



theRPgroup

Research • Planning • Professional Development
for California Community Colleges

Umoja Community

Insights and Feedback from Program
Coordinators on Available Supports and
Resources

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Acknowledgments

The RP Group would like to thank the Umoja program coordinators who shared their experiences and offered recommendations and suggestions to strengthen the supports and resources offered statewide by the Umoja Community. This report is a summary of their insights about and impressions of the capacity-building support provided by the Umoja Community. We are also grateful to the Umoja Community leadership for their support and guidance. A special thank you to Elisa Rassen for her feedback and suggested edits on the report draft.

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Executive Summary

The [Research and Planning Group for California Community Colleges \(RP Group\)](#) partnered with [Umoja Community](#) leadership to **conduct a study that assesses statewide efforts to support Umoja program coordinators**. The purpose of this study is to evaluate the effectiveness of the technical assistance, resources, and trainings offered by the statewide Umoja Community to support local Umoja programs. Umoja program coordinators from a representative sample of statewide programs and institutions were invited to participate. This **report summarizes the feedback and insights gleaned from interviews with nine program coordinators and one instructional faculty member** (program coordinators) who volunteered to participate.

Methodology

The program coordinator interviews were transcribed and analyzed using [Dedoose](#), a software that supports qualitative content analysis, to identify key themes, takeaways, relevant quotes and suggestions.

Overview of Respondents and Umoja Programs

The interviewees **largely comprised counseling faculty** who led programs that have been in existence anywhere from one to 44 years, some prior to 2006 when the Umoja Community was established, in rural, suburban, and urban areas, with various campus sizes, percentages of African-American students, and African-American student transfer rates. Representing nearly one-fifth of the 62 Umoja programs statewide, the program coordinators spoke about their passion for and dedication to Umoja and its students and the ways the work had been rewarding and personally transformational.

Many programs were led and supported by between three and nearly 40 administrators, faculty, and staff and **often offered one- or two-year learning communities with Umoja-led or supported coursework, most commonly** in English, math, and counseling. After completing Umoja coursework, students were still considered part of Umoja until their graduation or transfer and had continuous access to a variety of wraparound services and benefits, such as priority registration, tutoring, a “Village” space, workshops, and university tours. The [Umoja Practices](#) guided and framed key programming, pedagogy, and curriculum.

Successes noted by program coordinators focused on positive student outcomes, fruitful fundraising, and securing full-time positions. **Challenges included** a lack of transparency regarding the amount of funding provided by colleges; limited recognition and support from campus administrators; administrators’ lack of awareness of and understanding about the real time necessary for students to make academic progress, especially in the context of the non-academic issues that hinder student progress; and ability to record and code data and other information accurately to capture the scope and scale of Umoja services and supports provided to students.

Program coordinators **worked to “Umojafy” their institutions** by working to help others on campus recognize the inequities facing African-American students, learning how best and making a commitment to changing the narrative about African-American students, and infusing the Umoja practices to improve student outcomes. Others suggested that another Umoja-related campus impact was raising the voice and positive visibility of African-American students and faculty. The institutional transformation effort, Guided Pathways, engaged Umoja program coordinators who felt this framework mirrored Umoja without the cultural relevancy and who wanted to ensure that their and similar programs would not be lost. Although some program coordinators noted that the [Umoja Practices](#) could provide a foundation and model for Guided Pathways implementation, **many planned to offer parallel “mini” Umoja guided pathways part of the larger Guided Pathways transformation.**

Assessment of Umoja Community Resources and Supports

The **large majority (70-90%) of program coordinators positively assessed key Umoja Community resources and supports**—the program coordinator-only Winter Retreat, the mandatory Summer Learning Institute, student college recruitment Umoja Days, the Annual Conference for students, site visits and ongoing guidance by regional coordinators, effective practice examples, and sample pedagogy—as extremely or somewhat effective or useful. **Fewer program coordinators assessed the case studies and curriculum as effective and/or useful, 50% and 40% respectively, as many were not aware of the availability of these materials.**

Generally, program coordinators indicated that **all Umoja Community events, supports, and resources provided needed guidance** on programming and pedagogy, offered safe spaces and opportunities for Umoja staff and students to network and collaborate, and underscored the importance and implementation of the Umoja Practices. Suggested improvements focused on presenting valuable information on how to “Umojafy” their work and that of the larger campus community, offering guidance on and support for fundraising, advocating for changes in the statewide data management information system (MIS) to ensure the capture of accurate and useful program and student information, and gathering participant input at key events.

Table 1 provides a snapshot of areas of strength and opportunities for improvement noted by the program coordinators for each of the core Umoja Community supports and resources.

Table 1. Umoja Community Resources and Supports—Areas of Strength and Areas for Improvement Reported by Program Coordinators

Areas of Strength/Support	Areas for Improvement/Concern
<i>Winter Retreat</i>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Opportunity for program coordinators to have space to collaborate and convene • Focuses on new methods, practices, and programming • Seen as “self-care” and helps to prevent “burnout” 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Additional focus on methods, practices, and programming • Need to balance time spent on providing emotional support versus sharing new methods, ideas, and solutions

Areas of Strength/Support	Areas for Improvement/Concern
<i>Summer Learning Institute</i>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • On-ramps and orients new program coordinators and staff • Provides space for networking and collaboration across programs • Offers specifics on effective Umoja practices 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Schedule shorter days • Utilize less lecture style, more interactive sessions • Need clear framing and objectives for each day • Focus on specific ways to “Umojafy” efforts and practices • Gather participant feedback prior to end of institute • Reconsider costs as the institute is cost-prohibitive for some programs
<i>Umoja Days</i>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students learn about prospective transfer sites and Umoja supports/programming, share experiences, and network with peers • Exposes other campuses to the work of Umoja 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Market as a college recruitment event • Reconsider timing • Can be cost-prohibitive • Consider programming on Umoja and its practices geared toward students
<i>Annual Conference</i>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Students are exposed to new perspectives, learn about Umoja practices, share their experiences and network with their peers, take leadership roles, and earn scholarships 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify African-American speakers focused on African-American student issues and academic/life success
<i>Site Visits and Regional Coordinators</i>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regional coordinators help to address issues and challenges; connect programs within their assigned area; share their experiences and offer advice; provide models, approaches, strategies related to the Umoja practices; ensure campus administrators are accountable to the program; and provide updates on changes within the Umoja Community and regional and statewide issues 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Train regional coordinators and program coordinators on how to best conduct site visits • Clarify purpose, goals, objectives, and protocol for site visits
<i>Effective Practice Examples</i>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provides training and support from fellow coordinators at Winter Retreat, Summer Learning Institute (SLI), and assigned regional coordinators 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Offer more organized, formal, and structured information on how to implement effective practices
<i>Curriculum, Case Studies, and Sample Pedagogy</i>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use of Umoja Practices, and in some cases case studies, to inform curriculum development 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of awareness about available resources • Offer more organized, formal, and structured information

Recommendations

Additional support and guidance could be provided to help the program coordinators bring positive attention and more funding to their programs, have additional tools to strengthen their teaching and program structure, and be prepared to present Umoja practices to inform campus-wide Guided Pathways design and implementation. **The support and resources that the program coordinators need most from the Umoja Community fall into the following four categories: 1) advocacy, 2) communication, 3) capacity-building and professional development, and 4) fundraising.** Each of these categories is described below in Table 2.

