



**Professional Development Strategic Plan  
2022-2027**

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## Professional Development Strategic Plan for 2022-2027

**Executive Summary** – The IEPI Steering Committee is proposing the creation of a comprehensive professional development center, based on a shared leadership model, to serve all employees at SMC. The vision of the **Equity-minded Professional Innovation Center**, the EpiCenter, is to build community and capacity among all employee groups to make SMC a place where everyone belongs and realizes their potential. Research suggests that comprehensive professional development for faculty, classified professionals, and administrators is one tool to help close equity gaps (Adams-Manning et al, 2020; Condon et al., 2016; Desimone et al., 2002; Elliott & Oliver, 2016; Perez et al., 2012). The EpiCenter also strives to be a tangible demonstration of Santa Monica College's strong commitment to serving our Black and Latinx students, who experience the greatest equity gaps. This plan assumes that all employee groups will be able and encouraged to participate in professional development activities. All employee groups share a commitment to student equity, inclusion, and completion, as well as maintaining currency and building knowledge and skills in their roles. All groups will focus on building equity-mindedness in opportunities designed specifically for their constituencies, and they will come together across the institution when appropriate. The IEPI Steering Committee hopes to help change the culture of professional development at SMC through both incentives and accountability. The Committee envisions supporting employee participation and leadership in various EpiCenter-supported and facilitated activities with either time, money, or flex credit (for faculty,) per contractual negotiations, whenever possible. In return, the Committee will strongly encourage employees to apply and share their learning with colleagues via workshops, department meetings, or professional development days, and will provide opportunities to do so. Our goal for the next strategic plan cycle will be to codify a plan for employees to earn units and other forms of recognition, such as badges and certificates of completion, through their participation in professional development opportunities to incentivize our colleagues to learn and grow here and share their learning in-house with others. By offering a variety of opportunities tailored to the needs of all employees, the EpiCenter strives to be the center of growth, development, and professional excellence for all while also cultivating community and joy in our daily work.

**Introduction**—Santa Monica College was founded in 1929 with just 153 students (“Fast Facts”, 2022). SMC pre-dates the explosion of the community college sector in the 1960’s and 1970’s across the United States, and specifically in the state of California. SMC is an independent district serving students from the greater Los Angeles area and around the world, reaching far beyond our designated service area of Santa Monica and Malibu, though our connections to the local district are strong. SMC values learning and achievement, and this value should extend beyond students to include all SMC employees—classified professionals, faculty, and managers. The concept of “faculty development” emerged in the 1970’s as the student body in higher education, particularly in community colleges, expanded to include students that were first-generation, low-income, non-traditional, and from marginalized communities, while the demographics of the faculty had changed little over time (Krug, 2018). This newly diverse student body demanded a different kind of teaching than traditional lecture, and that challenge

continues today at SMC. Further, the IEPI Steering Committee believes that to serve our students as whole people, the EpiCenter also needs to support the development of our classified and management colleagues.

SMC continues serving students who are often underserved in other sectors of higher education. As demonstrated in our Student Equity Plan, SMC has a strong commitment to serving our Black and Latinx students, who are 8% and 37%, respectively, of our student body as of Spring 2021. These students experience equity gaps across the institution. Research suggests that comprehensive professional development is one tool to help close equity gaps (Adams-Manning et al., 2020; Condon et al., 2016; Desimone et al., 2002; Elliott & Oliver, 2016; Perez et al., 2012).

To that end, the IEPI Steering Committee is proposing the Equity-minded Professional Innovation Center: the EpiCenter. While the EpiCenter is part of the Equity, Pathways, and Inclusion division, it is a separate entity. The IEPI Steering Committee deliberately chose a name that echoes EPI to maintain equity at the forefront of our collective work.

***Vision:*** The EpiCenter strives to build community and capacity among all employee groups to make SMC a place where everyone belongs and realizes their potential.

***Mission:*** The EpiCenter supports the equity mission of Santa Monica College as well as the [Vision for Success](#) through coordination and facilitation of professional learning and growth opportunities for all employee groups that are grounded in the principles of equity-mindedness: race-conscious, action-oriented, institutionally focused, systemically-aware, and evidence-based. By offering a variety of opportunities tailored to the needs of all employees, the EpiCenter strives to be the center of growth, development, and professional excellence for all while also cultivating community and joy in our daily work.

