



PASADENA CITY COLLEGE

**LATINE/X
STUDENT FOCUS
GROUPS**

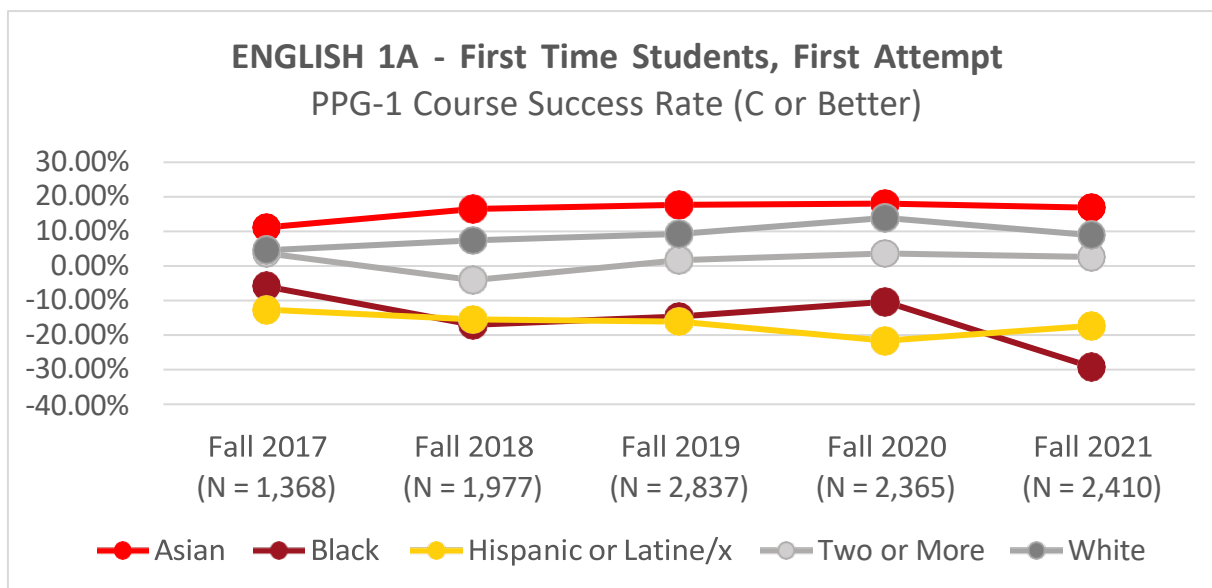
**SUMMARV OF
FINDINGS**
AUGUST 2023

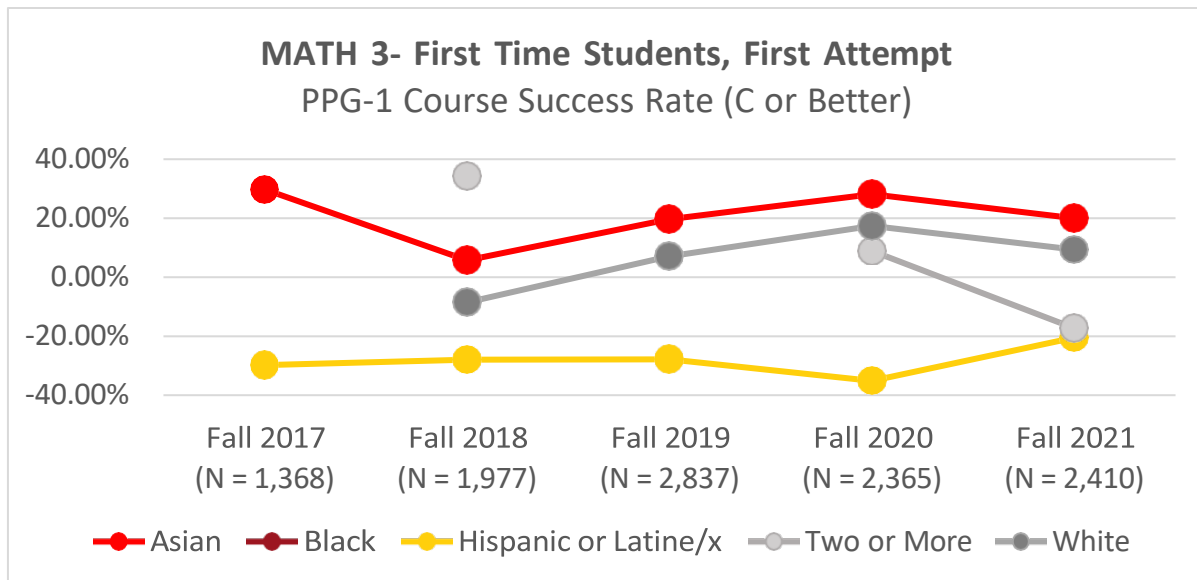


INTRODUCTION

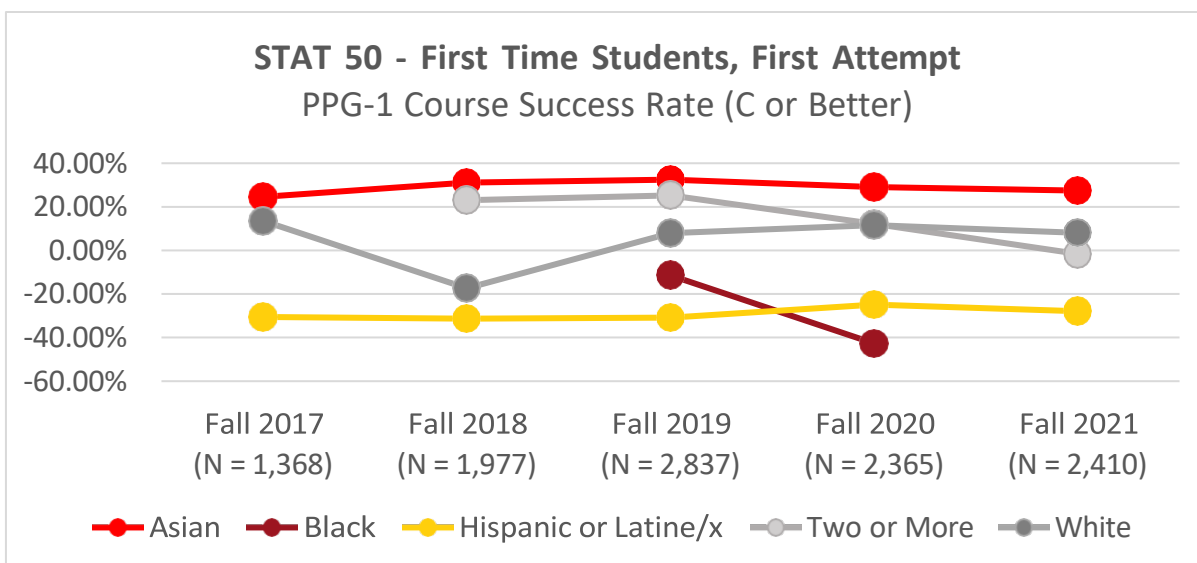
The inaugural Data & Inquiry Coaching Program at Pasadena City College (PCC) launched in the fall of 2022. The year-long, cohort-based professional development program aims to build institutional capacity to analyze data and conduct inquiry to improve the learning experience and outcomes of racially minoritized students.

The first cohort included 12 faculty and two administrators from the English and math departments who sought to address the racial equity gaps experienced by and improve the transfer-level English and math completion of racially minoritized students. In their initial analyses of disaggregated course success data for first-time students in their first attempt in college level-English (Engl 1A) or math (Math 3 or Stat 50), with or without corequisite support course, the data coaches found that **Black and Latine/x students most consistently experienced the largest gap in terms of college-level English and math course successful completion** when compared to students who identified as non-Black and non-Latine/x, respectively. The gap between the course success rates between each racial/ethnic group and all other students not part of the group is called the “Percentage Point Gap Minus 1” or PPG-1. Negative PPG-1 values indicate that the specific racial/ethnic group is negatively and disproportionately impacted in terms of the outcome.





**Note: Very few Black first-time students enrolled in Math 3, and their PPG-1 values could not be calculated*



The collective sensemaking of this finding led the data coaches to identify four salient hunches or hypotheses to describe the root causes contributing to the gaps experienced by Latine/x students in English and math courses:

- Latine/x students' past experiences have negatively shaped their self-efficacy (they don't see themselves as good students)
- Faculty do not know how to relate to and reach Latine/x students
- Grading and other classroom policies are not flexible enough to meet the needs of Latine/x students
