Strategies to Advance Equity

Survey Results from the ACE-UP Community of Practice

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Given persistent gaps in academic and employment outcomes for students of color and other underserved groups, many community colleges are grappling with how to advance initiatives that more effectively serve their historically marginalized learners. These equity gaps include lower degree completion, reduced job opportunities, and lower earnings, especially for Black and Latine students, and can be attributed to structural barriers, including poverty and lack of access to high-quality secondary education (Anderson et al. 2021). Importantly, employment and earnings disparities in the labor market are observed for graduates from underrepresented groups even when they have the same levels of education as other students (Biu et al. 2023). This brief describes efforts by community colleges to address disparities for historically marginalized students and improve outcomes for students overall. Data sources include college staff responses to two surveys administered to the ACE-UP community of practice. The surveys were designed to understand college goals and strategies for advancing equity, partner involvement, employer engagement, data and metrics, and factors helping or hindering progress toward equity goals (see box 1).

Documenting Lessons Learned from the ACE-UP Community of Practice

In January 2023, Corporation for a Skilled Workforce launched the Advancing Community Equity and Upward Mobility (ACE-UP) community of practice, which convenes 15[a] community colleges across the country to strengthen their capacity to address equity gaps. We use "equity" in this brief to describe fair treatment and intentional strategies that eliminate disparities for historically marginalized and underserved students and ideally result in equal academic and career outcomes for all students. Another goal of ACE-UP is to meet the skill development needs of workers to access in-demand jobs and career pathways, as well as employers' needs for a skilled workforce.

[a] The number of ACE-UP participating institutions is current as of fall 2024.

Key Takeaways

- Colleges participated in ACE-UP to further institutional goals, improve employer engagement, bolster student success efforts, and support data-driven decisionmaking. Although the initiative focused on strategies to advance equity in partnership with employers, colleges reported taking a broad approach involving multiple goals in addition to employer engagement.

- The strategies colleges implemented largely aligned with their articulated goals for advancing equity with a major focus on leveraging institutional leadership support and enhancing student support services. Employer partnership strategies were less commonly reported by colleges, potentially pointing to challenges colleges face when engaging with employers.

- Colleges relied on internal offices at their institutions, especially offices of Academic Affairs and Student Supports, to align with goals around student success metrics. They also relied on external partnerships with workforce development and community-based organizations to further equity goals, for example, by supporting students' access to employers or enhancing student supports.

- Colleges focused on a range of industries, including health care and social assistance, manufacturing, and educational services, to address issues of access for underserved students, as well as retention in jobs. Colleges reported employers acting as champions for equity goals, sharing or reviewing data with colleges to inform data-driven decisionmaking, and contributing staff time to support institutional equity efforts.

- Colleges implemented data practices aligned with their equity goals, including regular analysis of student success outcomes, disaggregating data by race, ethnicity and gender, and making data available to a range of staff across the institution. Workforce data were less commonly collected and analyzed, echoing other studies showing barriers to tracking employment outcomes. At least two colleges reported establishing metrics related to their equity goals as part of ACE-UP.

- Colleges reported refinement or evolution of equity goals throughout their participation in ACE-UP. Challenges to realizing equity goals included staff turnover, shifting institutional policies, and financial barriers for students.

- ACE-UP was credited with supporting colleges' equity goals by facilitating conversations around equity, uplifting best practices in the field, and helping colleges figure out how to prioritize equity in employer relationships and industry partnerships, especially at the institutional level.

Lessons from this brief can inform staff and leaders from other colleges implementing strategies to improve academic and employment outcomes for historically marginalized students. Institutions who are grappling with the current legal and policy context around implementing equity-focused initiatives can benefit from the experience of peer institutions. This brief is part of Urban's broader effort to document lessons learned from ACE-UP, which includes five special topics briefs published by the Urban Institute in fall 2024 (Spaulding et al. 2024).[1]

Data Sources and Limitations

The data in this brief come primarily from two surveys administered to colleges participating in ACE-UP. A pre-survey was fielded to ACE-UP colleges in summer 2023, designed to understand colleges' goals at the start of the ACE-UP initiative, and a midpoint survey was fielded in summer 2024, to understand lessons learned and changes over time. We use "college" as the unit of analysis because college teams collaborated to prepare one response to each survey.

Information about colleges' goals for advancing equity within their institutions and programs comes from the pre-survey. The pre-survey had a 60 percent response rate (9 colleges responded among 15 surveyed). The remaining findings in this brief come from the midpoint survey unless otherwise indicated. The midpoint survey had a 91 percent response rate (10 colleges responded among 11 surveyed) and captures more recent data. A final survey in spring 2025 will collect information from ACE-UP colleges on lessons learned over the course of their experience in the community of practice.

