

TO: Chief Executive Officers, Chief Human Resource Officers, Academic Senate Presidents, Chief Instructional Officers, Chief Student Services Officers

FROM: Dr. Daisy Gonzales, Deputy Chancellor, Executive Office
Dolores Davison, President, Academic Senate for California Community Colleges

RE: Local Use of a Functioning Equivalency Process

The California Community Colleges (CCCs) are undergoing a systematic transformation to address the lack of diversity among faculty, staff, and administrators. The CCCs serve a diverse student body where approximately 50% of students are from historically underrepresented groups, yet the diversity of our faculty and staff does not reflect the student population. Data from Fall 2019 indicates that 24% of tenured faculty and 22% of adjunct faculty self-identified as a member of an underrepresented group. In response, the Chancellor's Office and the Academic Senate for California Community Colleges (ASCCC) as a part of the Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) Implementation Workgroup are committed to improving faculty and staff diversity in California's Community Colleges by reviewing recruitment, hiring, and retention policies and practices. These efforts to diversify the CCC workforce are aligned to the goals of the *Vision for Success* and supported by the system's guided pathways efforts to improve student success and the DEI Integration Plan adopted by the Board of Governors in September 2019.

The DEI Integration Plan identifies the local equivalency process as a system-wide equity strategy to improve faculty diversity hiring and reduce barriers to employment. To ensure that the equivalency process is being optimized across the system, this joint guidance memorandum reviews the authority of districts and colleges to create and utilize a functioning equivalency process for hiring faculty pursuant to California Education Code section 87359 and Section 53430 of title 5 of the California Code of Regulations. Every district equivalency process is obligated to ensure that potential applicants are afforded the opportunity to demonstrate that they meet or exceed the minimum qualifications through alternate means in a fair and accessible process.

District's equivalency process for applicants applying for tenured and adjunct faculty positions must be established and implemented in compliance with regulations promulgated by the Board of Governors. It is also anticipated that new Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) guidelines in early 2021 will include a review and evaluation of district equivalency processes. This memorandum is intended to direct the attention of colleges to an evaluation of their processes from both a compliance lens and an equity lens.

Background

Equivalency is an alternative process to determine an applicant's qualifications for a faculty position. It is meant to be a mechanism to allow qualified candidates to demonstrate that they have attained and possess qualifications that are equivalent to the Minimum Qualifications to teach within a discipline, not just a course. That is, a candidate can demonstrate experience by

providing evidence of professional training, delivery of instruction in other settings, or receipt of an industry credential or certificate. The ASCCC has established the following principles¹ for granting equivalency:

- “Equivalent” to the minimum qualifications means comparable to the minimum qualifications, not “nearly equal.”
- The applicant must provide evidence he or she has attained the equivalent to the breadth of coursework or experience equal to the general education component of an earned degree from any regionally accredited institution.
- The applicant must provide evidence he or she has attained the skills and knowledge equivalent to the depth of knowledge provided by specialized coursework required for the degree listed in the Disciplines List.
- For non-master’s disciplines, evidence that the requisite professional experience is equivalent to the full-time experience required for the discipline.
- Eminence should not be used as the sole criteria for granting equivalence.

Local Responsibility

Local academic senates and governing boards are jointly responsible for establishing an equivalency process (i.e., the structure and operation). It is recommended that an equivalency committee be established to ensure that the equivalency process is utilized consistently and fairly across all disciplines. It is important that the equivalency committee consist of faculty within and outside the discipline to properly assess and determine if the applicant has the breadth of general education requirements equivalent to an earned degree and to safeguard decision-making by removing bias. It is also a best practice to include a representative from human resources who can inform the equivalency committee of past decisions of the committee for consistency and fairness and provide EEO training to center the committee’s dialogue. Chief Instructional Officers are often a part of the equivalency committee, as the senior administrator directly responsible for academic quality and rigor.

Additionally, it is the district’s and college’s responsibility to ensure that information about the equivalency process is clear, understandable, easily accessible and up-to-date on the district’s website, and in all relevant human resources documents. Applicants should be able to access clear information about the process and requirements related to equivalency. Particular attention should be paid to how the district’s information would be interpreted by a potential candidate from outside of our system who may not be familiar with the terms *minimum qualifications* or *equivalency*.

Equivalency does not lower the minimum qualifications for hiring. Equivalency grants careful consideration to applicants who provide evidence that their education and experience is equivalent to the minimum qualifications for the position. As stated, equivalency is an important

¹ Bean, M. & Eikey, R. (2019, November 7). *Equivalency to the First Minimum Qualification* [Conference Presentation]. Academic Senate for California Community Colleges Fall Plenary, Newport Beach, CA, United States. <https://www.asccc.org/content/equivalency-first-minimum-qualification>

component of the hiring process as it generally enhances the diversity and qualifications of the qualified applicant pool. Equivalency also ensures that qualified candidates, who may be excellent instructors, are not immediately excluded from consideration simply because they do not possess traditional preparation. The equivalency processes should support local equity focused goals. A general framework for an equity-centered equivalency process includes:

- Reflective and proactive training for equivalency committees that will help advance institutional solutions.
- A data-informed process that helps campuses examine institutional structures that perpetuate bias.
- A commitment to continually assess institutional practices through neutral analysis and feedback collection to improve equivalency processes including campus climate, recruitment practices, accessibility of personnel, etc.

Best Practices and Resources

The ASCCC has partnered with the Chancellor's Office, Association of Chief Human Resource Officers (ACHRO) and other statewide associations to develop resources and tools to help districts and colleges develop and implement a functioning and equitable equivalency process. To access more information and best practices on the equivalency process, please use the links below:

ASCCC Model Hiring Principles and Procedures

This resource is an interactive module that may help shape college dialogue about improving the hiring processes of the institution. This is a living document that is updated as the ASCCC receives further input from system partners.

Equivalency to the First Minimum Qualification

A guided presentation about equivalency processes and meeting the requirement for degree attainment through alternate means.

Equivalency Principles, Guiding Questions, and Equity Framework

A subsection of the Model Hiring Principles and Procedures specifically focused on equivalency.

CTE Faculty Minimum Qualifications Toolkit

This toolkit was jointly created with the ASCCC and the Chancellor's Office with specific emphasis on career technical program qualifications but is relatable to all disciplines. Attention and examples are provided to meet the specific breadth requirements of the general education pattern of the associate's degree.

If you have any questions about this guidance memorandum, please contact the Chancellor's Office General Counsel's Office at legalaffairs@cccoco.edu and/or the Academic Senate for California Community Colleges at info@asccc.org. For questions regarding local policies, contact your college human resources office and/or faculty senate president.

cc: Chancellor Eloy Ortiz Oakley
Executive Vice Chancellor Marty Alvarado
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