



**TO:** Chief Executive Officers  
Chief Instructional Officers  
Chief Student Services Officers  
Chief Business Officers  
Chief Human Resources Officers  
Academic Senate Presidents

**FROM:** James Todd, Vice Chancellor of Academic Affairs  
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**RE:** TOP to CIP Transition – Infrastructure and Operational Alignment

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The California Community Colleges system will be transitioning from the system-only use of the Taxonomy of Programs (TOP) code to the universally accepted Classification of Instructional programs (CIP) code by Fall 2027.

### **Background**

The California Community Colleges use the TOP code system to organize college programs and courses into similar families of programs. The rest of the country, including the California State University and University of California systems, uses the CIP code system to organize academic programs into families. While the community colleges use the TOP code system for reporting to the Chancellor's Office, all required federal reporting—such as for IPEDS, Perkins, and Gainful Employment—use CIP codes to classify programs and awards. The TOP code system is primarily organized around instructional programs, yet the codes themselves are also used for a variety of fiscal, research, facilities, and other related reporting purposes. As a result, the community colleges must use two competing systems to complete all mandated state and federal reporting.

Even though TOP codes have been an important part of organizing curricular programs within the community colleges, the changes associated with adopting a [common course numbering system](#) represent an ideal time to move the community colleges to a common classification system that is CIP. In an October 2024 memo ([ESLEI 24-60](#)), the Chancellor's Office announced its intention to transition from TOP codes to CIP codes for courses and programs. This memo outlined the opportunity to make this transition while colleges are adopting Common Course Numbering ([AB 1111](#), 2021), which will require colleges to make updates to substantial portions of their curriculum over the next few years. This corresponding shift to CIP codes ultimately will decrease college reporting burdens and improve alignment to other systems of higher education within California and the rest of the United States.

## **Actions Required**

Implementation of this code system transition necessitates leveraging both internal and external stakeholders to make all necessary adjustments in all related infrastructures and operational processes to comply with this new requirement for the use of only CIP codes for programming, reporting, and tracking activities as well as other functions. These adjustments could include, but are not limited to, the following:

- **Develop a Transition Process and Schedule:** Create a detailed implementation plan with clear milestones and timelines for a comprehensive transition to the CIP Code system.
- **Establish Cross-Departmental Collaboration and Planning Task Force Formation:** Facilitate interdepartmental cooperation by establishing a planning task force consisting of key representatives from within the institution and district (e.g., fiscal, research, curriculum, student services, technology, facilities, human resources, workforce development, communications, and administration). This group should serve as a collaborative task force dedicated to coordinating efforts, sharing insights, and ensuring a cohesive approach to the implementation of CIP codes.
- **Establish Departmental Action Teams:** Impacted departments within a college infrastructure will need to coordinate the necessary work to meet the requirements of this transition. Contributing to a Transition Process and Schedule, these experts should identify tasks and set benchmarks for a successful cadence to the fulfillment of this transition. Of note should be the integration of primary systems with downstream and ancillary systems impacted by this transition and their inclusion within the workflow.
- **Address Technology Needs:** Identify and address technological requirements, including database repositories, programming needs, reporting and tracking requirements, and updates for websites and other systems to support the transition effectively. The identification of barriers and, more importantly, solutions will be a necessary approach to this undertaking.
- **Ensure Data Integrity:** Foundational to all aspects of this work is the assurance that the data input process will ensure accuracy, consistency, and reliability of the data being captured. The establishment of data integrity protocols and validation checks (e.g., format and range checks, mandatory fields, uniqueness constraints, cross-field validation, etc.), that is both human and technological, should be braided into all impacted tracking and reporting programs and conventions.
- **Establish Communication Protocols:** Develop a comprehensive communication plan outlining protocols and channels for effective information dissemination and collaboration among all relevant entities involved in or impacted by this transition.
- **Identify and Address Professional Development Needs:** Assess and address the training and skill development requirements of staff, faculty, and administration to ensure individuals possess the necessary expertise and knowledge to effectively navigate and implement the transition and ongoing use of CIP codes within the college infrastructure.

## **TOP to CIP Transition – Infrastructure and Operational Alignment**

October 17, 2025

A collegewide task force, as well as departmental teams, should review all applications employed in the operational use of the TOP code system. This internal review aims to identify potential impacts, plan accordingly, employ solutions to any barriers, and outline the essential steps to replace TOP codes and integrate CIP codes seamlessly. Additionally, internal stakeholders are encouraged to assess the implications of this code transition on ancillary programs, materials, and publications, both in physical and electronic formats, ensuring timely updates aligning with the transition cadence.

All efforts, including coordination across departments, technology upgrades, validation protocols, communication plans, and professional development and trainings, should align with the planned Fall 2027 implementation date to ensure successful and timely operations for a college's use of CIP codes.

### **Internal and External Partners Impacted**

As part of the necessity for management and infrastructure planning teams to fully operationalize the TOP to CIP code transition by Fall 2027, communications with internal and external entities related to such code usage for programming, reporting, and tracking purposes will be required. It will be the responsibility of each institution to plan and communicate with all relevant third-party providers and any institutional partners to coordinate the necessities of this transition.

College and district internal entities are urged to promptly begin all necessary assessments, communications, and planning activities to ensure a smooth and timely transition to CIP codes. Collaboration and proactive engagement are fundamental during this initial phase.

In order to support this code system transition by Fall 2027, the Chancellor's Office continues to examine outstanding issues related to transition from TOP codes to CIP codes. Further details for specific impacts around updates to programs, reports, handbooks or manuals, and other items that are related to this code transition process are forthcoming.

The Chancellor's Office is committed to supporting the colleges in their implementation of this updated policy and will provide additional guidance and technical assistance as needed. If you have any questions, please send them directly to the appropriate contact: Curriculum is David Garcia at [DGarcia@CCCCO.edu](mailto:DGarcia@CCCCO.edu); Fiscal is Lorena Romero at [LRomero@CCCCO.edu](mailto:LRomero@CCCCO.edu); MIS is Todd Hoig at [THoig@CCCCO.edu](mailto:THoig@CCCCO.edu); Workforce is JeanClaude Mbomeda at [JMbomeda@CCCCO.edu](mailto:JMbomeda@CCCCO.edu).

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