



Stories from the Field

CLP | Career Ladders Project

# Berkeley City College

## Redesigning Practices Based on Equity and Justice

### Equitable Counseling Approach

When Berkeley City College (BCC) counselors Dri Regalado and Skyler Barton set out to ramp up equitable counseling practices for dual enrollment, they worked to change the hearts and minds of faculty and staff about high school students' abilities. Their goal was to break through deficit mindsets and get to where people are "seeing and celebrating the students for how brilliant and capable they are," Dri said. Leveraging opportunities to share equitable dual enrollment practices, the BCC

sense of belonging at BCC and their confidence in their ability to succeed in college.

The effort to expand, uplift, and enhance dual enrollment at BCC was done with an intentional focus on expansion in service of equity and justice. Dri Regalado, a Puente counselor, and Skyler Barton, an Umoja counselor, worked to strengthen relationships with colleagues at local high schools and with community partners working to better serve BIPOC, first-generation, undocumented, and traditionally underserved students. Their focus was building a community for and with the students by establishing a well-connected network of care to ensure students have what they need to succeed. This network collaborates regularly in-person and by phone, text, and email to ensure students are supported. "Trust and rapport with our partners and the students is key to the success of dual enrollment students at BCC," Skyler shared. As of fall 2024, 20% of BCC students are dual enrollment students,



*"Seeing and celebrating the students for how brilliant and capable they are."*

—Dri Regalado, Puente Counselor, Berkeley City College

dual enrollment counseling team strove to shift college constituents to see dual enrollment as a lever for equity and justice for first-generation, Black, Indigenous, people of color (BIPOC) in local high schools. This effort grew from BCC's participation in a community of practice connected to Dual Enrollment for Equitable Completion (DE4EC), a philanthropically-funded statewide initiative. The BCC dual enrollment counseling team led the culture shift by uplifting student voices sharing the positive impact of dual enrollment on their

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—Skyler Barton, Umoja Counselor, Berkeley City College



and the majority are BIPOC students. Retention and completion rates for BCC dual enrollment scholars also exceed the college averages.

Early on in the effort, Dri and Skyler also brought the culturally responsive practices of the college Umoja and Puente programs to dual enrollment classrooms by leveraging a small grant to pay BCC Umoja and Puente students to serve as near-peer mentors. This embedded support structure resulted in a 5-1 or 6-1 ratio of teachers or mentors to students in the dual enrollment career and life planning course offered at high schools.

In the classroom, Dri and Skyler created a space to build a community with the students while teaching college navigation and guided exploration. The high school students could see themselves represented in the near-peer mentors, reinforcing that they are welcome at the college. Miguel Sanchez, a BCC Puente Scholar who served as a near-peer mentor in a dual enrollment class believes that “the involvement of student workers like myself allowed for a more enjoyable, and comforting experience for 8th and 9th graders taking community college classes.” The leadership lens the BCC dual enrollment counseling team applied to ramping up equitable dual

enrollment offerings resulted in a network of care for dual enrollment students and a structure for the near-peer mentors to be supported as student leaders, deepening the experience for both student groups.

## The Transformational Practices

- **Create a caring and engaging environment.** “College should be fun and exciting. We want students to feel excited to be in our classes and work to create a classroom space where students feel supported and cared for,” shared Regalado.
- **Support students where they are.** “Every student is our student, whether they are in high school or college, formerly incarcerated, managing a disability, or in high schools. If we all gave 100%, students would have everything they need from the college,” shared Barton.
- **Build relationships.** Dri and Skyler get to know students and their support networks at the high school. These relationships create a network of care to ensure students succeed.

### Call to Action for the Field

- **Strive for a no-fail model.** Aspire to ensure every student succeeds by providing equitable support services and a coordinated network of care.
- **Build community and be in community with your high school partners.** Work to build relationships with community and high school partners who are also striving to serve students equitably. Leverage these networks in service of meeting students’ needs.
- **Empower your student leaders.** Support community college students to enter and succeed in leadership roles through training and mentorship.