Table 2. Recommendations for Umoja Community Support

Advocacy
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Support and recommend to the California Community College Chancellor’s Office (CCCCO) recognition and institutionalization of Umoja to support guaranteed and sustainable funding• Outline additional codes and push for updates with the CCCCCO for the statewide MIS to fully capture Umoja programs’ scope, scale, and outcomes• Prepare and expect regional coordinators to hold administrators accountable as part of their job responsibilities
Communication
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Determine more transparent and inclusive decision-making strategies influencing regional leadership selection• Develop additional communication and marketing of available Umoja Community resources to program coordinators• Clarify objectives and outline better framing for events and resources
Capacity Building and Professional Development
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Offer training and direct support to model effective data tracking methods• Prepare program coordinators to play a lead role in highlighting Umoja and its practices as foundational to Guided Pathways design• Provide guidelines and develop protocols to set expectations, provide structure, and inform the work of the regional coordinators• Consider two tracks for the SLI—one for new program coordinators and staff, and another for more seasoned program coordinators and their staff• Provide grant writing support and assistance
Fundraising
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Identify funding opportunities for Umoja programs• Support grant writing to secure additional financial and other resources

Conclusion

The **Umoja Community resources and supports are effective and useful** in helping program coordinators avoid burnout, strengthen and scale up their programs, and adequately support and inspire their students. Increased attention to issues such as 1) how resources and tools are marketed and disseminated, 2) capacity-building to effectively use the available materials and

submit and track program and student data, (3) efforts related to clarifying and structuring the role of and developing a protocol for regional coordinators, and (4) statewide advocacy for data support and funding will all be necessary to continue to support and strengthen the work of the program coordinators. Additional research on Umoja from the student perspective, as well as an examination of students' outcomes, will provide a fuller picture of the impact of the Umoja Community.

Introduction

Umoja is “a community and critical resource dedicated to enhancing the cultural and educational experiences of African American and other students” ([Umoja Community website](#)). El Camino and Chabot Colleges have the longest continuously running communities, and 15 culturally-focused programs for students of African descent existed in 2006 when an effort to affiliate these programs as part of a statewide Umoja Community began. In response to the educational equity gaps experienced by students of African descent on California community college campuses, **these programs seek “to transform, enrich, and advance the lives of students by infusing culturally relevant pedagogy and practices”** ([Umoja Community website](#)). With a focus on providing students of African descent a safe and conscious space, mentorship, guidance, and support, Umoja offers and supports culturally-based and focused classes, assignments, and readings, as well as African-themed rituals and workshops to prepare its community members for educational and professional success. Often funded by the California Community Colleges Chancellor’s Office Student Success and Equity initiative, Umoja programs have improved “the retention and success of ... students as well as stimulat[ed] their progress to transfer-ready status” ([Umoja Community website](#)).

Project Purpose

The Research and Planning Group for California Community Colleges ([RP Group](#)) is partnering with the Umoja Community to evaluate the effectiveness of technical assistance, resources, and trainings offered by the statewide Umoja program to support local Umoja programs. This research has been undertaken in order to identify effective practices that can be highlighted and recommended for existing and future Umoja programs.

This report summarizes the interviews conducted to assess the effectiveness of the resources and supports provided to Umoja program coordinators, identifying common themes and recommendations offered by program coordinators to inform the Umoja Community leadership’s efforts to provide the training, support, and resources for coordinators to sustain, strengthen, and grow their programs.

In This Report

The first section of the report provides an overview of the research methodology and approach used and then summarizes the characteristics of the Umoja programs and program coordinators who were selected for study inclusion. The experiences of the project coordinators who were interviewed and the selection criteria used to identify those who would be interviewed are highlighted next. The report’s following section provides additional information on program context, structure, successes, and challenges for the program coordinators who volunteered to share their insights on the Umoja Community resources and supports. The interviewees’ assessment of and feedback on the Umoja Community resources and supports are summarized and then followed by suggestions and recommendations gleaned

from the input provided. The report's conclusion proposes additional research activities to further explore program impacts.

Methodology

To identify a representative sample of the Umoja membership, 12 coordinators were selected by the Umoja Community leadership based on the following criteria: campus region and area type, campus size, college's African-American (AA) transfer rates, and college's percentage of African-American students. Table 1 provides an **overview of the characteristics of the programs managed by the 10 program coordinators who responded** to the invitation and agreed to be interviewed.

Table 3. Characteristics of Umoja Coordinators' Programs

College	Community Type	Region	% AA Transfer*	Campus Size**	% AA Population***	Years in Existence	Year Began as African-American-Serving Program	Year Joined the Umoja Community
Antelope Valley	Suburban	South	32	M	16	9	2006	2015
Bakersfield	Suburban	Central Valley	24	M/L	5	13	2008	2015
Diablo Valley	Urban	East Bay	48	M	5	1	2006	2006
El Camino	Urban	South	36	M/L	14	8	1987	1987
Fullerton	Urban	South-Long Beach	52	M/L	3	5	2013	2012
Los Angeles Trade Technical	Urban	South-Los Angeles	41	L	17	44	1974	2015
Los Medanos	Suburban	Bay Area	42	S	14	32	1986	2006
Moreno Valley	Rural	Inland Empire	35	S	11	6	2012	2012
Sierra	Suburban	Sacramento	46	M	3	7	2011	2013
Southwestern	Suburban	San Diego	45	L	5	10	2008	2008

* From Datamart or Scorecard

** Small (S) = <11,999, Medium (M) = 12,000-24,999, Large (L) = 25,000+ students

*** From Umoja Leadership database

Ten of the 12 program coordinators voluntarily agreed to a **45- to 60-minute telephone interview** during which they were asked to comment on their role and that of their team members, their program structure and components, their successes and challenges, and their assessment of resources and supports provided by the Umoja Community (see Appendix A for the interview protocol). [Dedoose](#), a software that supports qualitative content analysis, was

used to code the transcribed interviews to determine common themes and identify relevant quotes. A summary of key takeaways is provided to protect the interviewees' confidentiality.

Overview of Respondents and Their Umoja Programs

The 10 individuals interviewed represent nearly one-fifth of the Umoja programs (10 of 62) and were mainly counselors who had worked at their current college or another California Community College (CCC) for a while before joining Umoja. A few program coordinators held other positions focused on student equity or were part of their colleges' Guided Pathways committees. In many cases, the coordinators were encouraged by college administrators or outgoing Umoja coordinators to apply for the coordinator position due to their demonstrated commitment to African-American students and issues of equity and inclusion. All interviewees were driven by a commitment to serve and support African-American students.