Further, the EpiCenter is positioned to help SMC meet some of the Vision for Success Core Commitments (California Community Colleges, 2017). Professional development supported or facilitated by the EpiCenter will use data and evidence, including appropriately disaggregated student outcome data, especially by race, to help drive ongoing inquiry. Further, the EpiCenter will use consistent evaluation of activities and programming, as well as the development of the EpiCenter overall, to help measure progress. Most importantly, the EpiCenter hopes to be at the forefront of thoughtful innovation and action by synthesizing existing professional development opportunities on campus as well as supporting new programming. The EpiCenter strives to be the place for all employee groups to experiment, reflect, and integrate new learning into a continuous cycle of improvement.

**History of Professional Development at SMC**—The first SMC Professional Development Plan published in December 1985 was conceived as a comprehensive plan including all SMC employees. Specifically, a component of the larger plan, *Project Synergy*, had the following goals: “to serve as a clearinghouse to coordinate ongoing professional development activities for faculty, staff, and management; to explore opportunities for renewing, revitalizing, and retraining faculty, staff, and management; to recommend ideas, programs, or activities to the

appropriate college personnel or committees; and to develop a 5-year plan for staff development at Santa Monica College.” The original iteration of PD at SMC echoes the current plan for the EpiCenter. Components of the original plan, including sabbaticals and new faculty and classified professionals’ orientation, persist, but much of the plan was never realized.

Beginning in 2009, the Basic Skills Initiative (BSI) task force, in conjunction with the Professional Development Committee (PDC) in the Academic Senate, surveyed faculty, with a focus on English and math, to assess their professional development needs. Faculty reported that they were interested in learning new and effective teaching strategies, culturally responsive pedagogy, increased multidisciplinary collaboration, strategies in reading and writing across the curriculum, learning theory, and support integrating technology, among other issues. To support these needs, and to provide support for instructors teaching Basic Skills and Career Education courses, the task force proposed a teaching and learning center that would “yield *transformations in the classroom and student support services* (emphasis in the original) and reduce a traditional over-reliance on methods and practices that are not currently working regardless of discipline” (Title V grant application.) This overarching goal, with the inclusion of student services, points to the possibility of a comprehensive Center that would include faculty and anyone else working in student services (which is essentially a significant portion of our Classified colleagues and managers.) Another item of note is the emphasis on the Basic Skills Initiative and Career Education—while BSI no longer exists, our AB 705 co-requisite students fill that student space currently. With the awarding of a Title V Hispanic-Serving Institutions grant in 2012, the Center for Teaching Excellence was born.

Running in parallel, around 2010, SMC hired a Professional Development Coordinator, who served in the role from 2010-2012. The role was designed as administrative support for the PDC and was primarily responsible for creating and implementing professional development opportunities for Classified professionals as there was no Classified Professional Development Committee (CPDC) at the time. The PD Coordinator assessed the needs of and scheduled trainings and workshops for Classified professionals. The PD Coordinator was instrumental in the implementation of the district-wide, mandatory FERPA training process. Additionally, this first PD Coordinator envisioned a CPDC; a comprehensive Professional Development Institute in conjunction with HR, the Academic Senate, PDC, and other relevant campus groups; a Master Calendar for all Professional Development; and a universal evaluation form for all professional development activities. Many of these ideas have either come to fruition in various forms or are in the current plan for the EpiCenter. The PD Coordinator left SMC for personal reasons in 2012, and the position was not filled again until 2020.

The next iteration of a formal professional development plan was conceived in 2013 in response to the development of the Center for Teaching Excellence. In this version, professional development (here, still focused on faculty) was deliberately designed to be decentralized with the idea that this agility would allow faculty to focus on interests and have their needs met. However, research suggests that faculty development that is intensive, sustained, and cohesive leads to improved student outcomes (Krug, 2018). While some aspects of the 2013 Professional Development Plan remain in place—PD day workshops, speakers, technology

training, professional meetings and conferences—the Faculty Summer Institute, which included Classified professionals in its final iteration, no longer exists. Professional development for faculty now lies in the hands of various Senate committees, including the Professional Development Committee, New Faculty Committee, Distance Education Committee (and department), and the Career Education Committee; these groups work independently. Additionally, programming out of the new Equity, Pathways, and Inclusion Division, such as Equitizing Gateway Courses, also function independently of other existing professional development.

