

# Strengthening Student Success Conference 2026



## Proposal Submission Guide

PROPOSALS ARE DUE BY 11:59 PM ON THURSDAY, MARCH 19, 2026

Form link: <https://form.jotform.com/therpgroup/sssc-2026-proposal-submission-form>

### Reclaiming Joy: Reconnect. Refocus. Revolutionize.

For over 100 years, California's community colleges have been the heart of educational access, equity, and opportunity for all. And while our mission to serve all students in all our communities has not wavered, we have experienced profound challenges in recent years. This year's Strengthening Student Success Conference invites faculty, classified professionals, administrators, and student-support professionals to gather under a theme that reflects both urgency and optimism: **Reclaiming Joy: Reconnect. Refocus. Revolutionize.**

#### **Revolutionize.**

This year's theme calls on us to **reclaim the joy** inherent in learning, collaboration, and student transformation—and to use that joy as a catalyst for meaningful change. Joy is not a distraction from the work—joy is the work. By centering joy, we create environments where students thrive, educators feel renewed, and institutions evolve with purpose. We will be inspired to **reconnect** by rebuilding meaningful connections—with each other, with our students, within our communities, and with ourselves. We will be motivated to **refocus** as we cut through the noise and trials of the last few years to focus on what truly matters: our students. And finally, we will be challenged to **revolutionize** our campuses by thinking boldly to reimagine what is possible and by acting courageously to make significant, sustainable changes that will propel us all into a better, more joyful future.

Strengthening Student Success Conference 2026 will provide you with uplifting energy, practical insight, and creative exploration. Consider it a reset button: joyous, forward-looking, and deeply human as we reaffirm our shared commitment to equitable outcomes for all students.

# Conference Goals

By attending Strengthening Student Success Conference 2026 (SSSC26), attendees will

- Learn ways to navigate changing landscapes, funding, and other challenges in order to create caring institutions for students, faculty, and staff;
- Commit to students as necessary co-creators of race-conscious and equitable student experiences;
- Learn how colleges are integrating practical, equitable, race-conscious, and evidence-based practices to advance student success; and
- Exchange ideas with colleagues and other stakeholders and feel empowered to lead change.

## Developing Your Proposal

The application form will ask you to address the following:

1. A description of the learning outcomes for your session.
2. A description of how your session provides practical examples of how colleges can improve student success (up to 200 words).
3. A summary of the evidence that supports your presentation, including any analysis of disproportionate impact or positive effects on priority populations (up to 200 words). We understand that your work may be new; however, it should still be grounded in research from the field. Please include your plan to evaluate your work and a description of the emergent or adapted work in addition to any data collection you have done.
4. A description of how you will help participants understand and strengthen connections between your session topic and their own practice (up to 200 words).
5. A short statement about how your session topic relates to equity and race consciousness (up to 200 words). For example, does your session highlight a practice that improves the experience and outcomes of historically minoritized groups on your campus? Or does the session demonstrate how a given practice has fostered a more equity-minded and race-conscious culture throughout your campus community?
6. How you plan to include student co-presenters or examples of student experience or voice. Proposals that include student co-presenters, experience, or voice will be given priority consideration.

7. Identification of the primary audience for your session: colleagues interested in learning about similar work (first wave) or colleagues currently engaged in similar work (deep dive).
8. A description of some creative approaches, tools, activities, or resources you will incorporate into your proposed session to maximize audience engagement. We expect all presentations to be engaging and to utilize active learning strategies.
9. A session title (up to 110 characters) and description (up to 125 words) for use in the conference program.
10. Identification of the two strands your session addresses (one primary and one secondary).
11. The length of your preferred session (60 or 75 minutes).
12. Contact information for the presenter(s).

**A note for vendors:** Only proposals that include college co-presenters and show how a college is using your product to advance student equity and success will be considered. This is not an opportunity for a sales pitch.

## Session Formats

We request that presenters design all sessions—regardless of length—for active learning. Through narratives, demonstrations, conversations, and/or hands-on activities, participants should be able to consider how concepts, models, and possibilities could be applied to their own practices and settings.

SSSC26 will feature sessions of two lengths:

- **60-minute sessions** focus on sharing content, describing a program, or reporting research findings. We encourage these sessions to be interactive and include time for questions. These sessions typically have no more than 2-3 presenters.
- **75-minute sessions** include hands-on activities and interactive discussions that help participants consider ways to apply concepts and models to their own colleges and work. These sessions typically have no more than 3-5 presenters.

# Helpful Hints for a Successful Proposal

We will select proposals using criteria that reflect the conference goals and theme. See the proposal scoring rubric for more details.