- The curriculum does not reflect the lived experiences and cultural identities of Latine/x students.

To assess the four hypotheses, the data coaches conducted focus groups with over 60 students during the months of February and March 2023. The data coaches facilitated the focus group discussions in pairs, and each discipline-specific pair led at least one focus group for the opposite discipline (i.e., math data coaches led discussions among participants who were currently enrolled in English 1A and vice versa). The focus groups sought to answer the following broad research question:

What factors do Latine/x students perceive as facilitating their success? What challenges do they face in learning in an English or math course?

The focus group protocol (see Appendix for questions) probed students to share their stories about their classroom and learning experience, their perceptions of successful students, their opinions about the impact of their own race/culture on their collegiate experience, and their interactions and communication with faculty at PCC.

Focus group participants were recruited by email, and all students currently enrolled in English 1A, Math 3, and/or Stat 50 who identified as Latine/x were included in the recruitment pool. A post-focus group questionnaire indicated that 96% of the focus group participants identified as Latine/x (N = 63) but were more representative of the overall college population in terms of gender (62% women), distance education status (16% exclusively took courses online), and time of day (43% took both evening and day classes). Furthermore, disproportionately more of the focus group sample were enrolled full-time (12 units) at the time of their participation in the study than the overall student population in Spring of 2023.

This report provides a summary of the six (6) primary themes found across the focus group discussions, with supporting student quotes. The findings of the focus group will inform the data coaches' effort to design and implement an intervention or change to address the equity gaps experienced by Latine/x students in college-level math and English courses at PCC.