For other employee groups, while Classified professionals have regularly participated in biannual institutional professional development days, programming for Classified professionals continues to be sporadic and lacking strategy and intentionality, though Classified professional development is explicitly mentioned in historic plans. There have been job classifications specifically related to technology—Educational Computer Specialist and Computer Support Specialist—whose positions included training and support for both Classified professionals and faculty, but these positions were phased out by 2005. Since 2018, an additional position, the Senior Technology User Support Specialist, has absorbed some of the campus-wide training functions of the Educational Computer Specialist, and the Administrative Assistants, through their Resource Group, also picked up some of the functions of the previous roles, but the work is ad hoc and unofficial. Further, there was a one-time allocation of resources for Classified professional development from the Chancellor’s office (\$91,161.00 to Santa Monica College from AB 1840 Education finance, section 34, as our portion of a \$5 million allocation in fiscal year 2018-2019,) but no on-going programming has been created from this money.

Similarly, though managers do have some professional development run out of Human Resources (Management 101), there is no special money set aside by the District to support an individual manager's professional development outside of any line-items in departmental budgets. Thus, this individual professional development is not available to many managers.

## **Plan Overview**

*Development Process*—As stated previously, the original Center for Teaching Excellence began with a Title V—Hispanic Serving Institution grant and existed from 2012 to 2019. The purpose of the grant is to support Latinx, low-income, and other traditionally underrepresented students (per the U.S. Department of Education), and the vehicle for doing so in this instance was through professional development for faculty first and then classified professionals as well. Professional development as a tool to increase student outcomes while closing equity gaps is explicitly mentioned in Title V (Krug, 2018). The first iteration of the Center was led by a project manager who worked in conjunction with approximately 6 faculty members as an advisory committee to develop programming to meet faculty needs. After the first 3 years, the Center was no longer supported by the grant, and the faculty advisory committee was disbanded. The Center was then led solely by the director, who continued to work with faculty to develop and implement programming, but without the reliable support of a formal advisory committee and with extra administrative responsibilities outside the Center. It was under these circumstances

that classified professionals were integrated into the now Classified/Faculty Summer Institute. Once the Center leader left for a new job and the pandemic hit, the Center for Teaching Excellence was dormant.

As a response to the changes at the Center and looking to expand opportunities for all employees, SMC, through Human Resources, applied for and received an Institutional Effectiveness Partnership Initiative (IEPI) grant in January of 2020. The IEPI grant is designed to support community colleges as they implement the Vision for Success, and the specific intention of the grant is to support professional growth and break down silos across the institution. The primary objective of our grant is to create a comprehensive professional development center to serve all employees at SMC. The IEPI process includes consultation with a group of outside colleagues called the Partnership Resource Team, community college leaders from across the state who have expertise in the issue (here, professional development) and who engage with stakeholders to help assess needs and give feedback. The PRT came to SMC in Spring 2020 and Fall 2020 for a series of three visits. Then, based on the work of the PRT, an IEPI Steering Committee was formed to create and implement our comprehensive professional development plan; the first funding cycle, where the committee created a plan for the plan, occurred between January 2021-June 2022. The IEPI Steering Committee then received an extension to codify and launch our plan. The Committee has integrated additional feedback from all employee groups as the Committee developed this plan.

### *Working Assumptions*

The IEPI Steering Committee believes that:

- SMC, as a learning institution, should be a model of continuous growth and improvement—professional development and training—for all employee groups to better serve students;
- All employees—classified professionals, faculty, and managers—*want* to improve their practice to better serve our students, and particularly our Black and Latinx students;
- All employees can get better at our jobs—it is possible to learn, grow, and improve over time; and
- All employees can transfer and actualize new knowledge with support.

*Constituencies to be Served*—This plan assumes that all employee groups will be able and encouraged to participate in professional development activities. All employee groups share a commitment to student equity, inclusion, and completion, as well as maintaining currency and building knowledge and skills in their roles. All groups will focus on building equity-mindedness in opportunities designed specifically for their constituencies, and they will come together across the institution when appropriate.

For classified professionals, continued professional development and training, consistent with the institutional mission and based on evolving procedures, technology and learning needs, will emphasize equity-minded practices that enhance and improve job skills as well as career development if colleagues want to prepare for positions of increasing responsibility.

For faculty, both full- and part-time, professional development will emphasize improving equity-minded pedagogical knowledge and techniques; student-centered non-instructional capabilities and equity-minded practices; and supporting leadership development if desired. While personal and professional growth are intertwined, improving pedagogical knowledge and skill is paramount to closing equity gaps while also improving student success outcomes for all.