- **Data and evidence are important aspects of sharing your work.** Data, particularly disaggregated data, can highlight a need and show the effectiveness of solutions addressing that need. Proposals should explicitly include local evidence. However, we also understand that sometimes colleges pivot due to newly discovered needs or events that impact your work in unanticipated ways, and therefore, you may not have significant data yet. If your proposal is about transitions, changes, or innovative ideas that you implemented in the last three to five years, please provide as much data detail as you have available. Some of your data points may include sharing the details of how you figured out what you needed to change or innovate based on surveys, focus groups, or some other evaluation tool. In addition, if your work is new, we ask that it be grounded in the most current research from the field.
- **Include co-presenters who bring different perspectives.** Cross-functional teams are critical to college redesign. We encourage you to consider inviting the different voices—students, faculty, classified professionals, student support personnel, researchers, and administrators—who are part of your campus efforts and could add depth to describing your work. All proposals must include at least one presenter from a California community college. In addition, we will give special consideration to proposals with students as co-presenters.
- **A clear title and session description addressing learning outcomes help attendees select your session from the many that are “competing” for their attention.** Creativity is welcome; however, attendees have limited time to decide which of the many sessions to attend. Your title and description should succinctly describe what they will gain from attending your session. *Titles are limited to 110 characters.*
- **You may have questions about which strand to choose for your proposal.** You will have the opportunity to have your proposal reviewed in two strands. Because so much change work is interconnected, and because transformation efforts are often about making connections and breaking silos, we recognize that many strong proposals do not fall into only one area. Please identify a primary and secondary strand (if appropriate) under which your proposal will be reviewed.

- **When using the online form to submit your proposal:**
  - If you wish to save your proposal and come back later, click "Save and Continue Later." On the next screen, click "Skip Signing In." Enter your email address, and you will receive an email with a link to access your saved proposal. **You MUST use this link to access your partially completed proposal.**
  - If you would like to start a new proposal, you can do so at any time using the original link (listed at the top of this page).
  - After you submit your proposal, you will receive a confirmation email with a copy of your proposal.

## Strands and Descriptions

### 1) Sustaining Partnerships and Networks for Student Success

Partnerships with educational institutions, community and faith-based organizations, and government agencies help students feel connected to our colleges. Effective cross-sector collaboration requires strong communication, ongoing relationship-building, and race-conscious practices aligned with institutional goals.

Career Education (CE), California Adult Education Program (CAEP), and K-12 transition programs rely on active partnerships to support smooth student pathways. Stronger connections with UC and CSU campuses improve transfer preparation and experiences. Community organizations extend our reach and help students transition into college.

We seek presentations that highlight partnerships that connect and strengthen professional networks across systems and that align with local institutional goals and Vision 2030 while supporting student success.

#### Examples:

- Coordinated K-12 and college transition efforts (dual enrollment, early/middle college, bridge programs, career/college planning)
- Intersegmental partnerships with CSU and UC
- Programs supporting adult education students, including SB 554 dual enrollment and pathway alignment
- CE programs connecting students, educators, and employers for workforce development and pathways to certificates, degrees, and transfer
- Regional initiatives or consortia that effectively support student advancement

- Partnerships with community organizations that provide equitable services for racially minoritized, financially insecure, justice-impacted, or otherwise underserved students

## **2) Achieving Equity in the Classroom**

California community colleges have been at the forefront of transforming teaching and learning to achieve equity in the classroom; however, these efforts can often seem siloed and faculty may feel isolated in their work. We are seeking presentations that highlight culturally responsive, antiracist, and active learning practices—such as decolonizing curriculum, addressing students' affective needs, expanding learning beyond the classroom, and using technology to improve outcomes. A key emphasis is understanding what structural or cultural changes were required, how those changes occurred, and who contributed to the work.

This strand also highlights strategies that strengthen student connection, integrate academic support into instruction, and expand equitable online learning. We are looking for examples of equity-minded course design, faculty collaboration, tutoring and library support, and the use of technology or open educational resources. Additionally, we invite work that incorporates social justice, service learning, activism, and community engagement to promote race consciousness and equity.

### **Examples:**

- Scaling online learning while addressing inequities and overcoming structural barriers
- Creating culturally rich, equity-minded, and race-conscious syllabi
- Using student experiences to shape teaching practices
- Implementing high-impact instructional strategies
- Supporting the affective domain through metacognition, belonging, and habits of mind
- Faculty collaboration on redesigned co-requisite courses
- Strengthening academic support in online and in-person settings
- Expanding use of open educational resources (OER) and Zero-Cost Textbook initiatives
- Collaborative curriculum and pedagogy across disciplines, including ESL and Career Education

- Courses and activities centered on social justice, service learning, activism, volunteerism, and community engagement to promote race consciousness and equity

### **(3) Creating Support Systems for Students and Employees**

Many colleges are building compassionate, holistic support systems that address the basic needs of both students and employees. We seek presentations that demonstrate how institutions are tackling food and housing insecurity, financial instability, and physical and mental health challenges. A key emphasis is on colleges that have made poverty reduction and increased economic and social mobility central to their mission, supported by strong structures, partnerships, and cross-campus collaboration.

