

Cypress College Rising Scholars



Spring 2025
Program Review

Part 1. Program Mission Statement

College Mission Statement

Cypress College transforms lives through lifelong learning with educational opportunities including transfer to four-year institutions, associate degrees, certificates, and a baccalaureate degree. We are dedicated to forging academic and career pathways to support the achievement of our students, enhancing their economic mobility, fostering equity, and enriching society.

Rising Scholars Mission Statement

The Rising Scholars (formerly LIFE) Program strives to support formerly-incarcerated, system-impacted, and substance abuse recovery students, so that they successfully achieve and exceed their goals through the vehicle of higher education. Receiving an education not only drastically reduces the recidivism rate, it also serves to elevate individuals and communities out of the systems that lead to their incarceration. We aim to empower and uplift the generations of current and future students who seek an education on Cypress College's campus.

The Rising Scholars Program is a member of the Rising Scholars collaborative, a network of California Community Colleges committed to serving incarcerated and formerly incarcerated students by providing degree-granting programs in correctional facilities and on-campus support for students who have experienced the criminal legal system.

A. How does it align with Cypress College's mission?

The Cypress College Rising Scholars Program mission aligns with the broader Cypress College mission by reinforcing the college's commitment to transforming lives through lifelong learning and supporting student achievement and equity. The Rising Scholars Program seeks to support and elevate formerly-incarcerated, system-impacted, and recovery students—populations often marginalized in traditional educational settings—and provides them with the support necessary to pursue higher education and long-term success.

This program advances Cypress College's goals in several key areas:

1. The college's mission emphasizes **fostering equity**, and Rising Scholars directly supports this by removing barriers to education for students affected by incarceration and systemic challenges. It ensures these students are not left behind and are provided the tools to thrive both academically and socially.
2. We support our non-traditional student population with reintegrating back into society, and accessing a quality education. Rising Scholars promotes **lifelong learning** and directly contributes to students' **economic mobility**, an important

part of the college's mission. Education, as the program highlights, can drastically reduce recidivism and provide new pathways to sustainable futures.

3. Both mission statements emphasize **uplifting individuals and communities.** Rising Scholars goes beyond academic success—it aims to break cycles of incarceration and empower future generations, reinforcing the college's broader goal of **enriching society** through education.

The Cypress College mission statements discusses **forging academic and career pathways,** while the Rising Scholars mission statement refers to *helping students so that they successfully achieve and exceed their goals through the vehicle of higher education.* Inherent in this part of the Rising Scholars statement is that we creating academic and career pathways, so that our students can achieve and exceed their goals. We have woven career and academic counseling and opportunities throughout our programming practices, and have supported countless students with *achieving and exceeding their goals.*

Part 2. Program Overview

A. Briefly describe your program, including program components, function, and purpose.

The Rising Scholars Program at Cypress College has developed significantly since its foundation as a student club (FITE Club). However, despite our growth and changes over the years, we have always emphasized supporting/empowering students who are formerly-incarcerated and/or impacted by the criminal legal system (ie: system-involved and/or criminal legal system-involved). If we have the funds to do so, we also provide support for students who identify as addiction recovery as well.

Rising Scholars prioritizes hiring staff with lived experience. We understand the value of not only staffing our program with professionals who our student community can relate to, but also, providing professionals opportunities to move into the community college setting. The current Rising Scholars program structure is as follows:

* **Rising Scholars (faculty) Coordinator**, who oversees the program budget, applying for new grant opportunities, supervising the Professional Experts, leading/facilitating team meetings, and setting the overall direction of the program

* **Adjunct Rising Scholars Counselor**, who works with our student community to develop academic skills (studying, note-taking, time management), along with creating educational plans that take into consideration the unique circumstances of each Rising Scholar student. Additionally, our Rising Scholars counselor also has a caseload of approximately 30 students who they regularly check in on, providing them with personal/academic support and guidance.

* **Outreach Coordinator**, who is responsible for coordinating our outreach events (ie PACT meetings, student fieldtrips, etc) Our Outreach Coordinator also has a caseload of Rising Scholars students (approximately 50-60), that they regularly check in on, providing them with personal/academic support and guidance.

* **Professional Experts / Mentors**, who are responsible for regularly reaching out to and checking in on their caseload of students, along with supporting with even planning and implementation.

* **Student Workers (2)**, who are responsible for greeting incoming students, walking new students to various campus departments, providing students with information and resources, and supporting with events.

NOCCCD RISE Youth Program

A district-wide program (that is housed at Cypress College), which supports students who are 16 – 25 and who identify as:

- Formerly-incarcerated within youth facilities

- Involved with the criminal legal system as a youth (convicted of a crime committed at the age of 17 or younger)
- System-impacted (have had loved ones who identify as having incarceration experience)

The RISE Program is currently structured with the following:

- Director of the NOCCCD RISE Youth Program
- Youth-focused professional expert/mentors

Currently, we have between 350 – 400 students within our program. All of our students identify as being one or many of the following:

- Formerly-incarcerated
- Involved with the criminal legal system (i.e. DUI, brief jail time, probation)
- System-Impacted (have had loved ones who've experienced incarceration)
- Addiction recovery

The function and purpose of Rising Scholars is to support, inspire, empower those students who have been impacted by the criminal legal system. We aim to not only help individuals, but directly target those systems which unjustly target community members who have been traditionally marginalized and/or criminalized by the American legal system and society at large. We aim to create a community that provides not only educational services, but holistic healing and the shattering of socially-constructed barriers. We strive to create not only scholars, but advocates, activists, and change-makers.