For managers, professional development will emphasize equity-minded practices for hiring and management skills as well as leadership development, talent planning and leveraging, and succession mobility.

## **Professional Development Plan**

*Strategies and Directions*—Our vision of the EpiCenter is grounded in a shared leadership model. The IEPI Steering Committee believes that each employee group knows its professional development needs, and leaders from each group should be more accessible and responsive to the requests of their constituent group. The Committee envisions a group of leads for the EpiCenter: 2 faculty co-leads, up to 4 classified professional co-leads (depending on workflow, schedules, and support from supervisors,) and 2 management co-leads. These positions will rotate, giving many employees leadership opportunities.

Faculty Co-Leads: These positions will rotate every two years once the EpiCenter is firmly established. Each faculty lead will have 50% release time, the equivalent of 7.5 units. Faculty leads will liaise with the Professional Development Committee, Academic Senate, EPI, and Human Resources to facilitate existing professional development opportunities, including biannual professional development days, as well as create new content when needs arise. Ideally, at least one of the leads would be on or chair the PDC. These leads will also be available for ad hoc assistance to individual instructors, departments and programs for consultation on best teaching practices with a focus on equity. Potential faculty co-leads will apply for the positions through the Professional Development Committee, and applicants should be able to articulate their teaching philosophy as well as their relevant faculty development experience and expertise as part of their application. Recommendations from the PDC will then go to the Academic Senate for confirmation as faculty development falls under the purview of the Academic Senate 10 + 1.

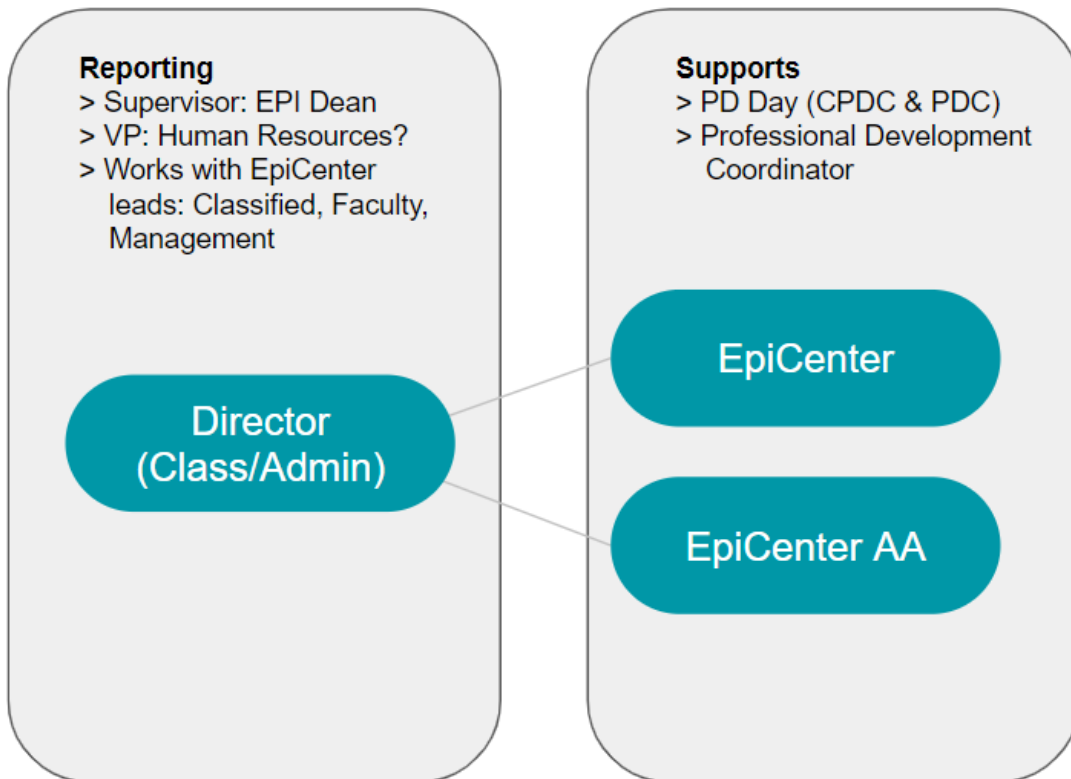
Classified Professional Co-Leads: These positions will rotate more frequently, and there should be support to facilitate participation as leaders in the EpiCenter. A 5% increase in pay may be assigned to Classified co-leads and additional Classified Professional Development Committee members with a Human Resources-approved assignment. Classified leads will liaise with the CPDC, CSEA, EPI, and Human Resources to assess constituent needs and to plan programming to meet those needs, including during biannual professional development days. The professional development coordinator will also support the Classified leads by tapping into Human Resources resources to provide training and outside consultation when needed. Ideally, at least one of the leads would be on or chair the CPDC. Potential Classified leads will apply for