There are currently 15 institutions participating in ACE-UP as of fall 2024.[2] A few institutions dropped out of the community of practice between the pre-survey (fielded to 15 colleges) and midpoint survey (fielded to 11 colleges), and 4 new institutions joined ACE-UP as a second cohort in summer 2024. Survey responses from the second cohort of colleges are not included in this brief and will be included in the final report in 2025.

Due to the changes in the cohort over time and small sample, the results are not generalizable and provide a snapshot in time from the perspective of the staff members completing the survey. Despite these limitations, the survey results that follow provide quantitative and qualitative insights from colleges participating in ACE-UP that add to our understanding of colleges' efforts to advance equity at their institutions. These insights supplement the findings in briefs published earlier this year focused on four colleges' efforts to implement data and metrics, employer engagement and partnerships,

supportive and career services, and institutional leadership and structures that support equity (Spaulding et al. 2024).

Survey Results

The purpose of the surveys fielded to colleges in the ACE-UP community of practice was to provide an independent assessment to understand more about their team's goals for advancing equity, metrics for setting goals and measuring progress, data sources currently available for tracking metrics of interest, and reflections on key partnerships and other factors that may help or hinder progress toward equity goals. In this section, we discuss findings across the two surveys by topic, noting the survey source for each topic.

College Goals for Advancing Equity

In the pre-survey administered in summer 2023, colleges were asked to describe their goals for participating in ACE-UP and provide information on the problems or issues that motivated their work to advance equity for underserved students. In this section of the brief, we discuss their goals and motivations.

ADVANCING INSTITUTIONAL GOALS THROUGH ACE-UP

Colleges were asked about their team's specific goals for advancing equity within their institutions as part of ACE-UP. In open responses, respondents indicated a range of institutional equity goals as shown in box 2. Almost all the colleges responding to the pre-survey (7 of 9) indicated multiple goals.

BOX 2

College Equity Goals

Colleges shared information in the pre-survey about their goals for participating in ACE-UP. Colleges sought to accomplish the following:

- Leverage ACE-UP to support broader institutional equity goals
- Improve employer engagement and partnership
- Increase access, retention, and completion for underrepresented students
- Improve student supports and career readiness services
- Increase data-driven decision making
- Expand and improve work-based learning
- Recruit and retain diverse staff

Four colleges responding to the pre-survey saw ACE-UP as a way to **support broader institutional goals**. As part of this, colleges reported infusing equity across their institutions as a priority. One college wanted to create a culture and climate where "faculty and staff happily incorporate the strategies due to positive outcomes [from the work] and minimal stress to implement." They linked this goal to sustaining equity efforts at their college. Another described the desire to "increase awareness across the campus community to the disparities experienced by students."

Four colleges mentioned the opportunity to **improve employer engagement and partnerships** as a strategy for advancing equity. Colleges wanted to "understand best practices" for working with industry partners, including "learning the language, resources, and data" to craft strategies for working with employer partners, supporting employers in hiring underrepresented populations, and finding ways to get employers to "pay for the cost of education for lower income students."

Three colleges reported goals related to **expanding access and improving education outcomes** for underrepresented populations, including providing "more equitable access for all to all of our programming and services." Colleges with this goal reported focusing on specific populations of students. At one college, the focus was to increase "low-income minority enrollment in programs that lead to middle-to-high wage careers" in the region, and to "increase retention, persistence, completion and employment of low-income minority students." Another college planned to focus on veterans, individuals with disabilities, out-of-school youth, and those who were previously incarcerated. The third focused more generally on increasing recruitment and retention of more diverse students. To improve outcomes for these populations of focus, colleges set goals related to specific programmatic activities, such as expanding work-based learning, improving student supports, or building career readiness skills.

Three colleges stated goals related to **increasing data-driven decisionmaking**. As one respondent put it, "we would like to be more data-driven when addressing equity." Another college that was focused on supporting international students sought better ways of "tracking and communicating [about] the international student population." Better use of data can be viewed as an implicit goal at one college that sought to raise awareness of disparities experienced by students across the campus community.

EQUITY GAPS FOR UNDERSERVED STUDENTS

Colleges came to ACE-UP concerned about specific equity gaps that motivated their participation and guided their equity goals. Box 3 describes college responses to a question in the pre-survey about the disparities they hoped to address. Motivating factors included the **underrepresentation of particular populations** in postsecondary programs or in a job sector, **the racial wealth gap**, and the desire to **promote access through work-based learning**.

Equity Gaps that Motivated Participation in ACE-UP

Colleges responding to the pre-survey described numerous equity gaps that motivated them to participate in ACE-UP. These included the following:

- Limited access to postsecondary credentials or programs for low-income individuals and students of color

- Underrepresentation among students of color in the trades

- The wealth gap between Black and white households in the college's local area

- A lack of paid experiential learning experiences for underserved students who need to gain industry experience before completing an academic degree

Multiple colleges also described a strong motivation to join ACE-UP to share and transfer knowledge of equity-centered best practices among colleges participating in the community of practice.