When asked to offer any general comments about Umoja and their roles as coordinators, **many interviewees spoke about their personal passion for and dedication to Umoja**. As three coordinators shared:

I've been at [this college] now for ... years, and it's been by far the richest work that I've done to coordinate Umoja. It's really ... changed how I teach. It's changed the person I am. It's changed how I feel. ... I always loved teaching, and I love my career, but I certainly didn't love it the way I have these last six years.

I feel incredibly honored and blessed to be a part of the program. ... I know that I'm supposed to be in this program because I dream about it, you know? I have more dreams about my Umoja students ... than [I] have [about] any of my students. ... I just ... take that as a sign that this is where I'm supposed to be.

Honestly, ... I love my job. I love the population I serve. I can't imagine doing anything else, but it is definitely hard work, ... and sometimes you feel like people are always judging you and looking for numbers, but ... I just ... love the work. I just want to get whatever support that I can get from the larger community because I'm eager to strengthen everything and grow the program in other ways.

Other program coordinators spoke about the personal transformation that has occurred as a result of their association with the program. In the words of one interviewee:

Umoja changed my life. ... I know it's sort of changed students' lives, but I think really recognizing how it changes you as a person and connecting to something that's bigger than you and fighting for something that's bigger than you and understanding that this is not a 9:00 to 5:00, this is not a Monday through Friday [job]—this is an all-the-time thing where students' lives and their success is on the line and you have to give everything. You really, really do. And it makes you empathetic. It makes you supportive

of your students. It makes you grateful for what you survive. And, for me, it's taught me a lot personally about my own history ... that I wasn't taught in school.

Program Structure

Programs were most commonly two- or four-semester learning communities with students completing Umoja-developed or -supported² courses most commonly in English, psychology, and counseling with a focus on African-American history and relevant current events as well as readings from African-American authors, and if possible, taught by African-American faculty. However, students continue to be part of the Umoja “family” and receive supportive services even after they complete Umoja-led coursework. As one program coordinator described:

Umoja is really from cradle to grave. It's really from inception at this institution to transfer from this institution.

Teams between three and nearly 40 administrators, faculty, and staff managed and ran these programs. Training was received from previous coordinators, assigned regional coordinators, and most commonly, the Summer Learning Institute (SLI). Student recruitment took many forms including outreach to the general community (e.g., presentations at faith-based organizations), current students, and those attending feeder high schools. Key messages focused on providing a sense of communion and community and culturally relevant coursework and experiences. Commonly mentioned program benefits included a dedicated “village” space, an Umoja club centered on tutoring and peer support, recognition events and activities, academic support and guidance, priority registration, social events, mentorship, and dedicated counselors.

Nearly all of those interviewed spoke of “Umoja-fying” existing services and practices by infusing the 18 [Umoja practices](#) (see Appendix B) into non-Umoja-led coursework by working with interested faculty and inviting the entire campus community to participate in Umoja events. **The number of students who participated in these programs annually ranged from 60 to over 300.** Those programs adopting a learning community model had an average of 30 students per cohort.

Sample components of the 10 Umoja programs managed by the program coordinators interviewed for this project include the following:

² Umoja-support courses were taught by faculty who have been trained in the Umoja Practices and are teaching classes that may not be part of the Umoja learning community structure.

Table 4. Sample Components of the 10 Umoja Programs Managed by Project Coordinators Interviewed

Umoja Program Component	Examples
Outreach and recruitment	Presentations at feeder high schools, in college courses, and at the Transfer Center
	Counselor referrals
	Emails/texts to students who identify as African-American
Intake/entry	Application
	Interview
	Orientation
	Summer bridge
Coursework	Education plan
	Umoja-led courses in English, math, counseling, psychology, communications, and sociology
	Umoja-supported courses in dedicated course sections, such as biology
Ongoing services and supports	Coursework under development in math and history
	Priority registration
	“Village” space
	Rituals and celebrations, such as Black Graduation and Middle Passage
	Umoja club
	Business mixers
	Tours of Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs)
	Awards
	Connections to student government
Memoranda of understanding (MOUs) with four-year institutions	
Wraparound services	Mentoring
	Tutoring
	Counseling
	Book grants
	Transportation vouchers
	Clothing
	Food
Social work intern providing non-academic support	

Umoja Program Successes

The program coordinators were able to identify key wins from the past year with little hesitation. All spoke with a sense of pride in what they and their students had accomplished. **Several interviewees noted students’ retention, persistence, and academic accomplishments** (e.g., earning a degree and/or transferring) and personal growth as major successes. As two coordinators shared:

Our success rates in math [are our greatest success]. ... We have really put together a very social justice-based program; however, we have a lot of high success with our math [classes].

We were able to honor 19 students who were transferring at the end of this semester, whereas [in] our first year, we had two on that list. So, that felt pretty amazing. And that included some students going to HBCUs, ... UCs, ... [and] CSUs. That's one major success.

Others highlighted their ability to increase the number of Umoja courses and members, secure additional funding and full-time positions, and expand key program elements, such as creating a dedicated village space and increasing the number of Umoja-only course sections. Two program coordinators described:

Well, I do think it was successful to secure a full-time counselor and full-time coordinator. That was a really big thing for us. In addition to that, I think also just like implementing more courses [was a success]. This is the first year in 10 years that we've kind of ventured out of our English [and] math [courses] and are including humanities courses. And we're looking at other GE courses to broaden the Umoja experience for the students in other disciplinary areas.

I think the fundraising that I've been doing and the trips I've been able to take the students on [have been important successes]. And my ability to kind of navigate the resources on campus a little better because ... stumble on money that's on campus, and I've learned to ... find allies and move money here and there, and I've been able to get some things done without the vice president really knowing where it's coming from. So, I guess I'm learning to navigate my environment.

Challenges Facing Umoja Programs

The program coordinators seemed to be tested by four primary issues: 1) insufficient funding, 2) lack of visibility, 3) difficulty helping students manage non-academic stressors, and 4) obstacles to effective data collection, monitoring, and reporting.

Lack of access to sufficient and sustainable funding, such as that awarded to Puente, Umoja's close cousin, was a major barrier noted by several of the program coordinators. In the words of two coordinators:

I really want to take as many students as I can, but we're really limited [financially]. ... I just want a clear-cut budget. ... Give me \$60K for the year, okay? I'll spend it, I'll figure out what to do with it.

I think the money and the lack of budget transparency has just been a continuing problem.

Several program coordinators voiced frustration about lacking the visibility necessary to secure and warrant sufficient and sustainable funding. In contrast to the Puente program which

program coordinators felt was recognized and supported on their campuses, Umoja did not receive the same level of commitment and sustained funding. One program coordinator reported the following:

Our dean ... throws out the [Proposition] 209³ versus the equity funding and ... that's been a challenge. [He is] saying you can't discriminate and I'm throwing back well, we have equity funding specifically set up for an audience just as much as Puente has Equity Funding specifically set up for a certain audience. No one challenged their population with [Proposition] 209. It's readily accepted.

