If student services knew what was going on, the entire student services department could collaborate to share with students as they engage with them. Similarly, if student services departments held each other accountable for student success, they would see teams align strategies better and focus on students. Student services leaders must move to allow departments to be accountable to and for each other if they are to mitigate any negative impacts to first-generation college students.

We are tied in an inescapable network of mutuality, tied in a single garment of destiny. Whatever affects one directly, affects all indirectly.

—Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., Goodreads

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## APPENDICES

## APPENDIX A

### INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD APPROVAL NOTIFICATION

**RE:** IRB Review  
**IRB No.:** 114-2122 EXP

**Project:** Impact of California Community Colleges Student Centered Funding Formula on First-Generation College Students at Minority Serving Institutions – An Exploration of the Perspectives of Student Services Professionals

**Date Complete Application Received:** 05/27/2022  
**Date Final Revision Received:** N/A

**Principle Investigator:** Mr. George G. Mills, Jr.  
**Co-PI:** N/A  
**Faculty Advisor:** Dr. Elaine Ahumada

**College/Department:** CAS

**IRB Determination:** Expedited Application **Approved** – Faculty research using anonymous survey questionnaires; no minor participants; no more than minimal risk/risk appropriately mitigated; no deception utilized; acceptable consent procedures and documentation; acceptable data protection procedures. Data collection may begin, in accordance with the final submitted documents and approved protocol.

**Future Correspondence:** All future correspondence about this project must include all PIs, Co-PIs, and Faculty Advisors (as relevant) and reference the assigned IRB number.

**Approval Information: (Expiration: Full Review Only)** Approval is granted for one year from date below. If you would like to continue research activities beyond that date, you are responsible for submitting a Research Renewal Request with enough time for that request to be reviewed and approved prior to the expiration of the project. In the case of an unforeseen risk/adverse experience, please report this to the IRB immediately using the appropriate forms. Requests for a change to protocol must be submitted for IRB review and approved prior to implementation. At the completion of the project, you are to submit a Research Closure Form.

**Researcher Responsibilities:** The researcher is responsible for ensuring that the research is conducted in the manner outlined in the IRB application and that all reporting requirements are met. Please refer to this approval and to the IRB handbook for more information.

**Date:** 06/13/2022

APPENDIX B

PARTICIPANT INFORMED CONSENT

**Study Title:** Impact of California Community Colleges Student Centered Funding Formula on First-Generation College Students at Minority Serving Institutes – An Exploration of the perspectives of student services professionals

**Researcher:** XXXXXX

**Dear Prospective Participant,**

You are invited to participate in a research study conducted by XXXXXX at California Baptist University Online and Professional Studies, Doctorate of Public Administration program. I hope to learn how First-Generation College students would be impacted by the student centered funding formula, from the perspective of student services professionals. For the purpose of this study, student services professionals are defined as employees greater than 18 years old, who work in the various offices under the student services department/division and provide institutional support to faculty, staff, and departments in support of the goal of meeting performance metrics. You were selected as a possible participant in this study because I want to focus solely on studying student services professionals working at minority serving institutions.

**What are the next steps once you choose to participate in this study?**

- Your participation will involve an in-person interview or an online interview in which you will give your honest response to 14 interview questions regarding student services professionals' perspective on the impact of the funding formula on first generation college students.
  - In-person interviews will be conducted either at a location agreed upon by the participant and the researcher or online. The researcher will travel to whatever in-person location to meet you in person!
- Your participation will take 60 minutes or less.
- Your participation is strictly voluntary.
  - It is your choice to participate in this research or choose not to.
  - If you choose to participate, you may change your mind and leave the study at any time.
  - You may skip any questions you do not want to answer. ○ Refusal to participate or leaving during the interview process will not cause any negative consequences.
- Strict procedures are in place to protect your privacy and confidentiality
- Your responses to the questions will never be linked or identified to you or your organization.
  - In the research document, responses will refer to an alphanumeric coding system.
- All interviews will be audio recorded for accuracy purposes only.