Strategies for Advancing Equity

Colleges reported using a variety of strategies to make progress toward equity goals. In this section, we report on findings from the midpoint survey. The survey asked colleges to indicate which strategies their team has utilized to make progress toward their articulated equity goals. Colleges were asked to select all strategies that applied to their efforts.

Related to colleges' institutional-level equity goals described above, a key strategy reported on the midpoint survey was **leveraging institutional or college leadership support.** Another of the most commonly reported strategies was **making improvements or enhancements to student support services,** aligning with goals of increasing access, retention, and completion for underrepresented students and improving student supports and career readiness services. Figure 1 provides the number of college responses for each strategy we asked about in the survey. Only four colleges selected **changing employer practices,** such as recruitment practices or changing industry entry requirements, as a strategy they had used to advance their equity goals.

FIGURE 1
Strategies Used to Make Progress Toward Articulated Equity Goals
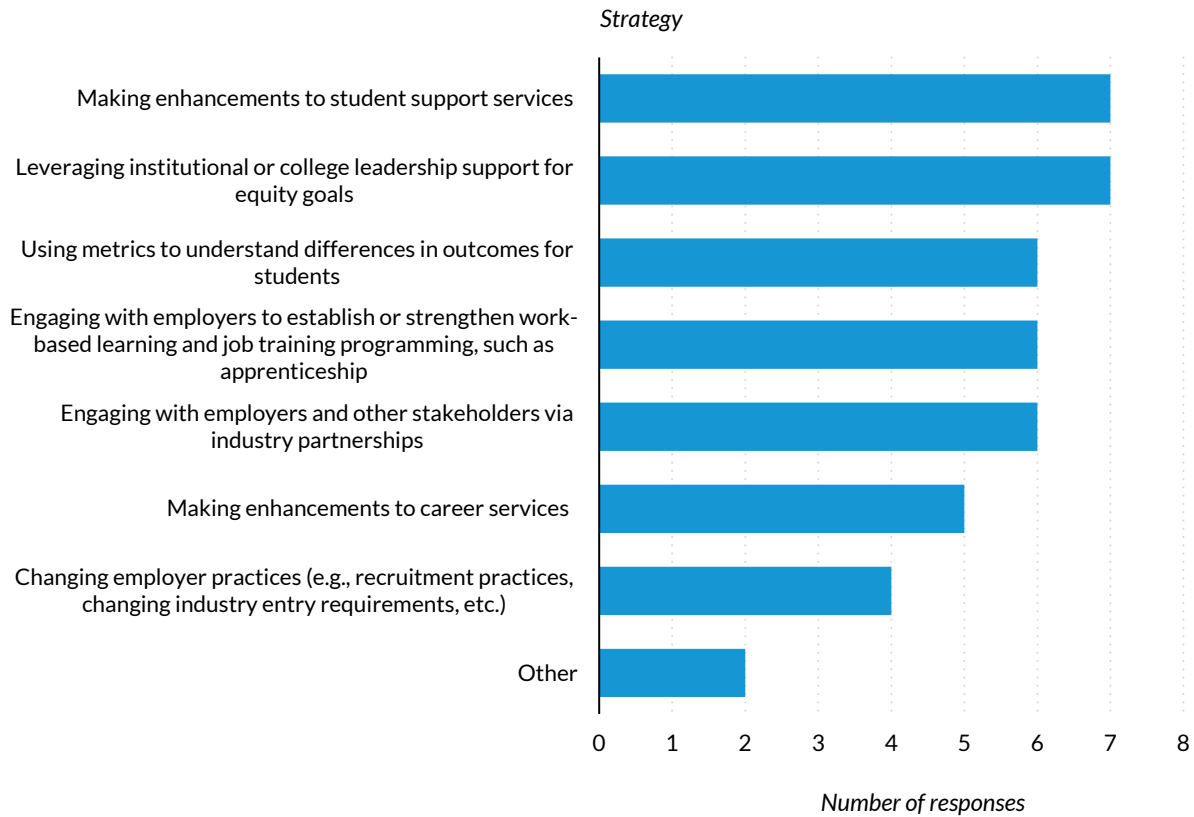
Strategy

Number of responses

Source: Midpoint survey of ACE-UP colleges.
Note: Colleges could select more than one response. One college included two responses in the "other" category. N = 10.

IMPORTANCE OF INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL PARTNERS

College partnerships, especially with internal offices like those focused on support services or career services, can help institutions better serve their students and make more informed decisions. Additionally, external partnerships with community-based organizations or workforce development organizations can help to enhance services for students. Employer partners are discussed in further detail in the next section.

The colleges were asked in the midpoint survey about the different types of external partners and internal offices at their institution they engage with to achieve equity goals. Because colleges are likely to work with many different types of internal and external partners, colleges were asked to select all that apply. Figure 2 shows the number of responses received for each type of partner.