Two program coordinators also cited major concerns regarding the need to address the non-academic issues hindering students' academic success. Another coordinator shared how many students need more time to make adequate and sustained academic progress. Two coordinators explained:

It's sort of the students' lives that get in the way of them being scholars. So, it's financial situations that makes transportation impossible. Or it's housing situations ... that just give them so much more to try to contend with when they come to school, and they haven't slept much, or they haven't slept comfortably, or they're anxious, or they're whatever because of some unstable housing condition. It's that stuff that makes it hard to get students in class on time with the necessary material in hand and ready to learn.

The biggest thing that I feel is really important is ... recognizing that good things take time They keep looking at ... the numbers ... and the success rates, and sometimes the numbers don't necessarily match the experience. ... I had students ... who failed my first English ... class, but they were better than when they started. ... [It would be great] if Umoja could come up with ... some sort of support ... or something to get the administration to be patient ... and not just look at numbers, but look at stories ..., and listen to ... where the students are coming from on an individual basis and then really invest in the program even though maybe the numbers don't necessarily reflect the small successes that were enjoyed.

Several program coordinators needed more training and support to collect, monitor, and report data and information to show and share their programs' and students' successes.

Others did not depend on the MIS and kept several spreadsheets to accurately capture and report on students' participation in program activities and students' use of available services. As one coordinator described:

[My biggest challenge is the] MIS and the data we've been tracking... That is a challenge because our [MIS] numbers—... they fluctuate. [We are] having to do double work. We're having to track our own numbers, as well as track MIS... Sometimes [the MIS] fields don't

³ In 1996, Proposition 209, California Affirmative Action, "prohibit[ed] public institutions from discriminating on the basis of race, sex, or ethnicity" [https://ballotpedia.org/California_Affirmative_Action,_Proposition_209_\(1996\)](https://ballotpedia.org/California_Affirmative_Action,_Proposition_209_(1996)).

work...And so [Umoja students are] not ... captured...We can't fix it at on ... our end. The Chancellor's Office, at their level, has to fix the backend of the software... .

Campus Impact

Interviewees' responses to how Umoja had impacted the larger campus community bordered on proselytizing, as many coordinators described "Umoja-fying" their institutions by working to help others on campus recognize the inequities facing African-American students, learning how best to engage and support African-American students, making a commitment to changing the narrative about African-American students, and infusing the Umoja Practices (See Appendix B) into their work. In the words of one interviewee:

We have staff that are in our EOPS office ... our discipline office that are Umoja-fied, so they really know the students. And the Transfer Center—we've got staff that are Umoja-fied once students are coming in for transfer. In our First Year Experience Program, we've got staff that ...are Umoja-fied and really understand what we're trying to do as a campus. Our director of Financial Aid is Umoja-fied. Our director of First Year Experience and some of her staff is Umoja-fied ... Our dean over Student Life and Services is Umoja-fied—she's gone through SLI, ... and we've tried to spread that throughout the whole campus.

A few program coordinators noted how **Umoja had led to regular discussions about and awareness and recognition of African-American students**. As two coordinators shared:

Before Umoja started, the circumstances of African American students on campus, it just wasn't discussed at the campus level. It wasn't a topic. ... I'm sure people individually were talking about it ... [and] were concerned, were passionate, had thoughts, but it just wasn't a thing that you would notice, and it really is now. It comes up ... in faculty senate meetings. It comes up ... [in] the advertisement the [public relations] for the campus...

Now our faculty [members say], "Oh, you must be an Umoja student, how can I help you? What can I do to help you ... get through this and help you to get it?"

Others suggested that other positive impacts included the voice and positive visibility that Umoja provided to African-American students as well as the support of and partnership with African-American faculty. Two coordinators commented:

It's a sense of pride ... [that develops when] especially our African-American students know that they have a place that they can call their own. And the fact that the word has gotten out about the program on the campus based on what we do. We've had interclub events where Umoja has dominated the interclub events. ... It's made a name for itself on campus.

We have really committed to bringing together all the Black faculty, staff, and administrators on campus in a unified vision around our students, and that has been a

tremendous success. So, we've mobilized and galvanized and really centralized our resources.

Relationship between Umoja and Guided Pathways

The interviewees, even those who were involved in the larger Guided Pathways effort on their campuses, most often spoke of maintaining but scaling up the existing Umoja pathways within the Guided Pathways framework. As two interviewees shared:

I'm a member of the committee for the Guided Pathways to make sure that ... we aren't written out of the pathways—[to make] sure that Umoja and other special programs [are included]

So, we have, for example, communications. We are this year looking into getting biology. So, we are a little bit more expansive in pulling in some of the general education courses across the campus. So, we're really a mini-Guided Pathway program within the larger institution, if that makes any sense.

The program coordinators understood that Umoja pathways were in line with the four Guided Pathways pillars and could serve as a model for Guided Pathways design and implementation. However, they were cautious about integrating Umoja pathways into the larger effort. One coordinator commented:

I know Guided Pathways is coming, and I know I need to get each and every one of our Umoja students onboard ... [However, we] have our own Umoja Guided Pathways and [we are] ... getting [students] through Umoja with our own Guided Pathways.

Other coordinators **voiced concern that culturally-focused programs would be eliminated or inadequately subsumed by Guided Pathways** and as a result, students of color and an equity agenda would suffer. In the words of one coordinator:

[Guided Pathways is] just Umoja on steroids, [but] missing the culturally-relevant ... part... .

Assessment of Umoja Community Resources and Supports

Since 2006, the statewide organizing and membership body Umoja Community has developed and offered a variety of resources and supports to help Umoja coordinators and their staff build and strengthen their programs. **Each interviewee was asked to assess a variety of Umoja Community resources and supports** (see Appendix C) using the following scale: extremely effective/useful, somewhat effective/useful, not that effective/useful, not at all effective/useful.

Overall, most of the program coordinators felt the available resources and supports were “extremely effective/useful” or “somewhat effective/useful” when rating the Summer Learning Institute (SLI), a mandatory week-long training and conference, the Winter Retreat, their Regional Coordinators, and the site visits, which were often discussed together. Some knew about a binder with curriculum, but few were clear on the availability of curriculum and case studies, and in some cases, sample pedagogy. As a result, these two items got the lowest ratings. Table 5 lists the percentage of extremely or somewhat effective or useful ratings for the Umoja Community resources and supports from highest ranking to lowest.

Table 5. Assessment of Umoja Community Resources and Supports

Resources and Supports	Extremely or Somewhat Effective/Useful
Winter Retreat	90%
Summer Learning Institute	90%
Annual Conference	90%
Other Regional Coordinators	90%
Umoja Days	80%
Site visits	80%
Effective practice examples	75%
Sample pedagogy	70%
Curriculum	50%
Case studies	40%

Summer Learning Institute

The mandatory Summer Learning Institute (SLI) garnered the most comments. Many program coordinators found the week-long meeting and its sessions most valuable for providing hands-on training related to the Umoja practices, orientation for new program coordinators and staff, and as a space to network and connect with other program coordinators and staff. As two interviewees shared:

Well, I learned that ... there's ... not just one way to teach math. They had a doctor, a faculty member there that taught a different way of teaching mathematics ... [connected to] the art of music and relating it to dance. It was extremely effective, and in our program that's the biggest problem we have with African-American students and other minorities—getting them through the math.

