



SERVING FORMERLY INCARCERATED STUDENTS Guiding Principles

California Community Colleges in the Rising Scholars Network serve incarcerated and formerly incarcerated students. The Rising Scholars Advisory Committee advises the California Community Colleges Chancellor's Office on policy and planning in support of the Rising Scholars Network.

The Advisory Committee believes that serving incarcerated and formerly incarcerated students is a critical matter of equity. Reaching and serving Rising Scholars students is within the mission of the California Community Colleges and aligns with the Vision for Success. The Advisory Committee further recognizes that formerly incarcerated students have great capacity to succeed in the California Community Colleges and that they, as with all students, deserve the best that the California Community Colleges have to offer.

In support of the pursuit of excellence for all California Community College students, the Rising Scholars Advisory Committee adopts the following principles to guide colleges as they exercise their local control to **serve formerly incarcerated students on campus**:

PROGRAM STRUCTURE

- Build a student-centered support program that relies on student feedback to identify needs and priorities;
- Hire qualified staff, including whenever possible staff with personal or family experience with the criminal justice system;
- Advocate for campus diversity, equity, and inclusion, including that found by hiring faculty and staff with lived criminal justice experience;
- Identify faculty and staff who can advocate for the program and the students in the Academic Senate and in other campus committees and offices;
- Seek a designated and sufficient space on campus with a door that closes to protect students' identities if they have not yet chosen to be public about their status;
- Collect data about the number of students and services provided; ensure that the college's MIS data about the number of Rising Scholars students is accurate. Build trust relationships with students so they are willing to disclose their status and they understand who can access the data and why data collection is needed. Respect the wishes of students who do not wish to disclose.
- Work towards program sustainability. Align program goals with existing college and district goals including Guided Pathways, the Vision for Success, and other institutionalized efforts to better serve students. Partner with existing campus programs such as Guardian Scholars that share a similar equity focus. Seek sustainable funding including Equity and general fund rather than relying on grant funding. Work with the Academic Senate and campus administration on resolutions that acknowledge a commitment to Rising Scholars students.

CLARIFY THE PATH

- Seek new students through outreach to reentry programs, community organizations, transitional housing facilities, Probation, Parole, juvenile detention centers, court schools, adult schools, and county jails;
- Identify a program point of contact who can be reached via multiple means including electronically and in person. Ensure that program contact information is updated, public and easily accessible by students and potential students;
- Ensure that potential students know to ask for the program when they arrive on campus. Educate frontline or first-contact campus staff about the program and develop a process for a warm hand-off to the program rather than relying on referrals;
- If students' initial or only interaction with the college will be online rather than in person, create a means by which students can link to Rising Scholars support resources at the beginning of the process;
- Create ways for students to find the Rising Scholars program without first disclosing their history to strangers;
- If possible, offer dual enrollment opportunities for youth involved in the county's juvenile justice system including youth in juvenile detention centers and court schools, and align transition services onto campus for the students;
- If possible, offer orientations, programming, or courses in the local county jail and juvenile justice system, and align transition services onto campus for the students.

ENTER THE PATH

- Walk students through the admissions and enrollment process. Connect students via a warm hand-off with trusted contacts in campus departments including financial aid, admissions and records, and academic and career counseling;
- Connect Rising Scholars students with other campus programs that may be available to them including EOPS, Guardian Scholars, Puente, Umoja, and Veterans Services;
- Lead professional development for faculty and staff to break down misunderstandings and prejudices; have students lead or provide guidance on these trainings if possible;
- Award credit for prior learning to students who took career education courses while incarcerated or detained whenever possible;
- Because students may be new to the college community, ensure that they are informed about academic decisions that have consequences such as the W, and academic opportunities such as scholarships and honor societies.
- Foster peer-to-peer introductions between new and existing Rising Scholars students.

STAY ON THE PATH

- Be proactive about student engagement and support. Affirmatively reach out to students who lose contact with the program or who miss classes or coursework. Take extra steps to find the student and see if they can be supported as soon as the student begins to lose contact or miss class;
- Establish a highly coordinated proactive approach to student and academic support services;
- Keep students on track to degree or certificate completion; engage students in a degree audit on a regular basis so students know where they are and what they need;
- Create structured opportunities for peer connections and peer mentoring within the program;

- Seek funding to offer paid student positions for peer mentorship and program leadership;
- Work with campus Human Resources, Financial Aid, and other departments to open work study and other campus employment opportunities for Rising Scholars students;
- Incorporate dedicated mental health supports into the program, potentially through campus mental health staff, community resources, or nearby MSW or other graduate students;
- Incorporate dedicated tutoring services or find campus or community partners who can offer comprehensive tutoring;
- Create community partnerships to address the students' unique needs such as expungement;
- Educate program staff and career counselors about career barriers such as licensing restrictions, or find a community partner who is knowledgeable about the barriers;
- Build a trust relationship with local Probation and Parole offices so that students are supported in their educational pursuits by their Probation officer or Parole agent;
- Advise students to attend office hours and build relationships with their instructors;
- Create a continuous feedback loop between program staff and students to ensure that the program adapts and responds to changing student needs.

ENSURE LEARNING

- Amplify student voices on campus, remaining mindful to avoid having students “perform their poverty” and compensating students for telling their stories whenever possible; elevating the student voice should serve not to exploit the student’s experiences but to empower students to share their knowledge as experts, leaders, and change agents;
- Incorporate a resiliency framework rather than a deficit model; focus on students’ capacity for positive growth rather than punitive responses to students who are struggling;
- Use professional development and other avenues to educate faculty and staff about opportunities to support Rising Scholars students in the classroom and on campus, including the challenges that may be unique to students on Parole or Probation;
- Avoid limiting students’ options or allowing others to lower expectations because of the students’ history;
- Be proactive about supporting students’ technology needs and gaps, as students with incarceration histories may face additional hurdles, lack technology access, and have knowledge gaps;
- Become familiar with the college’s campus police department or other agency that may be hired for campus policing. Work with campus administration to build a community where Rising Scholars students are welcomed on campus and campus police encourage and support Rising Scholars students;
- Encourage students to participate in student government and other leadership opportunities. Build the foundation for Rising Scholars students to become leaders on campus and in the community.