Internal and External Partners in Advancing Equity Efforts

Internal offices	External partners
• Academic affairs (9) • Student supports (9) • President's/executive office (7) • Other college program leadership offices (6) • Diversity, equity, and inclusion offices (4)	• Workforce development agencies (7) • Community-based organizations (7) • Education and training nonprofit organizations (6) • K-12 partners (5) • Other college partners (5) • Philanthropies/foundations (3)

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Source: Midpoint survey of ACE-UP colleges
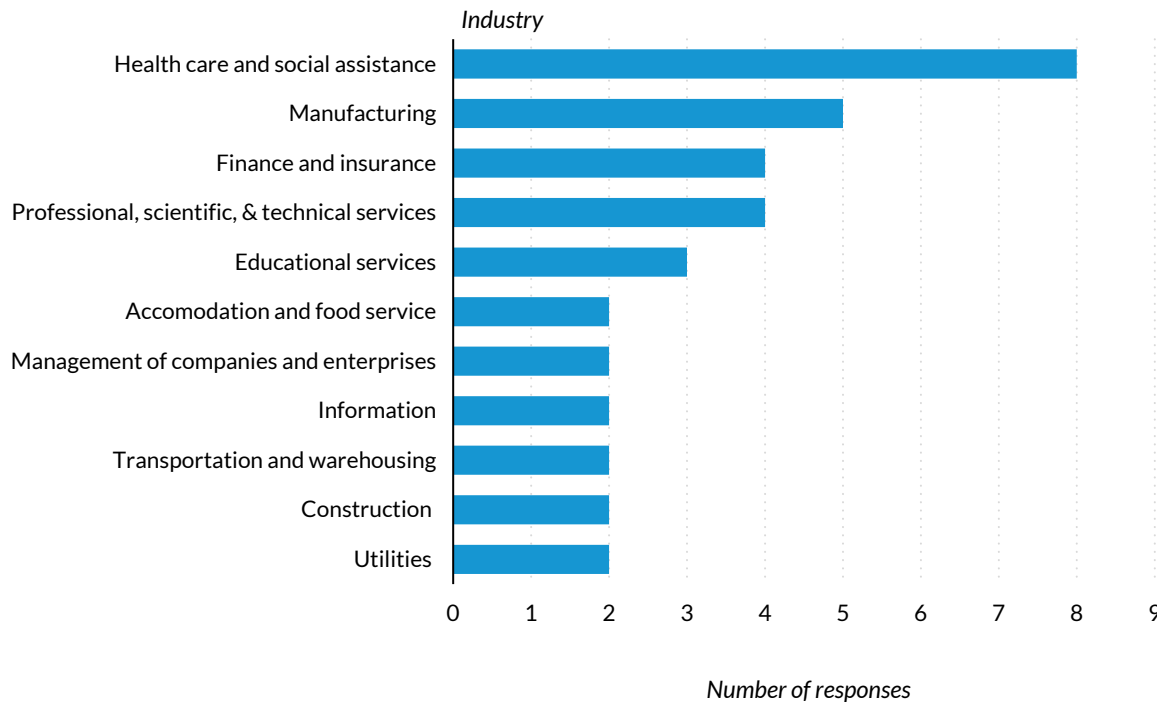**Note:** Colleges could select more than one response. N = 10.

The most common internal partners reported were **offices of academic affairs and student supports**, aligning with colleges' focus on institutional change to support student success. Among external partners, **workforce development agencies** were reported as likely to support goals around employer partnership and career pathways. **Community-based organizations** were also commonly reported as partners, potentially to assist with student support strategies and recruitment.

WORKING ACROSS INDUSTRIES TO ADDRESS EQUITY GAPS

Employer partnerships are critical for ensuring students are learning the right skills, can access jobs, and will thrive in their positions once hired. Colleges responding to the midpoint survey reported focusing on a variety of industries to advance equity and upward mobility as part of their participation in ACE-UP. Only one out of 10 colleges reported no specific industry focus. Colleges were asked to select all that apply from a list of 20 potential industries. Figure 3 shows the industries for which there was at least one response provided. The most commonly reported industries included **health care and social assistance; manufacturing; finance and insurance;** and **professional, scientific, and technical services** (see figure 3).

FIGURE 3
Industries of Focus Among Colleges Responding to Midpoint Survey

Industry

- Health care and social assistance
- Manufacturing
- Finance and insurance
- Professional, scientific, & technical services
- Educational services
- Accomodation and food service
- Management of companies and enterprises
- Information
- Transportation and warehousing
- Construction
- Utilities

Number of responses

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Source: Midpoint survey of ACE-UP colleges.
Notes: Colleges could select more than one response. N = 10.

Within their identified industries, colleges were asked to describe specific equity gaps they had observed for students and graduates within the industries identified. Some common themes included **low completion and retention rates** in programs preparing students to enter specific industries, the **need to better engage employers and support employer practice change**, and **students' lack of access to resources** that would help them access opportunities within targeted industries. One college mentioned the need for diversity, equity, and inclusion training for employers to "ensure they are accommodating students." They also sought to expand employer partnerships through engagement with alumni.