I think what really, really worked well is infusing a lot of the “why” for ... not just our students, but for faculty. What's your why? And this year's SLI was really effective with one of the presentations that [a speaker] did before we all went to the middle passage experience, ... really kind of breaking down like white supremacy and the effects that it has in so many systems. ... Even practitioners don't always understand that and ... really document the why of ritual. Why do we do libations? Why do we wear white? You know, why do we do all of these different things?

Suggestions for improving the SLI included shorter days and fewer sessions to allow more time for attendees to digest information and to network; fewer lectures and more interactive sessions; discipline-specific sessions; and clarifying objectives and requesting participants' feedback (e.g., evaluation form) at the end of each day. Five coordinators commented:

What can also be more effective is if they just cut down the timing. Their days are long. It's like 8:00 to 8:00. That's not necessary.

I think ... about lessons over the years where ... it's like, "Oh you need to be student-centered," ...[or] "It needs to be active," ... [or] "You need to get out of the lecture." And yet, all of that information was always delivered as a lecture

I get more out of pretty specific [instructions, like], ... "Here's a handout that talks about the steps that we did to put ... this practice into effect."

I wish there was more structured, organizational things like outcomes again ... so when I get out of this, my syllabus will be ... 100% Umoja-fied ... [and] I'm walking out of there with three Umoja principles, ... exercises, or worksheets, or projects, or assignments for my class

The other thing too I thought would have been really useful is ... to have little surveys at the end of each of day. [The surveys could ask], "What was useful? What would ... have liked to have done more of? What would you ... have liked to have tweaked?" Do that at the end of each day ... so that ... adjustments can be made in process rather than ... saying, "Okay well, we're done now. What do we need to change?" And we'll do it next time

A few interviewees indicated **the SLI was most effective the first time they attended as new coordinators but became less relevant for them and other seasoned coordinators over time.**

In the words of one interviewee:

[SLI is] somewhat effective if you go your first time, [but] not that effective if you go repeatedly. I think we need to get ... the disciplines together. ... If all of the bio professors and all the communications professors ... can get together for X amount of [time each] day, then that can be very, very effective, right? So that's needed.

Lack of funding to attend SLI and the timing of the event was an obstacle to the participation of some program coordinators and their staff. As one coordinator shared:

[Attending the SLI requires] such a big chunk of money, and we have to plan out our activities. ... I don't like to feel like I have to choose between ... attending this professional development opportunity and then resources for our students, [but] ... a lot of times that's ... the decision that I have to make.

Winter Retreat

The safe and trusting space provided by the Winter Retreat, which is only attended by program coordinators, was welcome. One coordinator described:

At Winter Retreat, I can breathe because if things are going bad in Umoja and there's conflict in Umoja, you're not trying to let your outsiders that are just coming onboard see that. ... So, I think it's a very different space, but I think that at Winter Retreat, coordinators can talk about very, very real problems very candidly without having to bite their tongue or worry about who's listening or what's [going to] go back to our campus.

Program coordinators reported that **this event allowed them to speak honestly about their successes and struggles with others who have had similar experiences in a safe, supportive, and confidential environment.** As one interviewee shared:

Sometimes working for a program like Umoja, we try to make a difference for all our students ... [and] it's a workout. And sometimes you get burned out, and that Winter Retreat is to get you back on task and get you the support [you need] and show you new methods of reaching out to students when certain things are not working, or you don't understand certain policies or procedures or the lack thereof. ... You get the support from all the coordinators.

Others were appreciative of the collaborative space, chance to regroup, and opportunity to learn new methods and strategies, but longed for more specific information on policies and practices to support their work. In the words of two coordinators:

So, the Winter Retreat is very effective ... [because] we touch bases and learn more about how ... each program works and [pick] up new ideas and new strategies. ... And it is [kind of] also a refresher and self-care for us because ... we are doing so much [and] ... we need to take time out for [ourselves].

[The Winter Retreat is] somewhat effective. ... Unfortunately, when things don't become effective, it's because ... sometimes it turns into a therapy session. And even though ... it's needed, it's ... not as effective when you're trying to get ... specific questions answered around programming or learn strategies around programming.

Umoja Days

Umoja Days—day-long, student-centered events held on the campus of a community or four-year college or university—are designed to allow students to network and share the unique pedagogical richness of the Umoja learning community with the larger campus. **Program coordinators appreciate the chance to have their students visit prospective transfer destinations and learn about supports, programming, and opportunities** these campuses can provide to them. As one interviewee described:

Umoja Days are ... a good way of getting the program out to the rest of the campus. It's a good way of marketing and selling the program to ... students [who] normally wouldn't buy into it, but they get to see what we're about. They ask questions. And I think ... it's a really good selling point if marketed correctly.

However, some felt Umoja Days were really a recruitment effort by the host universities and colleges when held at a four-year institution and that they should be marketed to students as such rather than as an Umoja event. As a recruitment endeavor, these days are less relevant for students who are not pursuing transfer or considering the host institution as their transfer destination. One coordinator commented:

They need to be called ... "recruitment days" instead of Umoja Days, ... like, "Come to [the host institution]." And that's all fine and good ... if it is for what it is ... and students know that. But if you have no interest in [the host campus] and you're trying to go to [another institution], it could be [kind of] pointless if you don't know what to expect when you get there.

A few coordinators shared how their students had benefited from the Umoja Days. In the words of one coordinator:

... for the [students] who do go, they say it's effective. It's ... a lot of students talking about their experiences of being a student, ... but it's fun as well because it gives [students] an opportunity to get off campus and ... and see another campus and maybe think that might be an option for them.

Some program coordinators lamented the inability to devote the energy, time, and funding necessary for their students to participate. As one interviewee shared:

The only reason I say [that Umoja Days are] somewhat instead of extremely [effective] is there's a lot of stuff that goes on and it's hard to do all of it. ... We've sort of figured out as coordinators what we can handle ... [because] we can only handle so many things per semester...

Annual Conference

The student-focused **Annual Conference** was described by several program coordinators as **impacting students in a manner similar to the impact of the SLI on themselves** and their staff. Program coordinators reported that the forum exposed students to important Umoja practices. As one interviewee observed:

[The annual conference facilitators] use the Umoja practices and principles that are being taught in different ways. [The fact] that the students get a chance to learn these things that support our pedagogy is just awesome.

The opportunity for students to meet other students was another key benefit of the conference. One program coordinator noted that **students often formed bonds and**

connections that lasted long after the conference had ended. In the words of two coordinators:

Definitely networking with other students [is a significant benefit of the conference], as well as growing their own relationships with each other. And the speakers, of course, were fabulous. The workshops were fabulous. ... The caliber of the workshops, of the speakers and the activities, was just outstanding.

Annual Conference is extremely effective because our students get a chance to meet with other Umoja students, and that's where they build their network. ... That's where they build their support. That's where they see things that they have never seen before and meet people that they thought they would never meet before.