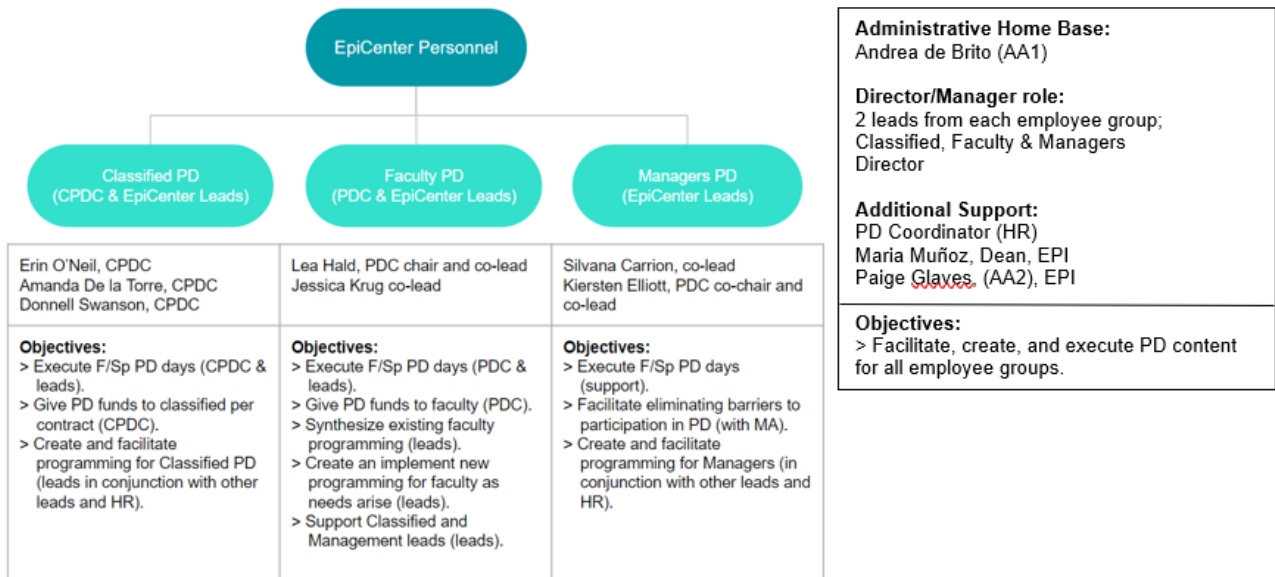


the position through the CPDC, and recommendations from the CPDC will then go to CSEA for confirmation and support.

**Management Co-Leads:** These positions will serve a two-year term, appointed by the Management Association president, and terms can be repeated. The role of EpiCenter lead will replace two (2) committee assignments. Management leads will liaise with the Management Association, Human Resources, and EPI to assess constituent needs and to plan programming to meet those needs, including during biannual professional development days. The professional development coordinator will also support the Management leads by tapping into Human Resources resources to provide training and outside consultation when needed. Ideally, at least one of the leads would be on or co-chair the PDC. Potential management leads will apply for the position through the Management Association, who will then make recommendations to the existing EpiCenter leadership.

Additionally, the EpiCenter will have a dedicated administrative assistant, access to an instructional designer, and a full-time manager to facilitate communication between employee leads and the professional development coordinator out of Human Resources to manage logistics of events as well as the budget. The manager will report to the dean of Equity, Pathways, and Inclusion, which is the division in which the EpiCenter lives.





All constituent group leads will meet regularly with EpiCenter staff (AA and manager, and a future instructional designer) and the professional development coordinator to discuss institutional needs and priorities as well as any overlap or needed alignment between the work they are facilitating for their colleagues.

The EpiCenter strives to be a “one-stop-shop” for all professional development on campus. One of the signature ways the IEPI Steering Committee hopes to consolidate information is through a Master Calendar that contains all professional development opportunities across the campus for all employee groups. The professional development coordinator will manage the master calendar, with input and support from the employee group leads and from the EpiCenter staff, to keep it updated and current.

