California Community Colleges

MEMORANDUM
December 14, 2023

Memo Number ESS 23-47 | Via Email

T0: Chief Student Services Officers
NextUp Directors and Coordinators

FROM: Rebecca Ruan-O'Shaughnessy
Vice Chancellor, Educational Services and Support

RE: NextUp Program Implementation Guidance

In January 2023, the Chancellor's Office distributed new funding to local community colleges to expand the number of available services to current and former foster youth via the NextUp program to include all 115 community colleges. For more information related to 2022-2023 Education Code Updates to Expand NextUp Program Eligibility for Students click here. This memorandum provides essential NextUp program implementation guidance for the effective implementation and expansion of the NextUp program in California. It outlines key implementation recommendations for every college as it strives to establish a student-centered program infrastructure that optimizes the utilization of NextUp funds, increases access to critical services for current and former foster youth and maximizes the overall impact of the program.

1. **Strategic Design and Delivery Focusing on Trauma-Informed and Student-Centered Practices**

The Chancellor's Office recognizes the NextUp program, by design, is a high-touch program that provides both academic support and comprehensive wraparound services and coordination needed between campus, county, and state resources available to our most vulnerable current and foster youth students. Colleges are encouraged to develop

and mature a student-centered approach grounded in trauma-informed principles in shaping the design and delivery strategy of the NextUp programs locally.

A trauma-informed approach to serving former and current foster youth involves recognizing and responding to the unique challenges and experiences associated with their lived experience. It prioritizes creating a safe and supportive environment that considers the potential impact of trauma on their well-being and development. This approach emphasizes understanding the prevalence of trauma, promoting sensitivity, and fostering empowerment, thereby cultivating a space where these individuals can heal and thrive.

Student-centered approaches focus on shifting financial and administrative burden from students to institutions while reinforcing a sense of unconditional belonging. Recognizing that current and former foster youth have important support and resources available to them on and off campus (e.g., automated status verification for financial aid auto-verification tool that exists in WebGrants, priority registration for enrollment (refer to California Education Code Section 66025.9), it is critical for colleges to implement streamline application and onboarding strategies that reduce or eliminate barriers to access. This can be achieved by positioning the NextUp program to function as a hub for service coordination and navigation for current and former foster youth students. NextUp program should strongly consider allocating staffing and resources to actively collaborate and coordinate with various campus departments, including Admissions and Records, Financial Aid, Disabled Student Services and Programs, Basic Needs, and other support programs for foster youth. Additionally, it should forge meaningful partnerships to connect students with the local social safety net programs and community-based services.

2. Adequate Staffing for Effective Service Delivery and Program Expansion

The NextUp program is in a unique position to serve youth with lived experience in the foster care system. Colleges are strongly urged to prioritize adequately staff positions to

support critical outreach and recruitment efforts and high-touch quality services. It is important to note that the NextUp funding formula allocates a much higher per student cost (approximately 3 times the cost per student that is provided for EOPS students) to acknowledge the high touch nature of the services and accommodate appropriate staffing levels.

To underscore the importance of staffing, colleges should view hiring the appropriate levels of staff is crucial element of a successful program. Furthermore, colleges are encouraged to establish creative staffing models that include interim positions to ensure sustainable long-term budgets to effectively serve the expanding needs of NextUp students. This proactive approach to staffing not only meets the immediate needs but also lays the foundation for a thriving and sustainable program.

3. **Prioritize NextUp Staff with experience working with Foster Youth and delivering Trauma-Informed Services**

Research has shown that the foster youth population is unique in many ways due to their past-related experience in the child welfare system, out of home placements, and unique life situations. Community college professionals working with current and former foster youth are highly encouraged to have experience working with students who require high-touch, trauma-informed, wraparound services, and support. These roles almost always include a Coordinator and/or Counselor position. Staff should have specialized training to understand the special needs of current and former foster youth students.

Should you have any questions regarding this memorandum, please reach out to Mia Keeley, Dean at mkeeley@cccco.edu or Thalia Marroquin, NextUp Program Manager, Educational Services and Support at tmarroquin@cccco.edu.

CC: Aisha Lowe, Executive Vice Chancellor, Educational Services and Support
Gina Browne, Assistant Vice Chancellor, Educational Services and Support