One program coordinator described using the conference to provide students with leadership opportunities:

[The Annual Conference is] really powerful for the students. They love seeing ... this huge extended family of other Umoja students and programs throughout the state. It [offers] great leadership opportunities for our students. We usually do a workshop and our kids get to be big shots ... and lead a workshop... .

Students were also awarded scholarships and learned about various HBCUs at this event. As one coordinator shared:

It ignites our students. It gets them excited. It motivates them to bring back fire to our campus. ... It's incredibly important and extremely helpful—... especially the HBCU piece of it. I have ... students accepted on the spot with presidential scholarships.

Some program coordinators noted **the quality of the speakers as a key selling point.** In the words of one interviewee:

And then seeing speakers like Cornel West and Tim Wise [is amazing]. ... [You] can't even put a dollar amount on those things, those experiences for these students who ... in other settings ... probably would never have gone to hear these voices... .

However, two coordinators suggested more attention should be paid to identifying African-American speakers given that most students had had White teachers throughout their K-12 tenure. They further suggested that speakers should be focused on and known for issues associated with African-American student success. One coordinator commented:

[The conference is] somewhat effective. Somewhat. You know, the only thing is the speakers the last two years have been horrible. ... Last year, they brought Tavis Smiley. He didn't even talk about Umoja at all. He just went in there and he just talked trash about Obama and Trump and ... it had nothing to do with students' success... .

Site Visits and Regional Coordinators

When discussing the site visits, most interviewees simultaneously spoke about the work of their assigned regional coordinators; therefore, both resources are presented together in this section.

Feedback on the site visits was mixed due to differences in the ways that the regional coordinators approached these visits. Some regional coordinators helped to address specific challenges the programs faced, visited with college administrators, sat in on Umoja courses, and met with the program coordinator, staff, and students. Other regional coordinators provided updates or sought to check in but offered no other support or discussion on issues such as funding and data-tracking.

Some program coordinators appreciated the opportunity to discuss issues and identify solutions to key challenges with their regional coordinators. As two coordinators commented:

[Meeting with the regional coordinator] gives you a heads-up of what's coming ... down ... the pike, [letting you know that] you might [want to] prepare for this, or these are the expectations that have been changed, ... [or] the Umoja board wants us to do [this] differently now. ... But then also, too, it was good for us to share the resources ... or supports we may need, and ... [my regional coordinator] was a wealth of information... .

So, I think that [the site visit] has been really helpful, especially with a lot of our regional coordinators that were in place before. They would come and show us here's how you do effective implementation of practice in your program. ... That has been really great.

[Regional coordinator] went to my class [and] ... met with students and ... administration. ... And the person who did those things is a real model in terms of my counselors seeing how you work with students, how you do a lesson, how you guide a discussion or even helping me in my ... class in terms of ... how you guide a discussion

Other regional coordinators provided some program coordinators limited support and resources. As three coordinators described:

The regional coordinator comes here and starts asking us questions ... [about] the health of our program and ... what [we are] doing, and they're looking for updates. And sometimes they want to go to a classroom, ... and sometimes the questions they ask kind of prompt me ... to ask questions of my own, but I feel like it's just a check-in actually.

Well, I was told I was going to get guidance on the data-collecting [issue] and I didn't. But ... in general, I have had site visits that have been extremely effective. I've had a site visit where the person went to my class and went to the student development class and met with students and met with administration.

At least one program coordinator described struggling to determine how best to use the services and support of the regional coordinator:

I like to sit with [my regional coordinator] and say, “Here’s what we’re doing,” and then we can work on the site report. ... It’s not like that directly benefits our program in a really clear way. ... Umoja statewide needs to know what’s going on with the different Umoja programs, and I’m happy to help that happen. But when we’re struggling with something, ... it just doesn’t occur to me to call [my regional coordinator] and say, “Can you help us with this?”

For other program coordinators, **the presence of the regional coordinator signaled to the larger campus the importance of the Umoja program.** As one interviewee commented:

We need to have somebody showing up on our campus to show others that ... we’re not just some pop-up program. We’re a viable program that supports minority and African-American students and to see ... the Umoja program show up on campus and talk with our leaders, talk with our students, come into our learning community, come into our classes, be a part of our ... celebration[s], ... to see how we’re doing things ... [and the] type of support our faculty, our institution is giving us—it speaks volumes.

One program coordinator expressed appreciation for the regional coordinators’ efforts to connect programs across the region as a way of providing another source of support:

Our regional coordinator ... makes sure that our region is intact ... So, if they have so many schools, they’re making sure that our schools are touching bases with each other. ... It’s making sure ... that we are helping each other out. If one program is failing, we’re all failing. ... We need to support each other ... [and the] regional coordinator helps tie us all together... .

Others were grateful for the presence of the regional coordinators on their campuses as representatives of the statewide reach and strength of the Umoja Community. A few reflected on the ways the regional coordinators helped to connect programs, identify resources, and draw attention and support to all Umoja programs in their area.

Effective Practice Examples

When the program coordinators discussed how they learned about effective practices, they mentioned the Winter Retreat, SLI, and regional coordinators most frequently, particularly those related to the Umoja practices. Commonly noted Umoja practices included the Umoja Club, Porchtalk, Village space, and mentoring. As two interviewees noted:

When we go through our winter retreats and our Summer Learning Institute training and our annual conferences, we learn about other best of practices and what works and what [doesn’t] work. Sometimes we need to try different things because what works for you may not work for me. But how did you go about doing it? So, maybe I could try that. So, you learn from each other. ... I believe that is extremely effective also with the Umoja practices.

In so many ways I feel like we're like a fledging program. We were established, but we weren't really built out like we should have been. So, when we get ... practices that are sent to us from other schools or within our region, ... I find that to be very effective because it helps us build out what we're trying to do.

More organized, formal, and structured information on how to implement effective practices seemed to be warranted and desired. In the words of one coordinator:

I do ask [about effective practices] when I go to different events and I speak to other coordinators, but ... I don't recall like receiving any collection of practices or anything like that. I may learn about some here and there when I go to different events or if I ask different people, but that's what I want more of.

Curriculum, Case Studies, and Pedagogy

The program coordinators accessed various tools at various Umoja events, usually to support teaching, and they received these tools from their regional coordinators and fellow program coordinators. As three interviewees noted:

I'm using case studies as part of a class. ... The Umoja program had several different case studies as well ... that I used. ... They gave us a disk that had like coordinator tools ... and part of that ... had case studies, ... so I just took some of those and tried to apply them to what's going on here... .

What has been nice is ... when we have [regional coordinators] come in onsite or other coordinators that have come ... having a roundtable and say, ... "How did you do this in your classroom? How'd you handle that in your classroom?" And these people who have so much knowledge and experience really pouring into our faculty ... techniques ... that they can do to make their classroom or their curriculum more effective.

So when it comes to curriculum, we haven't gotten too much advice, but I know over the next period or the next few months we will be ... asking a number of the other schools, "Hey, what is it that you offer?" Especially ... [our sister] college. ... We basically picked [another program coordinator's and staff's] brains a few times about how ... they do their cohorts, their curriculum, how it's set up, why it's set up that way, the plus [and] the minuses of it... .