EMPLOYERS AS CHAMPIONS OF EQUITY EFFORTS

Colleges worked with industries to advance their equity goals in a variety of ways. Only 6 out of 10 colleges on the midpoint survey responded that they are working closely with employer partners or industry partnerships as part of the ACE-UP project. Among the colleges that described working with employer/industry partners, their responses provide some insight into how colleges are working with employers to implement strategies related to their goals. The most common response was "**being a champion for equity goals and initiatives**" (e.g., sharing equity efforts with other employers, serving as

an example employer for other stakeholders, etc.) selected by four of the six responding colleges. The second most commonly selected choices were "**sharing or reviewing data with college to inform data-driven decisionmaking,**" and "**contributing employee or staff time to support institutional equity goals,**" selected by two colleges each. One college selected 'adapting policies or procedures' (e.g., for advisory boards, hiring college graduates, etc.).

Data and Metrics

The surveys also asked college staff what data elements their institutions had access to, whether the colleges had established metrics as part of their participation in the ACE-UP community of practice, and if relevant, what those metrics were and the data used to track the metrics. In this section, we draw on findings from both the pre- and midpoint surveys.

REGULARLY ANALYZING STUDENT SUCCESS OUTCOME DATA

When asked about the data elements colleges had access to at the time of each survey, the top five selections in the midpoint survey were **enrollment, retention, completion, credential attainment, and data on receipt of supportive services.** Figure 4 below shows how colleges responded to a question about how often they track and analyze the data. For all five types of data, **most colleges track and analyze data every semester or more.** Notably, data related to **post-college outcomes were reported as being less commonly accessible**. These included program or institution transfers (which 4 out of 10 colleges reported having access to), whether graduates obtained jobs (4 colleges), whether graduates obtained jobs in their targeted occupations (3 colleges), and hours worked while in school (1 college).

FIGURE 4

Frequency of Data Tracking and Analysis for Five Most Common Data Elements Reported by Colleges
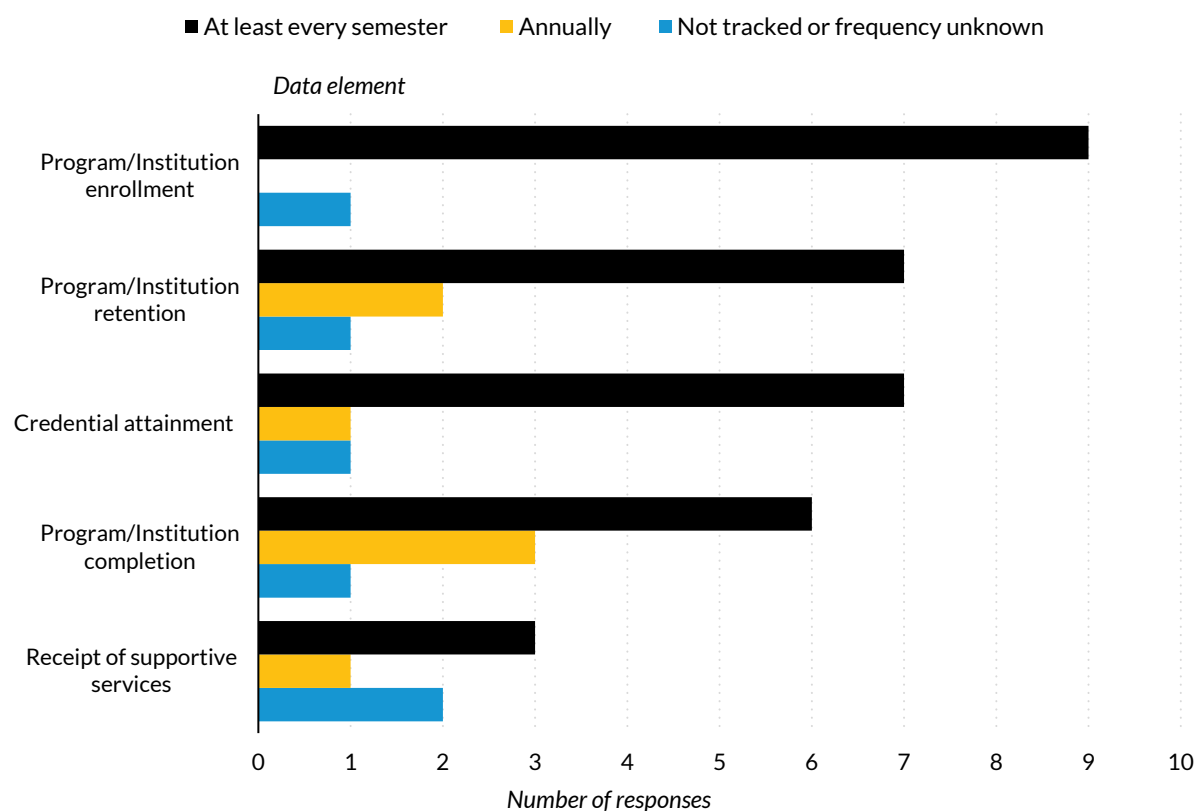
■ At least every semester   ■ Annually   ■ Not tracked or frequency unknown