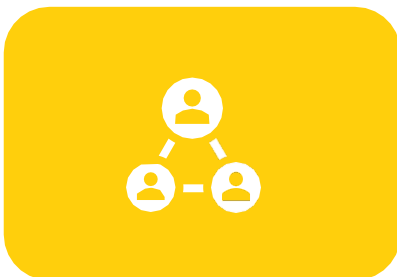
While the focus group findings reveal new insight about Latine/x student experiences at PCC, interpretation of the results should include an understanding that the focus groups may not be representative of all students or every Latine/x student at PCC.

The quotes included in the report, in some cases, have been truncated and edited for clarity purposes. Furthermore, the report uses they/them pronouns to refer to all students to ensure further anonymity of focus group participants.

SALIENT THEMES



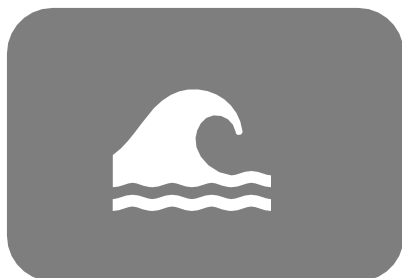
Theme 1: Caring Faculty
Motivate Students



Theme 2: Student-to-Student
Interaction Enhances Learning
& Engagement



Theme 3: Rigorous and
Challenging Courses with
Support



Theme 4: "Sink or Swim"
Learning Environments Deter
Learning



Theme 5: Faculty's Opinions
of Students and Help-Seeking



Theme 6: Clear Grading
Policies are Critical

THEME 1: CARING FACULTY MOTIVATE STUDENTS

Latine/x students who have made a personal, positive connection with at least one professor indicate that it motivates them to stay enrolled. Students shared that caring faculty who show interest in their personal and educational lives and experiences increased their academic confidence and positively influenced their engagement in the classroom.

Many students had a positive story to share about feeling seen and cared for by professors who took time to get to know them and subsequently responded to their needs. For example, one student described an English professor who illustrated care by getting to know them:

She's very interested in how we're doing. She would always let us know, 'I will always be there for you if you're struggling.' She gives like mom feelings because she's so caring.

"She would ask personal questions, and not in a bad way, but to understand where our writing was coming from. She was understanding and was very, very one-on-one, like really, really, really pushed us. She wanted to bring out the best in all of students."

Simple acts of authentic engagement mean a lot students. For example, one student described an impactful professor who illustrated care just by answering student questions in the classroom.

"I feel like he's really open to listening to his students, like he genuinely wants to know what you have to say. And whenever students ask questions, no matter how off-topic, he answers with like a whole paragraph. It shows he really cares."

A different student also described how simply "checking in" made a difference in her classroom experience:

"She always just kind of checks in on you to see if you're doing good and helping wherever [I needed]. I've never had that with any teacher before. Not like in my entire life. So I thought she was one of the best professors I've ever had."

In contrast, students felt that did not matter nor cared for in classes with little to no communication from faculty, including faculty who fail to check in with students and their learning.

Describing a bad experience in a classroom:

"He was not very understanding. Like I was in the hospital, in and out, and I would let him know, hey, this is what's going on. I was communicating on my end, but it was like crickets on the other end. I would reach out to get additional support, and it was like nothing would come back."

Before I dropped my courses, I started getting behind, and none of my professor's reached out at all, which was disappointing.

A student responding to another student's story about an ineffective professor:

"Yeah, I agree with what you said. I have had classes where I basically have to teach myself in order to pass the class. It doesn't seem like they (the professors) are putting in the work to make sure students understand [what's being taught]. They don't really care. It's just 'another year, another class' to them."

One way students described how faculty illustrated care was by connecting them to resources. Many described how critical these resources were in facilitating their educational pathway.

One student's story demonstrates the critical role faculty play in exposing students to information and resources they may not ever had access to:

"She asked me, 'Are you transferring?' And I was like, yeah. She said, 'What's your plan?'. I was like, oh [shoot], like, I don't know. All I knew was I wanted to transfer, but I didn't know how I was going to get there. She told me, there's this really good place (referring to transfer center), and there's this, and there's that."

On reflecting why this interaction was meaning, the student responded, *"It's kind of scary in college, no one ever tells you anything."*

Meaningful student-faculty interactions can be made in online classes as well:

- *"The class was online, but it still helped me be more engaged. You got grouped with other students. And then the professor really tried to understand your political opinions."* -describing a political science class
- *A student who takes classes exclusively online: "I want a professor to be involved, aside from putting a syllabus and all the due dates online. Even though all the responsibility to complete work is on me as the student, it's a bit more motivating when the teachers are there to help or answer questions."*