The SLI was often the main source of these resources. However, some program coordinators noted **the first few SLIs they attended were the most beneficial** in providing curricular and pedagogical resources. This assessment could be the result of the growth of the Umoja Community and an increase in the number of participants attending recent SLIs which required a change in the institute's structure and format, and a focus on training and on-ramping new program coordinators and staff. In the words of one coordinator:

That first SLI that we went to in 2012, I think that's when it was, was very hands on. And ... several pieces of the curriculum really that are still a big part of our program came

from that SLI, like doing a [Griot] project and doing ... Tom Dewitt's Four Q's activity to unpack a reading. And I still remember several ... video clips that we saw there that I'll sometimes show in class or show at a training. ... I don't think I've experienced much of that since that first SLI.

One program coordinator had infused the Umoja practices into the curriculum:

When we're teaching certain topics within our Umoja program, we use like the Epic of Love and the Effective Domain, or we'll use [Porchtalk]. ... We deeply value the student being intentional and deliberate and purposeful in the curriculum ... which we're teaching. So, we take our curriculum and we infuse it with our Umoja practices and principles... .

Few of the program coordinators knew where to find digital or hard copies of teaching-related materials. As one interviewee shared:

[Information on curriculum] was touched on [at the SLI], but we covered a lot. So, I feel like I'm still missing [things] and have gaps in there. I didn't also know about case studies, or the effective practice examples and sample pedagogy. ... I don't know a lot about that, except for the underpinning that everything is done through the Ethic of Love. That's really the only thing that I have holding it together. But as far as like a go-to guide or resources, I don't know anything about that.

Recommendations

Feedback from the program coordinators suggests that the Umoja Community offers several effective and useful resources. However, additional support and guidance could be provided to help the program coordinators bring positive attention and more funding to their programs, utilize additional tools to strengthen their teaching and program structure, and be prepared to present Umoja practices to inform campus-wide Guided Pathways design and implementation. The support and resources that the program coordinators need most from the Umoja Community can be summed up by the following eight recommendations in four key areas: *advocacy, communication, capacity building and professional development, and fundraising:*

Advocacy

1. Conduct advocacy to increase institutionalization and integration of Umoja programs into key CCC systems.
2. Advocate for changes to colleges and statewide MIS and provide professional development for program coordinators related to capturing, uploading and tracking Umoja program and student information.

Communications

3. Expand and enhance the clarity of communications throughout the Umoja Community.

Capacity Building and Professional Development

4. Offer capacity-building and professional development regarding the ways in which Umoja can inform Guided Pathways.
5. Offer capacity-building and professional development to allow program coordinators to effectively collect, upload, monitor, and report on Umoja program and students' successes.
6. Consider restructuring the SLI to appeal to both program coordinators and staff from new and long-running programs.
7. Develop a protocol to frame the site visits and overall guidelines to inform and structure the work of the regional coordinators.

Fundraising

8. Prepare program coordinators to fundraise and identify potential funding opportunities.

Each of these recommendations is discussed in further detail below.

Advocacy

Recommendation 1: Conduct advocacy to increase institutionalization and integration of Umoja programs into key CCC systems.

The Umoja Community must advocate at both local and state levels to ensure Umoja programs receive adequate and sustained funding and are connected and incorporated into existing systems. One area in which advocacy is key include institutionalization of program funding. For example, Umoja leadership could **encourage the Chancellor's Office to provide the type of recognition, institutionalization, and sustained funding afforded to other culturally-focused programs like the Puente Program**. In contrast to what Puente Program leaders are required to do, Umoja program coordinators felt they had to make the case with campus administration for why their programs deserved to be considered for certain funding. Regional coordinators play a key advocacy role and should continue to meet with college administrators during site visits to illustrate the scope and scale of the statewide support and programming, hold administrators accountable for supporting their Umoja programs, and manage expectations about time necessary to see student success.

Recommendation 2: Advocate for changes to colleges and statewide MIS and provide professional development for program coordinators related to capturing, uploading and tracking Umoja program and student information.

Another area where advocacy is key relates to changes to the statewide MIS system to enable accurate tracking of Umoja program's scope and scale. **Accurate data-tracking will require a push to have the statewide MIS codes to be adjusted to capture Umoja students and the breadth of services they receive**. Currently program coordinators have two data tracking systems—their own spreadsheets and the colleges' MIS. Many of the program coordinators struggled to understand how to upload information to their colleges MIS. Others had limited success engaging their colleges' institutional researchers to provide guidance and support.

Communications

Recommendation 3: Expand and enhance the clarity of communications throughout the Umoja Community.

More **transparency and more inclusive decision-making** regarding leadership changes (e.g., shifts in regional coordinators) could help alleviate concern and consternation among program coordinators. Program coordinators understand the Umoja Community may be undergoing “growing pains,” and increased communication about new decisions and changes will maintain their confidence.

Additionally, **communication about the resources that are available needs to be improved to ensure that program coordinators are aware of and have access to tools** that can strengthen and expand their programs. **Further clarity about the purpose, goals, and objectives for many of the Umoja events would also help set expectations** about what types of guidance and support to expect.

Capacity Building and Professional Development

Recommendation 4: Offer capacity-building and professional development regarding the ways in which Umoja can inform Guided Pathways.

Umoja is **primed to inform and support Guided Pathways’** development. Many program coordinators are involved in the Guided Pathways inquiry and design and **plan to offer mini-pathways as part of Umoja rather than considering how to infuse Umoja into the larger effort**. Outlining specific ways that Umoja and the Umoja Practices can serve as a model for the key elements of Guided Pathways would be helpful.

Recommendation 5: Offer capacity-building and professional development to allow program coordinators to effectively collect, upload, monitor, and report on Umoja program and students’ successes.

The ability of program coordinators to use data and information to share who is in their programs and the types and amount of supports and services students receive will be key to sharing program successes. **Few of the program coordinators felt they had the information necessary to adequately and accurately track their data**. Regional coordinators, the Winter Retreat, and the SLI could offer the training and support needed for program coordinators to capture information in order to accurately tell their stories and those of their students.

Recommendation 6: Consider restructuring the SLI to appeal to both program coordinators and staff from new and long-running programs.

Umoja leadership may also consider creating and offering separate SLI tracks for new versus seasoned coordinators and staff. New program coordinators and their staff are more likely to need a strong foundation in the Umoja Practices, pedagogy, and curriculum, whereas seasoned program coordinators and staff might need different types of resources and are likely to want to go deeper on key issues and approaches.

Recommendation 7: Develop a protocol to frame the site visits and overall guidelines to inform the work of the regional coordinators.

Regional coordinators approach their work differently. Guidelines that outline key objectives for site visits and recommended strategies for engaging campus leadership, Umoja students, faculty, and program coordinators and staff could ensure these meetings are effective. Program coordinators appreciate regional coordinators' willingness to advocate with their college leadership on their behalf and seek support and resources to address issues that are unique to their programs.

Fundraising

Recommendation 8: Prepare program coordinators to fundraise and identify potential funding opportunities.

