California’s Cradle-to-Career Data System: Learning from Texas and Massachusetts to Operationalize Data for Attainment Goals and Planning

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Question & Answers

Participant Question: TX and MA both emphasized the importance of producing actionable research and research feedback loops. CA’s C2C Office was specifically assigned no role in research (just dashboards and basic reports), and we have no coordinating board or other entity whose role it would be to do that. To what extent might this be a challenge to CA’s goal of using the C2C to assess progress toward goals and to design policy/budget solutions to improve that progress?

Answer: California’s data system is being set up to enable entities within and beyond state government to set research agendas and produce actionable research. During the planning process, stakeholders determined that the credibility of the data system would be strengthened by having C2C be the stewards of the data, ensuring the data are accessible and available, while leaving the opportunity to define and set the research agenda open to entities within and outside the state.

Participant Question: When did Massachusetts amend their goals to include AAPI (Asian American Pacific Islanders) communities in their strategic plan? How did this change reported data outcomes?

Answer (MA): We realized almost right away that we needed to amend our goals to not further perpetuate the model minority myth. We added AAPI students to the strategic plan for racial equity this year, which will allow us to report data for this student group, eventually in our Performance Measurement Reporting System. We actually have much to learn from CA around data reporting in this space!

TICAS Question: How did you get buy in from your post-secondary segments and other institutions to share their data and to be honest about challenges to addressing racial inequalities?

Answer (TX): We have tried to create a partnership with institutions so that they feel like they are along for the ride with us and rather than us saying “this is what you have to do.” We have worked to build relationships starting with the “coalition of the willing” and then expanding to others who become interested in and excited by the data.

In terms of equity, it is excellent to think about completion as what we need to strive towards, but what we are finding using the longitudinal data is that earnings outcomes are not equitable
across race, ethnicity, gender, and low-income status. Just because they completed college does not mean that we are done wrestling with the numbers. We need to make sure that students are receiving the same rates of return for their degrees.

**Answer (MA):** I would change the word from “buy-in” to “engagement;” we do not need them to buy in when all of this has been co-created. The reporting system is something that was developed through conversation with our institutions of public higher education. We also have a data council that is really helping to inform the development of the data system’s goals. The data council’s purpose is to develop the goals for the strategic plan, but also to engage a lot of key stakeholders as members. By giving these stakeholders tangible projects to work on demonstrates that they are key partners and allows us to have continuous conversations. We also leveraged an extensive Tableau analytics system with metrics, PMRs, and equity dashboards. Schools can download the data source and use tools to track their progress. We make the data accessible to postsecondary institutions, particularly wage and K-12 data that they may not have had access to in the past. Giving postsecondary institutions something in return helps along the process.

**TICAS Question:** Could you tell us about the process your states went through to connect the data that was held by the different entities or systems? How did you plug those pieces together and what, if any, data validation or reporting challenges did you encounter?

**Answer (MA):** I would say we are still encountering these challenges—the challenges do not go away, especially as you bring in new and additional resources. As you know, each agency changes its data collection processes and collects new data. Keeping the data aligned is difficult and takes lots of meetings and understanding. We continuously must engage agencies and review data.

**Answer (TX):** We also have to think about migration and how are families are more fluid. We must be sure to follow the right students, capture the data at the right time, and set up required meetings to that agencies have to sit down and talk through issues that they may be experiencing.