"CARING" FACULTY ARE...	
Descriptor	Example Actions/Interactions Described by Students
Engaging and interactive	Foster discussion on topic, not simply lecture on slides <i>"He gives us more time as a collective to be able to talk about it and work through it. I feel like I've been able to grasp a lot more of the concepts rather than, here's the book."</i>
Encouraging	Ask about career and major interests, and follow up with advice, mentorship, or resources <i>"When I told him what I wanted to do, which was English and writing, he asked me to stay after class to talk." The professor helped the student chart his educational pathway all the way to a master's degree.</i>
Passionate	Express enjoyment of subject <i>"Most of my [other teachers] were nonchalant about their job, but she really had a passion for English and writing."</i>
Present	Notice when students are not engaging and pivoting to re-engage them <i>"If people were kind of dozing off [in class], the professor would start making jokes and make us interact with each other. I liked that he would notice, oh, this isn't working with students. I'll try a different method."</i>
Proactive	Make first contact when student misses assignment or class <i>"If I forgot to turn in the assignment, the professor would automatically reach out, and she's like, 'Is something wrong? Do you need a time extension?'"</i>
Relatable and understanding	Treat students as equal learners <i>"My professor just dropped like the whole 'professor' thing. He's like, oh, just call me Josh. And it makes the environment a whole lot safer to make mistakes."</i>

THEME 2: STUDENT-TO-STUDENT INTERACTION ENHANCES LEARNING AND ENGAGEMENT

Students' overall learning experiences and perceptions about school are enhanced when they connect meaningfully with their peers.

When describing a “good” class at PCC, many students mentioned that their interactions with other students in the class fostered meaningful engagement, which ultimately increased their satisfaction with the overall classroom experience.

One student reflecting on how a study group helped them get through a difficult class:

“[The study group] was a community, you know, so that really helped me a lot. There was a lot of times where I thought in my head, like this is hard, but they (classmates), were right there, supporting [me].”

In my experience, group activities have been almost exclusively positive. And it seems that when they are well integrated into a course, it greatly develops connection with the course and allow us to be more engaged with the material

A different student shared a similar sentiment:

“I managed to get a group together, and we formed a nice study group. It was really a great support system for if we didn’t understand something, or if we were stuck on something, because we would make study guides together.”

Another student responded more directly about the role of student-to-student interactions in a “good class”:

“Like interacting with students. Because you can have a really good professor, but the class could feel dead because you’re just like, I’m here by myself, and you don’t really talk to anyone else.”

Other quotes from students that support this finding:

- *“I’ll run into people at the library. Hey, like my day is not as dreadful anymore. You know, like, I’m not by myself here. So I just like that connection with students because it feels like you’re not all alone in college.”*
- *“Luckily, I got really supportive classmates that helped me not fall behind those two weeks [when I was sick].”*

Faculty play a critical role in fostering community in a classroom and encouraging students to connect meaningfully.

A student who repeated the same course multiple times described finally taking the class online after two failed in-person class attempts shared that the student groups formed by the instructor helped with engagement in the course:

"You got grouped. So you did some projects alone, but you did other projects in pairs. The setting really helped. It helped me be more engaging. My previous time, it was in an auditorium, like huge, and it was like 60 plus students. You couldn't really make friends or socialize or find a partner to pair up into."

Some student struggle to initiate the connection with other students which suggests the opportunity for faculty to be more active in facilitating student-to-student interactions in their classrooms:

- *"During class break, I want to go up to people and talk to them. But like they're study, I don't want to be weird. I mean, I could be like, can we do homework? Because I work better too if someone else is doing homework next to me."*
- *"I just want teachers to encourage students to socialize with each other more, because I've noticed, even with myself and my peers, we kind of lost our social skills [during the pandemic]."*

While students seek a structure that facilitates student-to-student interaction in the course, they desire more authentic connections and purposefully designed group work or activities:

"There's definitely been times where you would be in groups, and kind of just do nothing."

Sometimes I hope that there's that one kid in the class that makes the Discord for everyone, because it helps me so much. Because it's like sometimes you don't want to ask the professor, you want to ask the classmates. And like having just a big ole group chat of like 30-40 people and throwing out your question for someone else to answer.

The first semester, I had no friends [at PCC]. The second semester, I made friends and like, I look forward to going to class. It makes it less depressing for me.

THEME 3: RIGOROUS AND CHALLENGING COURSES WITH SUPPORT

Students did not perceive challenging or rigorous courses negatively, particularly if they felt their professors were there to support them.

When describing a “good” class, none of the focus group participant used the word “easy”. Students were more likely to describe a good class as one that was challenging with engaging faculty who provided additional support. A story shared by one student depicts this theme perfectly:

“My favorite class I’ve ever taken was an English class at another college. It was a hard class, but he was just amazing, the way he taught, the way he was really engaged with the class. He made critical thinking really easy for everyone, especially the people who struggled, like he spent time after class to answer any questions you had, and he gave really great feedback on essays. He had us read like really tough material, but he really broke it down in a way where we could all understand it. And the whole class became kind of like a huge family.”

A challenging course did not necessarily mean an unreasonable amount of coursework:

“A good class? Right now, I’m in a humanities class, and it’s kind of challenging. It challenges you to actually think critically about subjects, but we only have five assignments the whole semester. So, it’s still challenging, but it still allows me to complete my other classes well.”