B. Describe how your program interacts or collaborates with other on and off campus programs.

The Rising Scholars Program at Cypress College is deeply committed to providing comprehensive, wraparound supports for our Rising Scholar student community. Central to our mission is the collaboration with various on-campus and off-campus programs to provide holistic support that addresses the diverse needs of our students.

On-Campus Collaborations:

We make a regular practice of referring our qualifying Rising Scholars to the following on-campus programs and departments:

- **Extended Opportunity Programs and Services (EOPS):** EOPS assists students facing economic, linguistic, and educational challenges by providing comprehensive support services to promote college access, retention, and transfer opportunities.
- **Cooperative Agencies Resources for Education (CARE):** CARE is a specialized program within EOPS dedicated to single parents receiving public assistance,

aiming to break the cycle of welfare dependency through educational training and self-sufficiency.

- **Grads To Be Program:** This program offers a safe space with supportive staff, providing a variety of services and resources for undocumented students to help them flourish and cultivate a sense of belonging on campus.
- **Guardian Scholars:** The Cypress College NextUp/Guardian Scholars Programs are available for all current and former foster youth attending the college to ensure their academic, career, and personal success.
- **Puente Program:** Established to increase the number of educationally underserved students who enroll in four-year colleges and universities, Puente combines writing, counseling, and mentoring components to prepare students for transfer and leadership roles in their communities.
- **Legacy Program:** Designed to offer Black student scholars an opportunity to transfer successfully to four-year institutions, Legacy combines academic, community, and mentoring components to foster a positive, well-rounded college experience.
- **Pride Center:** The Cypress Pride Center is an inclusive space for LGBTQ+ students and allies to relax, build relationships, study, get support, and access resources, hosting various events and workshops throughout the year.
- **Asian Pacific Islander Desi American (APIDA) Resource Center:** The APIDA Resource Center provides a supportive and inclusive space for students of Asian, Pacific Islander, and Desi descent, fostering a sense of belonging and promoting cultural awareness on campus.
- **Charger Experience Program:** This program offers first-time college students two years of free tuition, priority registration, access to specialized counselors, and engagement with academic programs and events to support their success.
- **Disability Support Services (DSS):** DSS provides a wide range of services to help students with disabilities access their education and participate in college activities, including academic counseling, assistive technology, and exam accommodations.
- **Career Planning and Workforce Development Center:** This center offers services designed to help students make informed college major and career decisions by providing counseling, classes, tools, and resources.
- **Mental Health and Wellness Center:** The center provides mental health counseling and various health resources to support students' well-being, including telehealth and in-person appointments.
- **Veterans Resource Center (VRC):** The VRC assists active duty, veterans, and dependents seeking to complete an educational degree or certificate, providing support services tailored to their unique needs.
- **Learning Resource Center (LRC):** The LRC offers services free of charge to currently enrolled students, including the Writing Center, Mathematics Learning Center, Supplemental Instruction, and Tutorial Services.

- **Associated Students (AS):** AS serves as the student government of Cypress College, offering students opportunities to gain leadership skills and engage in personal and professional development
- **Pathways of Hope:** In collaboration with Cypress College, Pathways of Hope provides access to food, shelter, and housing services to students experiencing hunger and homelessness in North Orange County.
- **Food Pantry and Laundry Services:** These services address basic needs by providing students with access to food and laundry facilities, ensuring they can focus on their academic goals without the burden of unmet essential needs.

Off-Campus Partnerships:

Additionally, we regularly partner with off-campus organizations, to provide our students with comprehensive, wraparound supports. Those partnerships include:

- **Project Kinship:** This organization provides support and services to individuals impacted by incarceration, focusing on healing, transformation, and successful reintegration into the community. We refer students to Project Kinship for wraparound supports. Project Kinship frequently refers their clients to us who are looking to continue with their education.
- **Underground Grit:** Underground Grit offers mentorship and support to system-impacted youth and adults, aiming to break cycles of incarceration and promote personal growth and community engagement. Underground Grit frequently refers their youth clientele to our NOCCCD RISE Youth Program.
- **Waymakers:** Waymakers provides comprehensive services to individuals affected by trauma and conflict, including crisis intervention, counseling, and support for victims of crime. Waymakers frequently refers their youth clientele to our NOCCCD RISE Youth Program.
- **Youth Guidance Center (YGC)/Youth Leadership Academy (YLA):** These programs focus on rehabilitating youth involved in the juvenile justice system through education, counseling, and leadership development. Case managers working within these facilities frequently seek us out for supports for their youth. These supports can include:
 - Career counseling
 - Academic counseling
 - Applying to/ enrolling at Cypress College and completing the FAFSA
 - Mentoring for these youth
 - Workshops (ie career development workshops)
- **Youth Development Court:** This court program offers alternative sentencing and support services for youth offenders, emphasizing rehabilitation and community integration. The NOCCCD RISE Youth Program attends YDC court days every other Friday, advocating in court for the youth enrolled in their program.
- **Recovery Road:** Recovery Road provides addiction recovery services, including counseling and support groups, to assist individuals in overcoming substance use

disorders. Additionally, Recovery Road also provides a comprehensive food pantry. We frequently refer our students in need to Recovery Road for support with groceries.