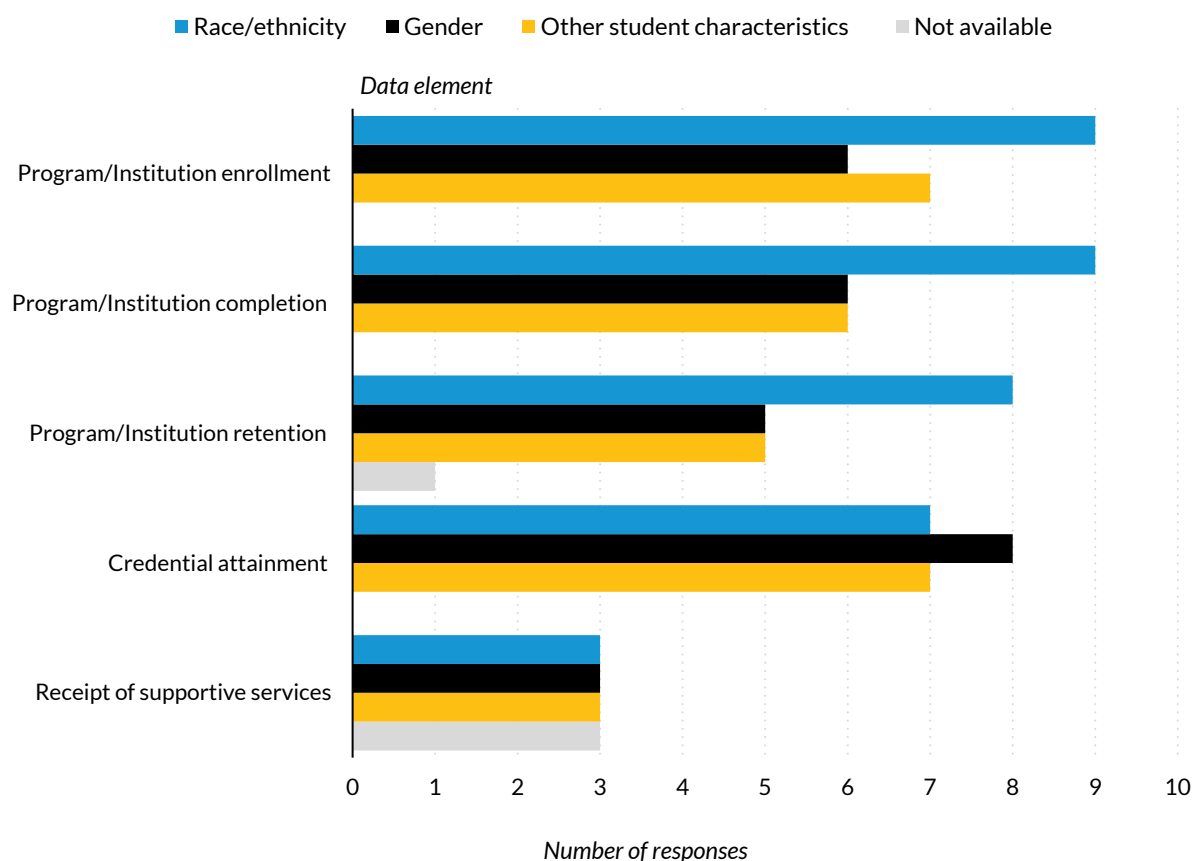*Source*: Midpoint survey of ACE-UP Colleges.
Notes: Program/Institution Enrollment N = 10, Program/Institution Retention N = 10, Credential Attainment N = 9, Program/Institution Completion N = 10, Receipt of Supportive Services N = 6.

DISAGGREGATING DATA BY RACE/ETHNICITY AND GENDER

In the midpoint survey, colleges that reported tracking the five types of data in figure 4 also noted they disaggregate the data by various student characteristics including race, ethnicity, or other characteristics (as shown in figure 5). **Race/ethnicity is the most frequent type of disaggregated data**, except for credential attainment, where respondents indicated they are most likely to disaggregate data by gender.

FIGURE 5
Number of Colleges Reporting Different Parameters for Data Disaggregation by Data Element

Source: Midpoint survey of ACE-UP colleges.
Notes: Program/Institution Enrollment N = 10, Program/Institution Completion N = 10, Program/Institution Retention N = 10, Credential Attainment N = 9, Receipt of Supportive Services N = 6. Colleges could select more than one response.