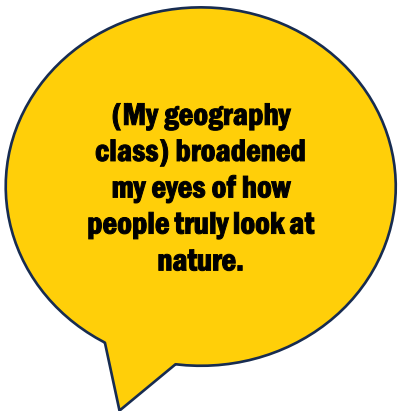
Course materials that connected directly to students’ lives facilitated learning of difficult course content.

Several students, unprompted, identified both English and math classes as ones that were most difficult or challenging for them, and having the content be connected to their real lives would support their learning:

(When class materials connect to their lives) I feel more comfortable to participate in class.

“It’s important for professors to factor in relevance to what’s going on in our lives personally. I had an English professor once, he applied what we were learning to our majors. We got the chance to research our major while at the same time completing an English assignment. So that was good. A good professor finds a way to apply what they’re teaching to more real-life events, especially when it comes to English or math, just things that you’re going to need in the future.”

Latine/x students valued learning opportunities that not only resonated with their real lives but also fostered curiosity, critical thinking, and personal growth.



(My geography class) broadened my eyes of how people truly look at nature.

In discussing positive classroom experiences, many students described how course material expanded their world views and perspectives, which in turn, enriched their learning experiences.

One student shared about their physical science class:

"It was like a critical thinking class so it kind of shaped my views about religion, spirituality, and we'd cover a number of different topics that are controversial, and like critically think about them, which is something I never really done before in my education. So yeah, that class really opened my mind".

Lastly, meaningful, detailed feedback from instructors fosters learning in difficult courses. One student shared the important role of feedback in an English course in keeping them enrolled in the course:

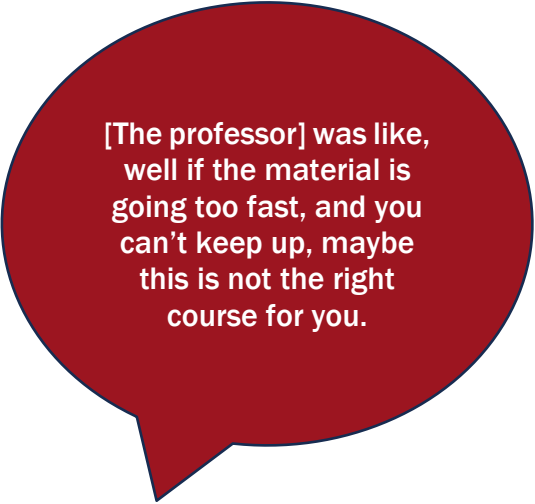
"I genuinely think that she was probably one of the reasons why I've been able to continue, because of the feedback she gave. It was a really tough class."

In contrast, several students shared stories about how broad or poor feedback was unhelpful to their learning progress:

- *"In an English class, they'll mark you down on your paper or like a paragraph, and you ask them for feedback, and they just give you a blatant answer, like, 'do better next time'. They don't tell you what you did wrong, or how to fix it."*
- *In a math class, "We had homework, but it didn't turn in any of [it]. The [teacher] assumed you did not do the homework if you did bad on the test, then he would dock you for the homework and for the test. That was a difficult class. It was like very demoralizing."*
- *"I remember specifically a final paper we had from a book we were reading. We had been writing, and I even met with the professor through his office hours. I read the book, I know what's going on. I have a great thesis statement. And when I met with him, he just said, 'You'll be good, whatever.' But when I [got my grade], I was like what did I do wrong? I remember writing to him, 'I don't think I deserved this grade, I did exactly what you told me to'. I never heard back from them. Now I always have in the back of mind, what was wrong with my paper?"*

THEME 4: “SINK OR SWIM” LEARNING ENVIRONMENTS DETER LEARNING

Classes that promote a “sink or swim” environment were more likely to be dropped by students, and the difficult classroom climate was harmful to their learning and success.



[The professor] was like, well if the material is going too fast, and you can't keep up, maybe this is not the right course for you.

Many students shared stories like this one when discussing their negative classroom experiences:

“It was clear that there were a large majority of people who weren’t understanding the math concepts, and the professor would just continue on, saying, ‘you have to get these concepts.’ And if you get it, you get it, if you don’t, you don’t. So, I ended up dropping the class.”

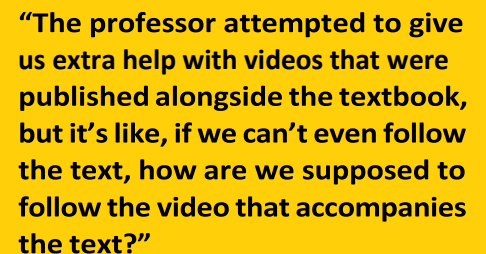
In these classes, students often described feeling the burden of “teaching themselves”. For example, one student shared:

“I did have a philosophy professor who, instead of explaining things thoroughly, she posted her slides on Canvas. She said she would try her best each time we asked her to explain the [concept we struggled with] more, but she never really tried. It almost felt like she was just pushing our concerns to the side. So, I had to try and teach myself some topics in my free time that she never explained in class.”

