

Integrating Equity-Focused Metrics into Planning and Budgeting Processes at Central Lakes College

A Strategic and Collaborative Approach Towards Educational Equity

Central Lakes College (CLC), a prominent public community college in Minnesota with campuses in Brainerd and Staples, stands as a beacon of educational opportunity in the region. As a part of the Minnesota State Colleges and Universities System, CLC is committed to fostering an environment of inclusivity and equity. To align with the statewide initiative, Minnesota State Equity 2030, CLC has embarked on a transformative journey to close educational equity gaps across various dimensions by the end of the decade.

Integrating Equity into Planning and Budgeting

To meet the objectives of Minnesota State Equity 2030, CLC has integrated progression metrics and equity-focused questions into its planning and budgeting processes. The college incorporated select questions from the Budget Equity Blueprint, leveraging the Prioritization Rubric to guide funding allocation decisions. This approach ensured that budget requests from various departments were aligned with the college's equity goals.

Furthermore, CLC fostered a culture of collective responsibility by engaging all employees in discussions about student learning outcomes, assessment, work plans, and strategic priorities prior to the annual budget request submission. This proactive approach allowed for intentional conversations about the college's goals, linking them directly to resource allocation through the budget process. Moreover, CLC initiated discussions about potential barriers to student success, paving the way for policy and procedural changes to better support student learning and guided pathways.

Improvement Project

Assessing Impact and Expanding Awareness of Student Outcomes to Support Resource Allocation Decision-Making

Toolkit Used

Budget Equity Blueprint

Results

- By integrating the toolkit into the budget process, CLC ensured that funding allocations were aligned with the college's equity goals. This strategic approach enabled CLC to prioritize initiatives and programs that directly contribute to closing educational equity gaps.
- CLC's proactive engagement of employees fostered a culture of collective responsibility and collaboration.
- By incorporating assessment practices into planning and budgeting processes, CLC enhanced its ability to identify and address institutional practices that may impact student outcomes.



“This work is important so that we can better support our guided pathways and transfer priorities, equity work, and strategic goals for the college. We need to ensure that we have the financial means and resource allocation process to support the ideas that will move the dial on equity and equitable student outcomes. We cannot allow the barrier of having financial challenges to impede our ability to support these goals.”

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Kari Christiansen,

Vice President of Administration Services

Emphasizing Measurable Goals and Metrics

CLC took a comprehensive approach to review student learning assessment, co-curricular assessment, the college’s strategic plan, and work plans early in the budget process. By incorporating measurable goals and metrics with an emphasis on equitable student outcomes, CLC aimed to identify and address institutional practices that may contribute to disparities in student outcomes.

The college revamped its planning cycle by including non-academic departments, such as co-curricular and other units, in its fall in-service day activities. This dedicated day focused on assessment planning, course scheduling, and budget development, ensuring that all departments were aligned with CLC’s equity-driven goals. Additionally, CLC updated its planning guidelines and forms to facilitate direct and meaningful conversations necessary for submitting assessment, work plan, and budget proposals.

Sustaining Momentum

Central Lakes College’s strategic approach to educational equity serves as a model for institutions aiming to close educational gaps and foster inclusivity. By integrating equity-focused metrics into planning and budgeting processes, engaging all stakeholders in collaborative discussions, and emphasizing measurable goals and metrics, CLC has demonstrated its commitment to creating a more equitable educational environment. Through these concerted efforts, CLC continues to make significant strides towards achieving the ambitious objectives set forth by Minnesota State Equity 2030.