- **The Access Project's Clean Slate Program:** Every Spring semester, Rising Scholars partners with the Access Project in order to provide our students and Cypress College community members with free livescan and expungement services!
- **Root & Rebound:** Root & Rebound provides legal advocacy and education to individuals impacted by incarceration, focusing on reentry support and the removal of legal barriers to success. We frequently refer our students in need of expungement services to Root and Rebound for virtual expungement supports.

Through these collaborations, the Rising Scholars Program ensures that students receive comprehensive support addressing academic, personal, legal, and basic needs, empowering them to overcome challenges and achieve their educational and life goals.

C. How is your program funded? Please include sources of funds such as categorical (e.g., SEA, EOPS, DSS), general, or grant and briefly describe how those funds are utilized.

We have a few funding streams to support our Rising Scholars and RISE student communities. They are as follows:

CCCCO Rising Scholars Network Grant: This grant is allocated through the California Community College Chancellor's Office and, therefore; not permanent. We are nearing the end of our 2022 – 2025 grant term (approximately \$450,000 for the grant duration) and are waiting for news regarding our application for the 2025 – 2028 term (up to \$900,000 for the grant duration). This grant is the primary financial support for our Rising Scholars Program, and supports *only* those students who identify as being formerly-incarcerated or involved with the criminal legal system. These grant funds are utilized for many services and supports, including:

- Adjunct academic counseling hours
- Program coordination overload hours
- Professional expert/mentor wages
- Events (i.e. Pancake Orientations and End of the Semester Celebrations)
- Program swag (T-shirts, backpacks, tabling supplies)
- Guest speaker stipends
- Basic needs supplies (i.e. motel vouchers, hygiene kits, gift cards)
- Textbook supports
- Laptop vouchers
- Miscellaneous: printing, snacks, coffee

Cypress College SEA Funds: This funding allocation goes to supporting our adjunct counseling hours, along with any, additional supports for our students who may not be criminal legal system involved, but have had loved ones who are formerly-incarcerated and/or are in recovery from addiction. We charge textbooks and laptop vouchers for our system-impacted and addiction recovery students to our SEA budget.

CCCCO Juvenile Justice Grant: This grant is also allocated through the California Community College Chancellor's Office. This is one-time grant funding of \$1.5 million spans the years of 2023 – 2029, and was allocated to North Orange County Community College District. Cypress College was designated the *lead* campus for this grant.

The purpose of these funds are as follows: "The overarching objective of the Rising Scholars Network is to expand the number of juvenile justice-involved students participating and succeeding in the community colleges... The higher education needs of justice-impacted youth can be met most effectively by creating dedicated programming at local community colleges. Community colleges are critical partners in this work; they are the primary point of entry for most incarcerated and formerly incarcerated students in California. They are accustomed to addressing challenges faced by a variety of student populations and through this new category within the Rising Scholars Network expand their offerings to include strong programmatic support for system-impacted youth."

These funds are utilized for a variety of youth-focused supports which include the following:

- Special Projects Director of the NOCCCD RISE Youth Program
- Youth-Focused Professional Expert/s
- Special events (NOCCCD Youth Week and Songs from the Hole)
- Program swag (T-shirts, backpacks, etc.)
- RISE Youth textbooks
- RISE Youth laptops

HIRE Up Grant: The Hire UP Pilot Program was established in 2022 to provide stipends to:

- Formerly-incarcerated students (released within the past 3 years)
- CalWORKs recipients
- Former foster youth

This grant was awarded to the North Orange County Community College District. Since Fullerton College and Cypress College are the two campuses providing for-credit courses, this grant is distributed only to students on these two campuses.

According to the "I Can Go to College" website, "the Hire UP is designed to help meet the true cost of college attendance and gain clear access to credential programs and workforce support needed to enter, participate and succeed in California's economy. Hire

UP is currently available at 25 California community colleges across 10 community college districts.

For financial aid awarding purposes, the maximum stipend amount per term is the state minimum wage for each enrollment level hours.

Enrollment Level & Hours

6 - 8.99 Units: 20 Hours

9 - 11.00 Units: 30 Hours

12+ Units: 40 Hours

Stipends are disbursed to students at least once per month, though colleges may disburse stipends on a more frequent basis.”

Part 3 - Student Satisfaction with Services

Overview:

The 2025 Student Services Program Review (SSPR) survey collected both quantitative and qualitative feedback from students participating in the Cypress College Rising Scholars Program. The results reflect overwhelmingly positive perceptions of the program's services, staff, and overall impact on student success. Below is a summary of key trends, student comments, and areas identified for improvement.