- Your recorded interview will be downloaded and saved using a password protected file. The file name will refer only to the assigned alphanumeric code and the date of the interview.
- The researcher is the only one who will have access to the cross reference between the alphanumeric codes and participant names. This information will never be made public.
- The researcher will destroy all electronic and paper documents five years after publishing the study by shredding paper documents and deleting electronic files.
- You will not be paid for participating in this research study. A token may be sent to you for your participation.

We cannot promise any benefits to you for taking part in this research. However, we believe this research will contribute to the understanding of the impact of the student-centered funding formula on first generation college students at Minority Serving Institutions.

There are no reasonably foreseeable risks, discomforts, or inconveniences as a result of participating in this research study. Although I do not anticipate any risks, if you experience discomfort, you may contact me (the researcher), or the CBU Counseling Center (951-689-1120, <https://www.calbaptist.edu/counseling-center/>).

The researcher is XXXXXX. The Chair overseeing this research is Dr. Elaine Ahumada. Please feel free to contact one or both of them if you have questions, concerns, complaints, feel harmed, or would like to talk to any member of the research team. This research has been reviewed and approved by the Institutional Review Board at California Baptist University (IRB # 114-2122). They can be reached by emailing [irb@calbaptist.edu](mailto:irb@calbaptist.edu) if your questions, concerns, or complaints are not being answered by the research team, if you cannot reach the research team, if you want to talk to someone besides the research team, or if you have questions about your rights as a research participant

### **What are the next steps once you choose to participate in this study:**

The researcher will need a signed Statement of Consent which confirms that the researcher has explained the purpose of this research and the intended outcome.

- The Participant understands that upon receiving the signed Statement of Consent, the researcher will contact me by email to establish a mutually agreeable date and time to participate in an interview.
- The Participant understands that the researcher will ask questions about their perspective as a student services professional at a Minority Serving Institution.
- The Participant acknowledges that ALL INTERVIEWS WILL BE AUDIO RECORDED and that all audio recordings will be used for research purposes and will not be used outside the research project.

- The Participants participation in this study should take about 60 minutes or less.
- The Participant understands that their responses will be confidential and that anonymity will be preserved by using an alphanumeric code in all writings that pertain to the research findings.
- The Participant acknowledges that their name and their organization's name will not be associated with any results of this study.
- The Participant may contact the researchers or [irb@calbaptist.edu](mailto:irb@calbaptist.edu) for additional questions.

By digitally signing this form, you acknowledge that you have read the informed consent, you understand the nature of the study, your interview will be audio taped and the potential risks to you as a participant, and the means by which your identity will be kept confidential. Your signature on this form also indicates that you are 18 years old or older and that you give your permission voluntarily to serve as a participant in the study described.

X\_\_\_\_\_

Please sign here if you consent to participate in the study

Please email this form back to me if you agree to participate. I will then contact you by email to set up a mutually agreeable date and time to conduct the interview.

Thank you for your consideration,

XXXXXX



APPENDIX C

INTERVIEW PROTOCOL AND SCRIPT

STUDY TITLE: Impact of California Community Colleges Student Centered Funding Formula on First-Generation College Students at Minority Serving Institutes – An Exploration of the perspectives of student services professionals

TIME OF INTERVIEW: \_\_\_\_\_ DATE: \_\_\_\_\_

GENDER: \_\_\_\_\_ HIGHEST EDUCATION LEVEL OBTAINED: \_\_\_\_\_

YEARS/MONTHS AT THE [ORGANIZATION]: \_\_\_\_\_

CURRENT POSITION: \_\_\_\_\_ HOW LONG IN CURRENT ROLE: \_\_\_\_\_

**The following provides an outline to guide the interview process for each participant to maintain consistency.**

## **I. Introduction**

### **Welcome and overview of session:**

Hello, and Thank you for participating in my research study on employee engagement. I am XXXXX., a doctoral candidate at the California Baptist University, Online and Professional Studies. I am working on a Doctor of Public Administration. You have read, acknowledged, and signed the Inform Consent letter explaining the study's intent and characteristics, as well as the authorization form to record this interview. I will ask you 14 questions regarding your perspective as a student services professional on the Student-Centered Funding Formula's impact on minority serving institutions. Today's discussion will be conducted within a 60 minutes timeframe. When we get close to the end time of the appointment, I will let you know. We will not go beyond that time unless you agree to do so.