MAKING DATA AVAILABLE TO A RANGE OF INSTITUTION STAFF

An important component of data-informed decisionmaking involves who has access to and can use available data. Responses from the midpoint survey indicated data are shared internally in various ways—either **shared with some faculty for specific programs** (5 colleges) or **shared widely with the college community** (4 colleges). Three colleges indicated that **executive or leadership staff have exclusive access to data,** and two reported sharing data externally. Who had access to which data varied across the colleges surveyed. One ACE-UP college staff member shared, "College-wide enrollment, retention, and completion data, disaggregated, is available to all faculty and staff through SAS analytics and SAS visualization (dashboards). Course level data is available to individual faculty members and their dean and the academic VP. Other data is available to administrators."

Course-level data can be especially useful for faculty working to support improved outcomes for learners. One college described sharing short-term training data with community-based organization partners, which can be helpful for collaborative efforts to support learners.

ESTABLISHING METRICS AND COLLECTING DATA RELATED TO EQUITY GOALS

Both surveys inquired whether colleges had established metrics related to their equity goals as part of their participation in the ACE-UP project. We examined changes in responses to that question from the pre-survey to the midpoint survey for the colleges as a group. Eight of the nine colleges in the pre-survey noted they had not established metrics related to their equity goals as part of their participation in the ACE-UP project, but all eight who did not have established metrics also expressed interest in establishing them. In the midpoint survey, **5 of the 10 colleges who completed the survey said they did not have established metrics** and 3 of those 5 colleges expressed an **interest in developing equity-related metrics**. Looking across the surveys, two of the colleges who said they did not have metrics related to their equity goals in the pre-survey noted they had established metrics in the midpoint survey.

BARRIERS TO DATA COLLECTION FOR TRACKING DESIRED EQUITY METRICS

When asked in an open response question about what data is still needed for tracking desired metrics, four of eight total responses from the pre-survey had themes of systematic data collection barriers. Examples included **lack of consistency in data tracked across years**, a **need for more detailed/disaggregated data**, **lack of monitoring/awareness of existing data**, and a **need for standardization in collecting workforce data**. Additionally, a **lack of access to workforce-related data** was noted across open responses to questions about data and metrics in the pre- and midpoint surveys. As one college shared in the midpoint survey, "We have institutional data, but lack more specific workforce outcome and wage data—it's a topic we are very interested in and [are] exploring ideas to better capture it."

When survey respondents were asked to describe how metrics would allow the colleges to measure success in achieving their equity goals, three separate colleges across the pre-survey and midpoint survey wrote about how **better metrics would allow them to improve support for students to achieve equity goals.** Those responses included identification of students in need of extra support (thereby improving retention), and allowing the program to be better informed of the needs of the students through enrollment, program scheduling and academic supports, completion, and entry into the workforce. In response to a prior question on data sharing, a college noted how data helped them "identify if we need to make our programs more robust, if programs need to [sunset] because they aren't allowing us to meet our outcomes or targets, [and] how to better connect with employers for them to hire our students."

This data will paint a more detailed picture of our student body, giving us information about their needs going into programs and how we can support them while they are enrolled, when they complete, and as they make their way into the workforce.
—ACE-UP college staff member

One college described that they hoped to use metrics and data to "pinpoint potential students of concern earlier on, [so that] we can help by providing students with support earlier in the process to ensure retention." Another college discussed the importance of tracking metrics to "begin telling the story of work experiences" of international students by communicating their "desire to remain within the region to support the local economy."

Evolution of Equity Goals and Role of ACE-UP

On the midpoint survey, colleges shared examples of how their equity goals have evolved or changed since the start of their participation in ACE-UP. **Seven colleges shared that their equity goals have changed since they joined ACE-UP**, and five reported that their equity goals have changed as a result of their participation in ACE-UP.

Colleges also shared reflections of their progress in closing the equity gaps that motivated them to join ACE-UP. Reflecting on progress made in closing equity gaps in the midpoint survey, one college described that **support from leadership helped "narrow [their] focus and build upon attainable goals**."[3] Another college shared **being more reflective in understanding gaps** and intentional with outreach, while acknowledging that this work is a "continuous improvement issue." They described pursuing grant funding to improve access for rural communities and being "eager to make greater progress" in the last year of ACE-UP. Colleges also shared examples of **using data to develop strategies to address equity gaps**, such as **working with institutional research departments** to collect and analyze enrollment, retention, and completion data, and identifying equity gaps within certain programs.

BARRIERS TO AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR FURTHER PROGRESS TOWARD EQUITY GOALS

In open responses, some of the factors colleges indicated that hindered their progress towards their goals included staff turnover, shifting institutional policies, and financial barriers for students.