Key Takeaways

Program Satisfaction

Students reported high levels of satisfaction across all service categories:

- **Overall quality of service:** 88% rated "Excellent," 11% "Good"
- **Staff courtesy, helpfulness, and knowledge:** Over 82% rated "Excellent"
- **Hours of operation, clarity of processes, and response timeliness:** 77%–82% rated "Excellent"

Student Demographics

- 76% formerly incarcerated
- 50% in addiction recovery
- 43% system-impacted
- 40% criminal legal system-involved

Barriers to Academic Success

- 67% cited difficulty covering **basic living expenses**
- 45% reported challenges related to **mental and/or physical health**
- 40% struggled with **school-related expenses**
- Other barriers included fear of disclosing legal history and employment difficulties

Legal Aid

- 59% of respondents indicated a need for **record-clearing or expungement services**

Most Helpful Services (Themes from Student Comments)

Students praised:

- **Financial resources:** book vouchers, food/gas cards, and the Higher Up grant
- **One-on-one support:** mentorship and emotional encouragement from staff (specific staff were named: Susan, Tray, Anne-Marie, Cynthia)
- **Academic guidance:** help with class registration, FAFSA, and SAP appeals
- **Legal assistance:** expungement clinics and legal workshops
- **Community and space:** a welcoming environment and sense of belonging in the RS Center
- **Events and enrichment:** guest speakers, workshops, and cultural activities

"I can't express how grateful I am for the people in this program. They've given me the confidence to continue school."

"The support here is real—it's the reason I stay in school."

Areas for Growth and Student Suggestions

Quantitative Feedback:

- 52% requested more help with **living expenses**
- 43% asked for **more community events**
- Additional requests included career support, academic tutoring, and increased mentorship opportunities

Open-Ended Suggestions:

- Reinstatement of the **HIRE Up Grant**
- Offer more **record-clearing services** and **career mixers**
- Increase access to **mental health services** tailored to formerly-incarcerated students
- Provide **extended RS Center hours**, additional staff, and more **physical space**
- Include **power outlets** in common areas and a **suggestion box** for feedback

Conclusion

The Cypress College Rising Scholars Program provides a transformative support system for formerly incarcerated and system-impacted students. Participants consistently highlighted the program's empathetic staff, essential resources, and community-building environment as critical to their academic success and personal growth. To strengthen its

impact, students recommend expanding financial assistance, legal aid, mental health support, and in-center services.

Part 4: Program Analysis and Planning

The Rising Scholars Program at Cypress College currently serves approximately **400 students**. The program is dedicated to supporting students whose educational journeys have been impacted by the criminal legal system, either directly or indirectly, as well as those in recovery from substance use. Our student population includes:

- **Formerly Incarcerated:** Individuals who have served time in jail or prison.
- **Criminal Legal System-Involved:** Individuals who have interacted with the legal system in any capacity, including probation, parole, short-term incarceration (even a single day), or legal system involvement through agencies such as Child Protective Services (CPS).
- **System-Impacted:** Individuals who have not themselves been incarcerated, but have close family members or loved ones who have experienced incarceration or detention.
- **Addiction Recovery:** Students who are actively engaged in recovery from substance use disorders.

These students often experience barriers to success in higher education, including housing and food insecurity, trauma, stigmatization, and financial instability. Despite these systemic challenges, Rising Scholars students demonstrate remarkable resilience, leadership, and academic commitment.

Findings from the Spring 2025 Rising Scholars Student Satisfaction Survey, conducted by the Office of Institutional Research and Planning, provide insight into our program's impact:

- 90% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that they feel supported by the program.
- 86% reported experiencing a sense of belonging within the Rising Scholars community.
- 81% indicated that participation in the program has helped them remain enrolled at Cypress College.
- 70% stated that the program has contributed positively to their academic success.

These outcomes exceed institutional benchmarks for student engagement and persistence, particularly among equity-priority populations. Furthermore, qualitative survey responses underscore the importance of community, mentorship, and individualized support. Students consistently expressed gratitude for the non-judgmental, trauma-informed approach of the program, as well as the emotional and academic support offered by staff, faculty and fellow students.

The program has also experienced steady growth in enrollment over the past several years (from just a few students in 2018 to the current student population of 2025), supported by

intentional outreach efforts, interdepartmental collaboration, and partnerships with local reentry organizations. As a result, retention rates among Rising Scholars students continue to improve, supported by wraparound services such as academic counseling, peer navigation, emergency aid, and targeted faculty engagement.

Moving forward, Rising Scholars will continue to partner with the Office of Institutional Research and Planning to track additional student success metrics, including course completion, GPA, transfer, and degree/certificate attainment. This data, combined with the student voice, will guide future program development and help ensure equitable outcomes for all students we serve.

Part 5. Program Accomplishments, Improvements, Challenges, and Obstacles

Rising Scholars Program

A. Accomplishments and Improvements Since this is the first official program review for the Rising Scholars Program, this section includes accomplishments from recent years:

Spring 2025:

- Rising Scholars student population reached approximately 400 students
- Weekly support groups held: FITE Club and All A's Recovery Meetings
- Major events:
 - Pancake Orientation (Jan 27)
 - Black Excellence & History Month campaign (Feb)
 - Clean Slate Program partnership launch with Livescan Days
 - End-of-Semester Celebration recognizing student accomplishments and graduates

Fall 2024:

- Received \$1.5M Youth Justice Grant (shared across Cypress, Fullerton, and NOCE)
- Hosted Youth Justice Week in district collaboration
- Secured \$78,000 from Chancellor's Office for program expansion
- Key events:
 - Pancake Orientation, Beach Day
 - Mental Health & Wellness Summit (hosted resource fair)
 - Collaborations with San Bernardino Office of Corrections & Career Center
 - End-of-Semester Celebration