#### **Examples:**

- Campus food pantries and clothing closets
- Housing assistance for unhoused students or others who have lost their homes, such as-victims of floods, fire, and other natural disasters
- Programs or services that assist students with basic needs to help keep them in school or return to school
- Integration of Career and Employment Centers with Guided Pathways to help students enter the path with career counseling and find jobs both on and off campus that enable them to stay on the path through completion
- Campus structures and integrated approaches that make receiving support unavoidable
- Development of college structures, such as student success teams or pathway teams, that create a campus culture in which all college personnel are responsible for student success and meeting student needs
- How colleges are implementing the requirements of AB 132 or assisting in the completion of Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) applications
- Redesign or implementation of stackable certificates
- Partnerships with industry partners to increase student work experiences

### **4) Humanizing Professional Learning and Leadership**

California's community colleges are investing in intentional, systemic improvement through professional development and leadership training that builds inclusive, participatory, and equitable institutional cultures. We are interested in presentations that show how colleges design these learning experiences, support online and remote

professional development, promote student-centered and culturally responsive practices, and cultivate leadership that drives institutional transformation.

We believe professional learning centers culturally responsive curriculum, support systems, and practices that close equity gaps. This strand focuses on how colleges are developing culturally relevant, humanizing professional learning and leadership practices to advance equity.

We seek presentations that understand that equitable education requires not only technical skill but also deep awareness of diverse histories, structural racism, implicit bias, and the impact these forces have on student experiences.

**Examples:**

- Professional learning that addresses ways to build diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility in employees' everyday practice
- Structures such as professional development centers, academies, and programs that foster culturally positive practices
- Leadership that creates courageous, community-building spaces for students and employees
- Collaborative learning models like inquiry groups and communities of practice
- Leadership development at all levels, including faculty and middle leadership
- Strategies that help leaders navigate crises affecting colleges and students

**5) Advancing Equitable Institutions**

California community colleges continue to work to actively dismantle structural inequities through intentional institutional redesign. This effort has focused on going beyond mere acknowledgment of disparities—rather, it is an active and ongoing process that uses liberatory thinking to eliminate or redesign harmful procedures and policies to improve outcomes for historically minoritized students.

We seek presentations that show how to break down silos and connect programs that began as single initiatives. We are particularly interested in presentations that highlight how integrated planning can lead to integrated action and how that action can create equitable institutions.

We are also interested in presentations that demonstrate a college's commitment to a focused vision and linked planning and research, including accreditation preparation and

Guided Pathways work. In particular, we are interested in highlighting how institutions are learning from this work, how Guided Pathways aligns with related equity initiatives, and how student voices inform solutions that close gaps between intention and impact.

**Examples:**

- Embedding Vision 2030 goals into equity-centered transformation
- Using the Student-Centered Funding Formula to rethink resource allocation
- Embedding equity into institutional planning and action
- Ensuring students have real influence in governance and committees
- Accreditation preparation aligned with integrated planning
- Redesigning course sequences and meta-majors
- Integrating academic support directly into classrooms
- Strengthening Promise programs
- Advancing diversity, equity, and inclusion through hiring and institutional culture
- Addressing AI's impact on teaching, learning, and academic integrity
- Implementing technologies that support holistic student success

**6) Navigating Disruption in a Shifting System**

California's community colleges are facing rapid and far-reaching disruption. From canceled federal grant programs, shrinking budgets, and the rollback of diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility (DEIA) efforts, to the rapid restructuring required through the implementation of AB 1111 and AB 928, the systems that have long shaped our work are being redefined.

We seek presentations that examine how these shifts are transforming practice, policy, and student support—and invite practitioners to explore strategies for resilience, adaptation, and leadership in a time of profound change. Rather than viewing these shifts solely as obstacles, we are interested in presentations that provide a forward-looking conversation about resilience, innovation, and institutional redesign.

This strand encourages presentations on models of collaboration, governance, and student support that share how colleges are maintaining their mission in the face of limited resources, canceled grants, or changing policies that hinder our work. We are interested in hearing about new and innovative ways colleges are keeping students at the center of their work—even as the winds of change continue to blow.

**Examples:**

- Understanding new policy landscapes
- Managing budget reductions
- Rethinking equity work with DEIA under attack
- Navigating transfer realignment (AB 928) and/or Common Course Numbering (AB 1111)
- Addressing the loss of federal funding
- Dealing with the impact of artificial intelligence on teaching and learning, institutional work, career pathways, etc.