There is [a] lack of time for the team to focus enough on this work. The team members have big responsibilities within the organization. Changes in leadership (new president, new provost) have slowed down some of this work.
—ACE-UP college staff member

Colleges view the ACE-UP community of practice as providing critical support, including **helping to facilitate conversations around equity**, **uplifting best practices in the field**, and helping colleges figure out **how to prioritize equity in relationships with employers and industry partnerships**, especially at the institutional level. At the time of the midpoint survey in summer 2024, they noted additional supports and resources that would further assist them in this work. These included additional opportunities to learn from the other colleges and employers doing this work, supports to help establish and track progress toward equity goals, and additional information on funding opportunities. It is important to note some changes may already be reflected in ACE-UP delivery given the time between survey administration and publication of this brief.

The ongoing connection with this network and the conversations facilitated by the coaches has provided invaluable information.
—ACE-UP college staff member

Discussion and Conclusion

The purpose of brief has been to document how a group of community colleges participating in the ACE-UP community of practice are undertaking efforts to address disparities in outcomes for underserved and underrepresented students. To achieve goals for closing equity gaps, they are implementing a range of strategies, leveraging internal and external partners (including employers), and using data and metrics to inform their work. Key insights from our analysis of their survey responses include the following:

1. **Defining equity goals and metrics**. Colleges reported equity goals that touch on multiple areas (e.g., student success, employer engagement, etc.) and sought ways to establish metrics that could be tracked to understand progress toward those goals. While regular data collection and data disaggregation were common, colleges faced challenges accessing employer data. The finding that there is a lack of information available to some colleges on post-graduation

outcomes is echoed in our brief on data and metrics published as part of this project and has been a challenge for some colleges for decades, with necessary data access varying by state (Petrov and Sirois 2024). There is a need for federal and state governments and philanthropy to continue to support efforts to expand and improve access to data for tracking equity metrics. Improvements include better information to understand whether students are being placed in jobs related to their training and whether jobs are of high quality. Within institutions, staff at all levels could benefit from access to employment data. Our brief on career services at the ACE-UP colleges revealed career services staff wanted to understand whether provided career services are improving outcomes for students of color (Briggs and Petrov 2024). Institutions can advocate for improvements at the state level and support data access for staff to answer key questions related to equity.

2. **Supporting student success**. Ultimately, equity initiatives are about working to address barriers that impede positive outcomes for students and meeting student needs so that all students have the opportunity to thrive. ACE-UP colleges are focused on closing gaps in outcomes for students who are underserved or face challenges in realizing their education goals. In collaboration with internal and external partners, colleges are working to provide students with supportive services and connections to employers. The importance of these partnerships is echoed in our brief on how ACE-UP colleges are using supportive services to advance college equity goals (Petrov and D'Elia 2024). Regularly analyzing data to understand student progress helped colleges gauge whether they were meeting student needs and making progress toward equity goals, as well as if midcourse corrections were needed. Other research has pointed to a need to better connect data on receipt of supports to demographic, persistence, and outcomes data to increase understanding of what supports are most important. Opportunities to improve student supports lie in finding ways to leverage technology to provide supports at scale and improve career advising, an important but often underlooked supportive service.

3. **Building employer partnerships**. Engaging employers in efforts to advance equity is a focus of ACE-UP, and colleges came to the initiative with goals related to improving employer engagement and partnership. Colleges reported working with employers across a range of industries to realize equity goals. Common strategies included collaborating with employers to establish or improve work-based learning or industry-specific training as part of industry partnerships, where groups of employers come together to solve regional talent needs. Our brief on employer engagement and partnership provides specific examples of work-based learning initiatives across ACE-UP colleges interviewed (Spaulding and Sirois 2024). In the survey, colleges noted a need to better engage employers, a common challenge in community college and workforce programs. They also wanted to find ways to support employer practice change. Our research has highlighted the importance of data in identifying equity gaps, such as high turnover for workers of color or female workers (Payne et al. 2023; Spaulding and Sirois 2024). Identifying shared values and goals between institutions and industry can help create opportunities for collaboration. Building strong relationships with employers over time can also

create conditions for changing employer practices to create more inclusive and equitable workplaces.

Colleges reported driving progress toward their equity goals through the support they received from the ACE-UP community of practice. A final report in 2025 will further document their efforts and provide additional insights on strategies to ensure all students can benefit from the opportunities that a community college education provides.

Notes

[1] The Urban Institute's documentation of lessons from ACE-UP contributes to a broader set of resources about the initiative, developed to support practitioners, policymakers, and funders. These resources include products developed by Corporation for a Skilled Workforce, including "The ACE-UP College and Employer Partnership Action Guide" (Poole, Dickerson, and Render 2024) and "Strategically Messaging Equity as a Postsecondary and Workforce Imperative" (Poole 2024).

[2] Other briefs in this series state 14 colleges participated in ACE-UP. Since publishing those briefs, the Urban team was notified there are 15 colleges participating in the community of practice.

[3] For more information about how ACE-UP colleges are leveraging institutional leadership to advance their equity goals, see our earlier brief, "Institutional Leadership and Structures that Support Equity: Findings from Four Institutions in the ACE-UP Community of Practice" (Petrov et al. 2024).

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