Spring 2024:

- Hosted guest speaker Lami J. Glenn, Sr.
- Expungement Clinic via Clean Slate Program
- Campus tours: UCI, CSUF, CSULB
- Mental health collaborations: Steve Fund, Sansón & Me screening
- Comedy Night and End-of-Semester Celebration

Fall 2023:

- Transitioned LIFE Program to Rising Scholars Program to align districtwide
- Received:
 - \$1.5M for incarcerated youth programs
 - Hire Up Grant for formerly-incarcerated, former foster youth
 - \$80,000 from Rising Scholars Network

- Student count reached ~200
- Hosted NA meeting, author Keri Blakinger, Root & Rebound Workshop, Pancake Breakfast, Beach Day, End-of-Semester Celebration

Ongoing Activities:

- FITE Club (Tuesdays)
- Life Coaching with Jamala Taylor
- All A's Recovery (Mondays & Thursdays)

Spring 2022 - Fall 2021 Highlights:

- Strong partnerships with Project Rebound and Underground Scholars
- Guest speakers with lived experience: Dave Dahl, Danny Murrillo, Martin Leyva, Javier Rodriguez
- Micro-communities created (e.g., Parents' Group, Sober Scholars)
- First-ever transfer fair for formerly incarcerated students (Fall 2021)
- LIFE Celebration Events

Spring 2021 Highlights:

- 94.5% retention rate
- 8 transfers to 4-year colleges
- Formed support communities, held 6 guest speaker events
- Developed job board, manuals, newsletters via interns
- Recognized by Chancellor's Office

B. Challenges and Obstacles

- **Stigma & Discrimination:** Ongoing bias affects student engagement and confidence
- **Navigating Reentry:** Students juggle parole, housing, work, and family while pursuing education
- **Financial Barriers:** Difficulties accessing financial aid due to recent release or past convictions
- **Limited Awareness:** Students unaware of Rising Scholars services
- **Technology Gaps:** Limited access to tech for late-starting students
- **Mental Health & Trauma:** Lack of accessible mental health resources impacts academic success
- **Physical Space:** Current shared space is insufficient; lack of nearby counseling services

RISE Youth Program

A. Accomplishments and Improvements

- Hosted over 25 impactful events and programs:
 - Songs from the Hole (108 attendees)
 - Weekly workshops at YGC, guest speakers at Gilbert High (Gils Lab)
 - Hosted college tours and community partner visits
 - Bi-weekly Youth Development Court participation and advocacy
 - RISE Youth Week across multiple campuses
 - Provided Chromebooks, gas, and grocery cards
 - Department of Rehabilitation workshops
 - Employed a Youth Professional Expert with lived experience

Key Events:

- Beach Day (Aug 16, 2025)
- Pancake Orientation (Aug 21, 2025)
- FLEX Day (Aug 22, 2025)
- Spread Off - Mt. SAC Community Event (Nov 21, 2024)
- Hillview Assembly (Oct 30, 2025)

B. Challenges and Obstacles

- Limited partnerships with colleges at youth facilities
- Probation restrictions on student furloughs
- Need for clearer pathways from incarceration to education or careers
- High student turnover
- Complicated financial aid process for youth
- Lacking programming: music, influencer, barbering, and career-exploration workshops
- Post-release challenges: ID access, housing, tutoring, food/book passes, legal services, and wraparound support

6. Ensuring Equity in Student Services

A. Describe how your program addresses the needs of underrepresented student populations and delivers equitable student services.

Professional Experts with Lived Experience

The Cypress College (CC) Rising Scholars (RS) Program understands the complexities of enrolling in community college. This is why we employ **Professional Experts with lived experience** to mentor our formerly incarcerated (FI) & criminal legal system-involved students through every step: from initial contact with RS, applying for financial aid/EOPS/DSS, to completing their educational goals. Navigating college can be overwhelming & full of barriers—we understand this as we have lived it!

Academic & Career Counseling

RS employs an academic counselor with lived experience who creates educational plans & provides skill-building tools for academic success. In addition to guiding students through enrollment & persistence, the counselor provides mentoring & emotional support, helping students navigate challenges such as interpersonal conflicts, sobriety, imposter syndrome, & positive self-talk. Our commitment to hiring individuals with lived experience ensures students receive guidance from those who truly understand.

Additionally, our program is led by tenured career counselor Anne-Marie Beck, who understands the critical importance of career development for students who have experienced incarceration & criminal legal system involvement. The RS team refers students to Anne-Marie & other career counselors for services, including:

- Major exploration & selection
- Resume & cover letter development
- Job search strategies
- Networking & LinkedIn profile building
- Professional branding & informational interviews
- Career pathway & licensure guidance, with attention to state & federal regulations impacting students with criminal records

Peer-to-Peer Mentoring

We value building positive social networks, which is why we facilitate multiple opportunities for peer mentorship, including:

- **Regular Weekly Meetings:** FITE Club, Collaborative Resource Meetings, All A's Recovery, & Caseload Peer Support meetings
- **WhatsApp Q/A Group:** Students can ask & answer each other's questions, providing instant access to resources & support.