But faculty can prevent the “sink or swim” mindset by co-constructing learning spaces with students which helps them feel accountability, seen, and supported.

An ideal class is one where instructors invite students as active partners in creating the classroom environment. As one student shared about how the climate in their astronomy class leads to engagement:

“I like how [the instructor] asks us what we want, like do we want to play music in the background or dim the lights. I know it’s her classroom, but she involves us in her decision making.”



“The professor attempted to give us extra help with videos that were published alongside the textbook, but it’s like, if we can’t even follow the text, how are we supposed to follow the video that accompanies the text?”

THEME 5: FACULTY’S OPINIONS OF STUDENTS AND HELP-SEEKING

Students care about what professors think of them, and students respond in ways, including avoiding asking for help or not turning in assignments, to ensure they are perceived by professors in the best light.

A math student described how they avoid tutoring or seeking help from their professors because they do not want to be judged negatively:

“I’m genuinely scared to look dumb. But it’s hard to study math. So, I go on YouTube when I have to study, because YouTube is like my tutoring. I’m like, [YouTube] can’t judge you.”

A good professor does not make you feel bad for needing extra help.

An English student shared how their motivation for not submitting an assignment was to avoid an uncomfortable conversation with their instructor:

“I think [the assignment] was halfway done. I was discouraged to turn in half-finished homework assignment, but I should have turned it in.”

When probed by the focus group facilitator on why they were discouraged:


“Probably because I would have to have a conversation with teachers, it’s obviously not done, and then having to explain my circumstances. I knew my opinion or reasoning wouldn’t be valued. Because why would 25 students turn it in, but not you. I already know the answer.”

Early impressions about professors, including cues from syllabi and initial interactions, affect students’ willingness to ask questions and seek help.

One student shared, “On the first days of class, you could really tell how the instructor is going to be with you, kind of like their personality. Like I have an English professor right now. He’s super nice and super engaged with students, and he’s always like, ‘if you have questions, email me, I will literally respond. Even on the weekends, even at 11 at night, I’ll respond.’ That kind of attitude makes me kind of be more engaged, like, I can seriously go to him, and he’ll help.”

First impression, [you know] a professor can make you feel dumb when they make you feel some type of way when you ask your first question.

A different student described assessing how faculty interact with other students before deciding to ask questions in class:



I had a graphic design professor on the first day made it clear that she would not accept late work, which is very intimidating.

"Once I see how people (professors) react when other students ask questions first, I see how they react. If it's a good reaction, then I'll be like, I have no hesitation of asking the question."

Even language in syllabi may deter students from seeking communication or help from their instructors. A student described needing flexibility in an assignment deadline, but they feared asking the professor for the accommodation because she read the following statement in the course syllabus:

I don't accept late work.

Even in the absence of explicit messages from faculty about their willingness to help, students made assumptions about the extent to which faculty were approachable and supportive based on their observations in the class. For example, one student, in agreement with another about relying on seeking help outside of the classroom, said:

"I just didn't feel any type of connection with the professor. He was just going based off his slides he had, I guess, from a previous semester. But you know, impressions do matter, and his PowerPoint was just bland. If there were any pauses when he was going through the slides, no one, including myself, was brave enough to be like, 'hey, can you go back to like 3-4 slides ago?'"

Warmth and kindness from faculty can encourage struggling students to reach out for help and support.

A student reflected on how kindness from one instructor boosted her confidence:

"There was a big essay, and I didn't turn it in on time because I was still working on it. And the professor was very kind about it. I was really worried, I thought she was going to be like, 'why haven't you turned it in?' But she was nice about it. She's like, 'don't worry, you have time, you can turn it in the last day of class'. I didn't get the best grade, I got a B. But she wrote a note, she told me I did a good job."

THEME 6: CLEAR GRADING POLICIES ARE CRITICAL

Students feel frustrated in classes when grading policies are unclear or perceived as unfair.

An English student reflected on two separate issues that arose from one classroom grading policy. The first related to the high stakes nature of grades made up by few assignments or assessments:

"I missed my first assignment because it was my first class ever at PCC, and I didn't know much. But I was like, wow, I can really only pass this class if I get a hundred on everything else. Dang, I can't even get an A because I messed up that one assignment."

The same student shared later in the focus group discussion about wanting the high stakes nature of each assignment to be more clearly communicated in the syllabus:

"You kind of should put that in the syllabus or something. That class didn't really explain much. It was like, 'oh, we're going to have two assignments' and not, 'we're going to have two assignments that are worth all your grade'. They should put emphasis on how much something is worth."

Sometimes I'll get like 8 out of 10, and not have the answer. Okay, where did I go wrong?

Furthermore, students indicated they wanted more opportunities to assess their progress throughout a course and receive feedback.