**Background:**

Across the United States, policymakers and other stakeholders are looking for ways to hold colleges accountable for the funding they receive in comparison to their outputs. The higher demand for accountability has resulted in the states turning to performance-based funding. For student services professionals who are critical to student success, especially for first generation college students, understanding how the metrics in the new funding formula impacts their students and institutions is one that has not yet been studied.

**Purpose:**

The purpose of this study will be to look at the impact of the student centered funding formula's impact on a selection of California Community Colleges that serve minority students from the perspective of student services professionals at these colleges who are experiencing the state's new "Student Centered Funding Formula", by reviewing artifacts as well as reviewing the literature on performance-based funding formulas, and use the research to understand the equity implications of the formula for first generation college students. Student Services Professionals in this study are those who work in Admissions, Financial Aid, Counseling, Disabled Students Services, Extended Opportunity Programs and Services, Dean of Student's office, Vice President of Student Services, and other variations participating schools may have.

**Ground Rules:**

For your information, please be aware that your participation in this study is strictly voluntary, and you may withdraw from the study at any time without fear of penalty or loss of benefit to you. All responses will be kept confidential. Feel free to disclose as much about your experiences as you feel comfortable. Any reference to your responses contributing to the study will be coded and any identifiable information will be removed.

If there are any questions that you cannot answer or do not feel comfortable answering, we can skip over those questions. In addition, I may be taking notes during our

conversation and audio recording it for a transcript. There are no foreseeable risks to you from participating in this study. There are no incorrect responses; say whatever comes to mind. All notes and audio recordings will remain in my possession and no names will appear on the final report. Again, our discussion will focus on the perspective of student services professions on the impact of the new student centered funding formula on first generation college students.

Do you have any questions before we get started?

## **II. Interview Questions**

### **Participant's Background**

1. Please start by telling me your name. Probe: What is your title and/or position?
2. How long have you been in your position?
3. What is your understanding of the Student-Centered Funding Formula?

### **Role in meeting metrics**

4. What metrics in the student-centered funding formula have first generation college students been successful in meeting? Why?
5. What are some of the most difficult challenges you have faced in your position in supporting meeting the performance metrics?

### **Perceptions about student services**

6. How might student services practices/strategies align to support the metrics of the student-centered funding formula?
7. What factors do you think contribute most to student success from a student services point of view?

### **Perceptions about the student-centered funding formula**

8. What are your thoughts about the student-centered funding formula? Probe - What has the college done or is doing to prepare to meet the performance metrics?
9. The student-centered funding formula provides additional funding to campuses to support student enrollment for underrepresented students. Research indicates that underrepresented students require high touch student support services to be successful. What is student services currently doing to support underrepresented

students, whereas high touch student support services refer to very personalized, individual support services?

10. Are there any performance metrics for which your office is responsible for producing or significantly impacts? –Probe – please identify the performance metric and a description of the role of your office in meeting the metric outcome.
11. What do you think the college can do to ensure that it receives the maximum funding under the student-centered funding formula?
12. What could student services do to mitigate any negative impact on first generation college students as a result of the student centered funding formula?

#### **Post Interview comments and observation**

13. What advice or recommendation would you provide to manage student services in support of meeting the student-centered funding metrics?
14. Thank you for taking the time out of your schedule to meet with me. This concludes the questions I have for you. Is there anything else you would like to share about your perspective as a student services professional that you think would be relevant to this study?

### **III. Debriefing**

Thank you for your participation. The information and responses you shared with me today will remain confidential. I will not use your name, your organization name or any other identifying information in the dissertation.