- **Pancake Orientations:** New & veteran students are grouped together to build connections & mentorship.
- **End-of-Semester Celebrations:** Veteran students are recognized & encouraged to mentor new students.
- **Campus Events:** Various opportunities throughout the semester for students to connect & support each other.
- **Human Services Internships:** Students gain professional experience in leadership positions while giving back to the RS community.

Meeting the Distinct Needs of Our Students

We take a data-driven, student-centered approach to program development, ensuring our services evolve in response to student feedback. Key initiatives include:

- **Regular Surveys:** Assessing student needs & adjusting programming accordingly.
- **Community Advisory Board Meetings:** Student representatives advocate for peers, helping refine services. After students voiced a need for increased RS space access, we prioritized hiring staff to keep it open four days a week, 10 hours a day.
- **Substance Abuse Recovery Support:** In response to student feedback, we implemented weekly All A's Recovery Meetings, based on a 12-step framework, to support students recovering from various challenges.

Impact Metrics & Success Stories

Our commitment to student success is reflected in measurable outcomes:

- **Enrollment Growth:** Our RS student community has quadrupled since Fall 2022, a testament to the welcoming & supportive environment cultivated by our faculty & staff.
- **Graduation Rates:** Increasing by approximately 5 - 10% annually as students persist & complete their educational goals.
- **Employment Outcomes:** 30-40% of our students secure employment within their first year at CC, thanks to our strong peer network & career center partnership.

Student Success Stories

Ashleigh Carter: Formerly incarcerated and currently a single mom. Through RS, she applied for & received multiple scholarships, secured a paid internship with the Governor's Office via the CC Career Center, and was selected as CC Graduate of the Year! She now attends CSULB, with plans to soon apply to law school. Her photo is displayed outside campus on Valley View Street as a testament to her success.

Valentino Gonzales: Valentino deeply engaged with our community. He began as an intern, later became a Peer Mentor, & contributed significant graphic design work to the program. Maintaining a 3.65 GPA, he completed all his coursework to transfer in 1.5 years. He is now preparing to transfer into a bachelor's program in social work, with plans to pursue an MSW.

B. How do you serve students regardless of service location or delivery method?

As stated above, each student is paired with a Professional Expert who reaches out to them regularly. These Professional Experts are also available before/after hours, and remotely. Students are able to quickly access someone who can support them with each of their immediate needs, and help them navigate the challenges that frequently confront students who are formerly-incarcerated and criminal legal system involved. Our Professional Experts are available by (google voice) phone and text, email, Zoom, and in person. Again, this provides multiple modalities to accommodate the unique needs of our student community.

C. Do you receive funding from Student Equity and Achievement (SEA)?

SEA Funding allows for Rising Scholars to provide programming and supports for our system-impacted, addiction recovery students as well. These students would not be covered by the CCCCO RSN Grant, so SEA allows for us to support these vulnerable students as well! With SEA Funding, we are able to provide this student community with academic counseling by a counselor with lived experience and textbook support. However, SEA funding is not guaranteed; rather, it is soft funds in need of funding proposals annually with unpredictable results.

7. Student Services Learning Outcomes (SSSLOs) and Assessment

A. Rising Scholars SLO Assessment:

Each of these SLOs were assessed in collaboration with the Institutional Research (IR) department and Rising Scholars during this Spring 2025 semester. Surveys were sent out to the entirety of the student community via email and WhatsApp. Additionally, QR codes were posted about the Rising Scholars Center – and mentors sent the links to their students on their caseloads.

SLO 1:

"Rising Scholars students will receive equitable and tailored academic supports, programming, and services, so as to ensure their academic success."

Success in Achieving the above-listed SLO:

High Satisfaction Ratings:

- *Overall Quality of Service:* 87.7% rated it "excellent"
- *Staff Courtesy, Helpfulness, and Knowledge:* Over 82% "excellent"
- *Timeliness, Clarity, and Quality of Resources:* 77%–82% "excellent"

Open-Ended Feedback:

Students consistently mention **academic support** in the form of:

- Counseling, mentorship, tutoring, and study space
- Help with registration, school supplies, and scholarships
- Support navigating school systems

Identified Areas of Change Needed

- 31% still expressed a **need for more academic preparation** support (Q8).
- 19% identified a **lack of academic support** as a barrier to success (Q7).
- Some comments point to **confusion about educational direction**, suggesting not all students receive the tailored support they need.

Overall, this SLO was mostly met, with students indicating high satisfaction and broad use of academic services. However, a subset of students still feel their needs are not fully addressed.

SLO 2:

"Rising Scholars students will receive equitable and tailored academic supports, programming, and services, so as to ensure their continued success in the form of individual, educational and career goal attainment."

Success in Achieving the above-listed SLO:

Support for Continued Success:

- Students praise mentorship, career prep, and the Hire Up Grant as enabling them to stay in school and aim toward longer-term goals.
- Multiple students directly credit the program with helping them re-enroll, transfer, or persist in college.
- 62% requested transfer support, showing that educational progression is on students' minds and the program is seen as a support system.