One frustrated student vented, *"It all depends on the final exam. It doesn't make sense, like it doesn't. If you're teaching me all of this throughout the semester, maybe test me a few times or give me assignment so I know [how I'm doing in the class]."*

Several students acknowledged that it was the faculty's prerogative to set their own classroom grading policies, and students needed to adjust to these policies. However, in these instances, students wanted the professor to **better communicate the expectations for assignments and provide clear guidance.**



It was just confusing because he wouldn't test on what he would teach, what he would lecture.

Lastly, students who were adept at navigating a course syllabus wanted their professors to more consistently align to the grading policies and timelines outlined in them.

- An anecdote from one student who requested a makeup exam that was documented in a syllabus: *“The professor said, ‘the exam already closed, you don’t know what you’re talking about.’ I’m trying to remind you of your own rule, you said that we can make up [an exam]. The whole interaction was just very stressful, and I was like oh my God, there goes a quarter of my grade.*
- Describing a poor professor: *“ His syllabus would, it would contradict the modules. Some of the module opening times were different, and the closing times were also different than what a syllabus would say.”*

APPENDIX: FOCUS GROUP QUESTIONS

Warm-Up/Ice Breaker

Why did you choose PCC? What are you studying at PCC? What is your goal at PCC? Please use your pseudonym/fake name when introducing yourself!

The Classroom/Learning Experience

1. Tell us about a class that you would describe as a “good class” at PCC. What was/is happening in the class? What was/is the instructor doing in this class? What were you/are you doing? What were/are the interactions with your instructor/other students like in this class? How did the “good class” impact you?
 - Probe if not mentioned: lecture, discussions, classroom activities, visual aids and other course materials, examples used, office hours, informal interactions (hallway conversations, etc.)
2. Tell us about a class that you would describe as a “bad class” at PCC. What was/is happening in the class? What was/is the instructor doing in this class? What were you/are you doing? What were/are the interactions with your instructor/other students like in this class? How did the “bad class” impact you?
 - Probe if not mentioned: lecture, discussions, classroom activities, visual aids and other course materials, examples used
3. When you need help with your course work/in your class, where do you go? Who do you ask?
 - Think back to a time when you sought help, and you got the help you needed? What happened? Describe the person or program who helped you.
 - Think back to a time when you sought help, but you didn’t get help. What happened?
 - Probe: office hours
4. Tell me about a time when you missed a class. What happened?
 - What was the circumstance that led to the missed class?
 - Probe for: family, illness, emergency, pandemic, academic-relate
 - How did the faculty respond? How did it make you feel?
5. Think about how you spend your time outside of class preparing for your [English/math] class (for example, studying, working on your assignments or homework).
 - What strategies do you use? Probe for SI/tutoring
 - How have your study skills changed over time (since starting PCC, since high school, etc.)?

- Overall, how do you think those strategies are working for you and why?
 - What do you think your instructor/PCC could do to help you improve your study skills for this course, specifically?
6. Tell me about a time when you did not turn in homework/an assignment or took a test or quiz without studying for it.
- What was going through your mind when you made the decision not to study or turn in the assignment? What were you feeling?
 - What influenced your decision?
 - What was going on in your life at that time?
 - When was the decision made?
 - How did the faculty react when you didn't turn in the assignment? How did you feel about how the instruction reacted?
7. There is no right or wrong answer to this last question. We are interested in hearing your opinions about a hypothetical scenario.

Scenario: Penelope has a lot going on at home. She is helping her mom care for her younger siblings while juggling working at T-Mobile 30 hours a week and studying for 4 classes. Her [English essay/math project] is due tomorrow, but she knows she is unable to complete the assignment in time.

- Should Penelope ask for an extension for the assignment due date? Why or why not? How should she communicate with her instructor?
- Her new extended due date is coming up. What do you think is going through Penelope's mind? What do you think she is feeling?
- What steps would you take if you were Penelope to complete her assignment?
- Penelope's life situation has not changed; she is still unable to complete the assignment, even with the new due date. If you were Penelope, what would you do, and why?

Perceptions of Successful Student/Impact of Race on Success

8. When you think of a successful student, what characteristics come to mind? How do you see yourself in relation to your description of a successful student? At PCC, when have you felt most successful as a college student? What was/is happening that made you feel successful?
9. In what ways, if any, do you think your race, ethnicity, or familial/cultural background plays a role in influencing your overall experiences in the classroom/ at PCC?
- Probe for other racist experiences (witnessed or experienced)
 - What challenges, if any, do you face as a Latine/x student that other groups of students on this campus do not face in terms of successfully completing their courses? Provide specific examples.

Communication/Student-Faculty Interactions

10. Who typically initiates communication between you and your instructors? In general, how comfortable are you talking with your instructors? What gives you this feeling of comfort/discomfort?
11. Who is your favorite instructor at PCC so far? What are the characteristics of this instructor?
 - What do they do?
 - What is your relationship and interactions with this instructor like?
 - What are some examples of things this instructor says?
 - How does this instructor respond when you ask for help?