The budget for the EpiCenter will focus on resources: human and material. The bulk of the budget will go to supporting the EpiCenter staff, employee leads, and funding for employee participation, as well as in-house facilitators, because so much of the work of the EpiCenter is about leveraging and synthesizing existing professional development opportunities. For material resources, the Committee would like to see the braiding of funds across the institution as well as grant and categorical funding to support the work of the EpiCenter. One consistent area of needed funding is the biannual professional development days to support speakers, food, and other hosting supplies. The resources needed for these two days support the entire institution.

*Assessment of Current State*—There is a systemic imbalance in the availability of and support to participate in professional development at SMC. Classified professionals (and managers, to a lesser extent) need broad support to participate, especially in opportunities beyond biannual professional development days. The recent inclusion of eight (8) hours of professional

development work for Classified professionals annually in the current CSEA contract is a welcome start. Part of the challenge is the nature of the work—managers and many Classified professionals have traditional office hours, while other Classified professionals work non-traditional hours including swing shifts. Making the time to invest in themselves while keeping up with their workflow is challenging; SMC needs to continue to rethink what this support looks like. Faculty have the opposite problem: too many opportunities siloed and not widely known. But because participation in faculty development is part of their contractual obligations, faculty are able to participate in a variety of offerings. The task of the EpiCenter will be to synthesize and support existing opportunities for faculty and to help create and support content for Classified professionals and managers.

*Recommendations*—The first iteration of the EpiCenter budget—crafted as “Relaunching the Center” in the DPAC 2022-2023 Action Plan—is informed by the former Center for Teaching Excellence Budget. The Committee’s reimagined EpiCenter has different financial needs. The EpiCenter is no longer the primary creator of content, but rather the facilitator and enhancer of existing programming. Therefore, the EpiCenter budget should be focused on personnel to liaise with existing employee groups and to create and implement in-house content when new needs emerge that aren’t currently being met. The EpiCenter will be a source for supplemental, not primary, funding for the existing panoply of professional development offerings. Instead, more money, especially unrestricted institutional funds, should be directed to building an EpiCenter staff, employee leads, employee participants, and in-house facilitators.

*Next Steps/Future Directions*—The EpiCenter hopes to serve as a repository of various resources for all employee groups on campus, including:

- A physical library of texts related to equity, pedagogy, and leadership in the brick-and-mortar space
- A digital library of recorded workshops from past events, including professional development days, as well as curated recordings on various topics of interest to our different employee groups, including trainings, on the EpiCenter website
- Drop-in hours for collaboration and consultation with all employee leads—faculty, Classified professionals, and managers—for their constituents, both in the physical space and online
- A comprehensive Master Calendar of professional development opportunities on campus for all employee groups on the website
- Designing and facilitating workshop series for different constituent groups for authentic needs that arise
- Supporting the work of the PDC and CPDC during biannual professional development days via logistics

Further, the IEPI Steering Committee hopes to help change the culture of professional development at SMC through both incentives and accountability. The Committee envisions supporting employee participation and leadership in various EpiCenter-supported and facilitated activities with either time, compensation, or flex credit (for faculty,) per contractual negotiations,

whenever possible. In return, the Committee will strongly encourage employees to share their learning with colleagues via workshops, department or division meetings, or professional development days and will provide opportunities to do so.

We are planning to use existing comprehensive surveys (climate surveys, the Big Annual Employee Survey from the 3C Collective, the Equity Audit) as well as the Student Equity Plan and real-time feedback from supervisors, employee evaluations, or other employee feedback as baselines that are already informing our next steps and to help us measure growth over time. Additionally, participants in EpiCenter programming will complete a standardized evaluation form as well as tracking forms to help us gauge the efficacy of the EpiCenter on an annual basis.

Our goal for the next strategic plan cycle will be to codify a plan for employees to earn units and other forms of recognition, such as badges or certificates of completion, through their participation in professional development opportunities to incentivize our colleagues to learn and grow here and share their learning in-house with others. We will need to construct clear expectations and deliverables to earn meaningful credit. Additionally, we will need to create an evaluation process for the EpiCenter overall that may include employee satisfaction surveys, student surveys about climate and belonging, and student outcome data (persistence, retention, and completion,) with a focus on closing equity gaps for our first-time-in-college Black and Latinx students. The IEPI Steering Committee hopes to institutionalize these procedures.

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