Career/Goal Support Services:

- 34% asked for more professional development opportunities (Q8).
- Students cited job-related barriers (e.g., criminal record, difficulty finding work) and appreciate the program's help with record expungement (59% say they need this service).
- Financial supports (grants, supplies) were directly tied to students' ability to continue working toward goals.

Identified Areas of Change Needed

- 52% requested more financial resources for housing/living—seen as critical to long-term success.
- 33% want more mentors; 33% want mental health staff—indicating gaps in tailored long-term goal support.
- Several open-ended responses suggest that career and transfer guidance is helpful but could be more structured or widespread.

While this SLO was substantially met, some students expressed a desire for more professional development and life-planning resources to fully support long-term success.

Part 8: This is our first Program Review

9: New Program Goals

GOAL ONE

Goal: To increase student enrollment within Rising Scholars by 5%, each year, from the 24-25 academic year

Objective

1. Continue employing approximately 5 Professional Experts/Mentors who can conduct outreach, in-reach, and provide support so as increase students' persistence and goal attainment rates.
2. Ensure that we continue providing tailored groups, events, workshops, so as to support our students with their unique challenges during their educational journeys at Cypress College.
3. Ensure that we continue providing our students with such targeted supports as: laptop vouchers, textbook vouchers, school supplies, so as relieve some of the financial burdens that frequently lead to students leaving school

Timeline

Year-round, except for the few weeks when we are closed for winter break.

Campus Plans/Initiatives

- SEA Plan
- Strategic Plan

GOAL TWO

Goal: To increase our students' degree and transfer rates by 5% each year (starting from the 24-25 academic year)

Objective:

1. To require our students have an SEP-A completed within their first semester with us
2. To require our students have an SEP-C completed within their first academic year with us
3. To continue our practice of referring students to the Career Planning Center for support with identifying a major when they are "undecided"

Timeline:

Year-round, except for the few weeks when we are closed for winter break.

Campus Plan/Initiative:

- SEA Plan
- Strategic Plan

GOAL THREE

Goal: Increase program staff (mentors), so that we have one mentor per caseload of **30 students**. Mentors are vital student success – and are tasked with consistently reaching out to their student caseloads, and supporting students in overcoming any challenges during their academic journeys – and, also, applaud any successes.

Objective:

1. Advocate for permanent campus/district funds to be allocated to this critical piece of the Rising Scholars' programming structure
2. Seek additional grant funding outside of campus/district funds
3. Ensure that datamart data is as complete and up to date as possible, so as ensure our CCCCO RSN grant allocations are proportionate to our actual student size

Timeline:

- May – June, 2025: Apply to Prop 47 Grant Funding
- Fall 2025: Begin having conversations with Cypress College and NOCCCD administration, in order to discuss securing permanent, allocated funds for Rising Scholars

Campus Plan/Initiative:

- SEA Plan
- Strategic Plan

Part 10: Resources / Needs Assessment

1. Full Time Director of Educational Partnerships

Justification/Impact on Goals:

Would greatly enhance our ability to:

- Regularly train, mentor, supervise staff, student workers, and interns
- Regularly apply for additional grant funding (ie Strong Workforce & Prop 47)
- Ensure that the program was closely monitored and supported consistently throughout the semester
- Could regularly meet and represent Rising Scholars during administrative meetings
- Ensure that all data, RQs, reimbursements, etc.. Are recorded, submitted, and processed on time and accurately
- Provide a professional with lived experience with a valuable opportunity to develop professionally – and grow this program

Cost:

- **Salary:** \$133,839 - \$168,761 a year
- **Benefits:** \$26,767.80 - \$33,752.20 a year (20%)

Priority # 1 or 2

2. Full Time Coordinator

Justification/Impact on Goals:

- Would greatly enhance our ability to:
- Return current faculty coordinator back to district hired position
- Regularly coordinate workshops, events, orientations, celebrations
- Ensure our program data, expenditures are tracked and monitored
- Enable us to apply for additional grant and campus funds (ie Strong Workforce & Prop 47)
- Provide a professional with lived experience with a valuable opportunity to develop professionally – and grow this program
- Provide regular guidance and supervision for student workers
- Create internship structure/manual for Human Services and graduate interns
- Attend regular RSN Collaborative meetings with CCCCCO
- Ensure we are thoroughly and accurately collecting our MIS Data

Cost:

- **Salary:** \$70,908 - \$85,560 a year
- **Benefits:** \$14,181.60 - \$17,112 a year (205)

Priority # 1 or 2

3. Tenure-Track Counselor

Justification/Impact on Goals: Currently, Cypress College has only one adjunct counselor available to support over 400 Rising Scholars students—a growing and highly vulnerable population. These students face a wide range of complex barriers as they strive to enter, persist in, and succeed in their academic journeys. Among the most common and pressing challenges they experience are housing instability (including homelessness), food insecurity, domestic violence, substance use recovery, classroom conflicts with professors/faculty instructors, probation and parole obligations, difficulties securing employment, and interpersonal conflicts.

These critical issues frequently surface during academic counseling sessions, and addressing them effectively requires far more than basic guidance. Students need a counselor with deep compassion, trauma-informed practices, and extensive knowledge of both campus and community resources. They need someone who can advocate for them and help them navigate institutional systems with care and consistency.