ADDENDUM: ROLE OF RACE/ETHNICITY IN LATINE/X' STUDENT EXPERIENCE AT PCC

This document is an addendum to the report discussing the findings of the Latine/x student focus groups (August 2023) conducted by participants of the first cohort of the Pasadena City College Data & Inquiry Cohort program, a cohort-based professional development program focused on building institutional capacity to analyze data and improve the experience and outcomes of racially minoritized students. This document discusses the findings related to one specific focus group question that didn't emerge as one of the six salient themes of the report:

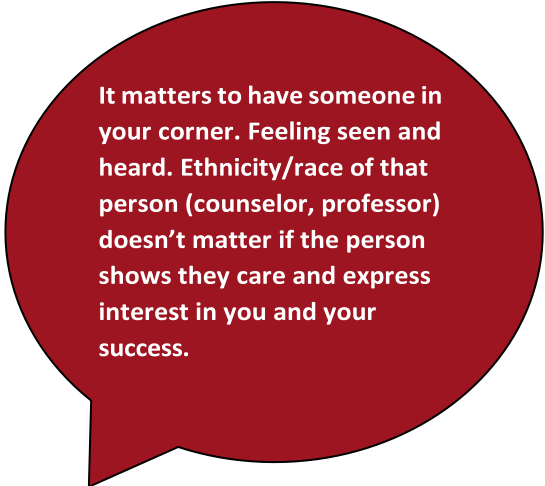


In what ways, if any, do you think your race, ethnicity, or familial/cultural background plays a role in influencing your overall experiences in the classroom/ at PCC?

The focus group data suggest that student participants, in general, perceived PCC to be a safe campus, and incidents related to explicit, personal racism experienced on campus were not common*. Most focus group participants felt that their racial/ethnic identity did not affect their PCC experience.

Sentiments like the following were frequently shared:

- *"I don't think I've noticed any microaggressions so far in the classes I've had"*
- *"Doesn't matter, honestly, in my experience, most like nobody really cares? Not that they choose to ignore it. It's just not important, and it's never brought up."*
- *"I've noticed it's not really a significant topic. It's just because this is a place of education, so ethnicity, race, or background shouldn't have anything to do with what happens to your education. It should just be a good education, no matter what. And I feel like the school does a very good job of maintaining that."*



It matters to have someone in your corner. Feeling seen and heard. Ethnicity/race of that person (counselor, professor) doesn't matter if the person shows they care and express interest in you and your success.

However, among students who **did** indicate that their racial/ethnicity impacted their experience, many shared that they were aware of how their perceived or expressed racial/ethnic identity as a Latino/Latina or Hispanic may impact their classroom experience and interactions with faculty and other students on campus. As such, some students shared how they change their behaviors to mitigate the potential negative impact of their race/ethnicity.

A student who identifies as Afro-Latine shared that the racial/ethnic makeup of the class impacts their engagement: *"When I enter a class, and it's primarily one race or another race, I do not tend to speak up as much."*

A different student shared:

*Three students reported experiencing or witnessing explicit racism and labeled the incidents as such

“

I'm Mexican and Dominican. So I feel like sometimes it's like, you know, how like sometimes Mexicans have this stereotype where they're like poor, like dirty. So sometimes with certain teachers who are Caucasian or more formal, I feel like I have to dress up or put on little earnings to look more presentable so they take me more serious. Like I'm here to learn, but then I also look presentable, so they take me serious, if that makes sense.

”

One student shared that they anticipated having their Mexican identity be in an issue in the classroom, but that so far, it has not:

"I've been waiting to be asked about to speak on my community because I'm Mexican. But I haven't yet. No one's really asked me to speak on my entire people. So I like that. I just don't feel like I'm the only one in that class, you know, because PCC is really diverse."

Furthermore, some students deduced that their negative experiences may have been due to their race/ethnicity, even in the absence of explicitly racist interactions.

"In the Transfer Center, a couple months back, I felt like I was pushed away. I don't know if it was because of what I looked like, but they didn't want to help me out. I started getting in my head thinking, this is me, but then I also come to find out that another (student) went through the same thing. He looks the same, too."

Speaking on a negative experience in the Financial Aid Office:

"I wonder if it's because I am Hispanic. I don't normally go there, but you like wonder, what is it about me?"

On the other hand, other students perceived their racial/ethnic identity or diversity in the classroom to add value to their and others' experiences.

For example, one student shared about discussing the Mexican American War in a history course:

"I'm Hispanic or Latino, so I know some of the other side of the story. And my class was mainly white or Asian population, so I felt like I could give the outlook or how Latino people felt, and how my father, who is Mexican, saw the war and were impacted by stuff like that."

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Pasadena City College's Equity Data Coaching is a cohort-based, faculty-led professional development experience designed to **build the capacity of the institution to examine data** to inform **meaningful change in the student experience and their outcomes**. Specifically, the Equity Data Coaching Program seeks to develop practitioners' data literacy and inquiry skills to **address racial equity gaps** produced by the college in course success, enrollment, retention, transfer-level Math and English completion, certificate/degree completion, and transfer. The program achieves this goal through a blended focus on both the technical and relational elements of data analyses and sense-making activities.

Special thanks to the inaugural Equity Data Coaching Team:

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