Relying on a part-time, adjunct counselor to meet these needs is not only unsustainable—it is a disservice to our students. To ensure the Rising Scholars program can provide equitable, holistic support, we need a full-time, tenure-track counselor. This investment is essential for fostering the success, well-being, and long-term educational attainment of our Rising Scholars students at Cypress College.

Cost:

- **Salary:** \$85,541 - \$158,462
- **Benefits:** \$17,108.20 - \$31,692.40 (20%)

Priority #3

3. FT Student Services Professionals

Justification/Impact on Goals: Currently, we provide our students with Professional Experts / Mentors, who are assigned caseloads of students to regularly check in with. However, as our program grows, and our Professional Experts go on/off contract (38 / 52 weeks), students are bounced between mentors – and sometimes go without mentors for months at a time. In our Rising Scholars Spring 2025 survey, many students credited the one-on-one mentorship and support they received from our staff as being one of the key contributors to their academic success. We foresee that, with permanent mentor

positions being provided to our students, we will see a significant increase in Rising Scholars student retention, persistence, and academic goal attainment.

Cost:

- **Salary:** \$60,384 - \$72,576 a year
- **Benefits:** \$12,076.80 - \$14,515.20 a year (20%)

Priority #4

Part 11. Program Review Involvement

A. Faculty and staff who participated in the program review process.

- Anne-Marie Beck (Rising Scholars Coordinator)
- Brandon Garcia (Rising Scholars Adjunct Counselor)
- Cynthia Blake (RISE Youth Program Director)
- Eileen Haddad (Senior Research and Planning Analyst)
- Dr. Troy Davis (Direct Supervisor & Dean of Counseling and Student Development)

B. Describe the involvement of faculty and staff in the program review process.

Anne-Marie Beck:

- Worked closely with IR in order to create student survey, distribute survey to student community
- Analyzed the results of the survey
- Compiled responses to the Program Review sections, incorporating the results of student survey into responses

Brandon Garcia:

- Collaborated with Anne-Marie, in order to create student survey in alignment with Rising Scholars Programming and student population
- Compiled responses for *sections 5 and 12* in the Program Review

Cynthia Blake:

- Compiled RISE-focused data and information for the Program Review process, particularly for *section 5*.

Eileen Haddad:

- Worked closely with the Rising Scholars team, in order to create and distribute Program Review survey to the Rising Scholars student community

Dr. Troy Davis:

- Reviews and approves / recommends modifications to the Rising Scholars Spring 2025 Program Review

Part 12. Publication Review

As part of the program review process, we conducted a thorough evaluation of the Rising Scholars department webpage and associated publications to ensure the accuracy and relevance of the content. The current website, <https://www.cypresscollege.edu/rising-scholars/>, requires several updates. Specifically, the “Events” section may need to be updated or possibly disabled, and the contact email listed on the page is outdated. The previous email, life@cypresscollege.edu, should be replaced with the current address, risingscholars@cypresscollege.edu. Additionally, the website currently lacks an intake or interest form link, which would support outreach and student engagement.

While we inquired about incorporating a Rising Scholars logo, Cari Jorgensen, Web Content Specialist in the Office of Campus Communications, confirmed in a December 19, 2024 email that only the official college logo is permitted on college webpages. However, she did confirm that a team photo could be added, and coordination with Tori Felipe is in progress to schedule the photo. The current webpage only features an exterior photo of the HUM building, which could be replaced to make the site more engaging. We also note that the new Rising Scholars Canvas Shell is under construction, with its implementation timeline to be determined.

Action Plan: We will connect with Cari Jorgensen and the Campus Communications Team to request the following updates to the Rising Scholars webpage:

1. Replace the old email address with the current one (risingscholars@cypresscollege.edu)
2. Add a new team photo
3. Include an intake/interest form link
4. Assess whether to update or disable the “Events” section
5. Coordinate the future implementation of the Rising Scholars Canvas Shell once completed

Part 13. Evaluation and Approval from Immediate Management Supervisor

Comments:

Program Review report reviewed and recommended changes have been provided and incorporated.

Immediate Management Supervisor Signature: Dr. Troy Davis

Date Approved: 05/27/2025

Anne-Marie Program Review Rising Scholars Spring 2025 Program Review

Final Audit Report

2025-05-27

Created:	2025-05-22
By:	Lela Beck (lbeck@cypresscollege.edu)
Status:	Signed
Transaction ID:	CBJCHBCAABAAvEV9s7BWD5Fc3v35-y8RidlUshoQdxP

"Anne-Marie Program Review Rising Scholars Spring 2025 Program Review" History

-  Document created by Lela Beck (lbeck@cypresscollege.edu)
2025-05-22 - 3:14:09 PM GMT - IP address: 207.233.78.119
-  Document emailed to Troy Davis (tdavis@cypresscollege.edu) for signature
2025-05-22 - 3:16:31 PM GMT
-  Email viewed by Troy Davis (tdavis@cypresscollege.edu)
2025-05-27 - 3:24:11 PM GMT - IP address: 104.47.55.126
-  Document e-signed by Troy Davis (tdavis@cypresscollege.edu)
Signature Date: 2025-05-27 - 3:24:34 PM GMT - Time Source: server- IP address: 207.233.78.134
-  Agreement completed.
2025-05-27 - 3:24:34 PM GMT