Limited financial resources to run their programs and participate in events are an ongoing challenge for Umoja program coordinators. Program coordinators seem to **have to fight to access available and relevant funding streams**, and there is little transparency regarding what they can expect from their campuses each semester. **Grant-writing support and training and identification of potential funding sources, along with the advocacy noted in Recommendation 1, could prepare program coordinators to secure additional monies** to attend more of the Umoja events and to organize additional non-academic supports necessary to allow students to focus on academic success.

Conclusion

The work of an Umoja program coordinator is rewarding but often difficult and made even more challenging by structural, financial, and contextual issues. Many of **the resources and supports developed and offered by the Umoja Community are effective and useful** in helping program coordinators avoid burnout, strengthen and scale up their programs, and adequately support and inspire their students. Attention to how resources and tools are disseminated, clarifying and structuring the role of and developing a protocol for regional coordinators, and advocating for data support and funding would go a long way to alleviating many of their challenges. Program coordinators may benefit for support and professional development on using the resources and materials provided by Umoja Community.

Moreover, to further support the Umoja Community's evaluation of the program statewide, a comprehensive examination of students' academic outcomes, along with their perspectives of and experiences in the program, would help provide a more complete picture of Umoja's impact on the success of African-American students in California Community Colleges.

Research and Planning Group for California Community Colleges

The RP Group strengthens the ability of California community colleges to discover and undertake high-quality research, planning, and assessments that improve evidence-based decision-making, institutional effectiveness, and success for *all* students.

Project Team

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Appendix A: Umoja Interview Protocol

Introduction

Based on a specific set of criteria such as institutional and Umoja program characteristics, you are one of 10 Umoja coordinators who are being invited to provide input and feedback on the resources and supports provided by the Umoja Community. This **hour-long interview will provide you with an opportunity to share** your leadership experiences, the specifics of your program, the program's successes and challenges, how your students are tracked and monitored, and your use and assessment of the effectiveness of the resources and supports that the Umoja community offers. The purpose of these conversations is **to understand the Umoja landscape and effectiveness of the support being provided to local Umoja programs.**

These conversations will **assist the Umoja Community in designing technical assistance and capacity-building activities and materials with a goal of providing more effective support** to you in running and scaling up your program.

What you share during the next 60 minutes will be summarized with the comments and feedback from the other nine interviewees. **No names or specific college or program details will be included in order to maintain your confidentiality and anonymity.** A final **report summarizing key takeaways from the 10 conversations will be shared with the Umoja community director and board** to inform their work moving forward. To ensure that I capture your thoughts accurately, I'd like to audio-record this conversation to refer to as I prepare the final report. This **recording will not be shared with anyone else.** Do you agree to have this conversation taped for my use only?

Before we begin, do you have any questions? Okay, let me start by asking...

PROGRAM LEADERSHIP

1. How long have you been involved with Umoja at [College]? Have you served in any other role with Umoja? Were you an outside hire or had you been working at the college when you applied for the role as coordinator? What was your previous job? When did you become coordinator?
2. Did you received any training / orientation to prepare you for this job? By whom, the college or Umoja?
3. How does Umoja differ from or is the same as other culturally-focused or categorical programs at your institution?

PROGRAM SPECIFICS

4. Did you model your program after a specific Umoja program? If so, please indicate which one and explain how.

5. Pretend that I am a potential student. Please walk me through what I would experience from outreach to recruitment/identification to selection to program entry and onward to graduation and/or transfer. How do I learn about the program? What makes me eligible and how are services and resources different? What requirements do I need to meet to remain in the program during my educational journey?
6. How many people are part of your team including faculty? What are their roles? What specific supports do they provide? What training and preparation do they receive?
7. How are students tracked including contacts with the program? What is defined as a “contact?” How do you report data to MIS? Do you request reports from IR or IT so that you can verify that the information is correct? If so, how often? What could make it easier to determine and track program numbers and student data? What are your challenges with tracking data? If tracking is not a challenge, what best practices/advice can you share with programs that are struggling with this task?

RESOURCES AND SUPPORTS

8. The Umoja Community offers different supports and resources to strengthen Umoja programs across the state. I will be listing specific resources and then ask you to rate the effectiveness of each of these resources over the last year using the following scale: extremely effective, somewhat effective, not that effective, and not at all effective, I haven’t attended/utilized, or I didn’t know about it. In addition to rating each resource, please share why you selected your rating.

Resources and Supports	Extremely Effective	Somewhat Effective	Not That Effective	Not at All Effective	Did not participate/ access – Why?	Didn’t know about
Winter Retreat						
Summer Learning Institute						
Annual Conference						
Umoja Days						
Site visits						
Other Regional Coordinators						
Curriculum						
Case Studies						
Effective practice examples						
Sample pedagogy						

In looking at these resources holistically:

- What worked particularly well?
- What is one thing that you learned?
- What were you able to put into action right away?

- What additional support did you need to utilize what you learned?
- What could have worked better?
- What may have been missing?

9. What resources are provided by your college to support your program? Is your college administration supportive of you and your program? How so? If not, how could the Umoja Community help you gain or increase their support?

SUCSESSES AND CHALLENGES

10. What is one major success you would attribute to your program over the past year?

11. What is one major challenge you encountered this past year? Did this challenge arise recently or has it been ongoing? How have you tried to address it? How could the Umoja Community help you with this challenge?

12. How has the Umoja program impacted the larger campus culture and community?

13. What could/should the Umoja Community do to better serve you in your role?

FINAL COMMENTS

14. Is there anything else you would like to share about Umoja in general? Your program? The Umoja Community? Your experiences as a Umoja coordinator?

Appendix B: Umoja Practices⁴

Raising “Intentional & Deliberate:” In Umoja we deeply value intentional and deliberate purposefulness. We should know why we are doing what we do; nothing should be random. This does not mean that learning and teaching is all pre-determined, proscribed, or pre-scripted. We are claiming here that we need to raise our capacity to be intentional and deliberate while creating “live learning” spaces and programs. Doing so helps our faculty engage a conscious dialogue informing their practice and choices and helps us engender in our students a similar conscious dialogue about their practice and choices.

Ethic of Love—the Affective Domain: When practitioners move with an ethic of love they touch their students’ spirits. Moving with an ethic of love means having a willingness to share ourselves, our stories, our lives, our experiences to humanize and make real the classroom. This leveraging of the affective—emotion, trust, hope, trauma, healing—moves the discourse deliberately as an inroad to the cognitive domain. Approaching one’s practice with an ethic of love implies a holistic approach—Body, Mind, Spirit.

Manifesting: How does the student reproduce what you do in class with their friends, family, and community? Students should be able to put into practice what they’re learning in your class. They should intentionally bring their learning into the community and share with family, folks that support them, friends who could benefit and be edified by the Umoja consciousness. The practice of manifesting intends to make sure that all of what we do in our programs is applied, connected, and relevant to the students’ lives, and that the learning manifests inside the identity—spirit and mind—of the students. The question: “How is this manifesting in a way that is helping them survive in their daily lives?”—is part of the consciousness of all Umoja practitioners and in turn a part of our students’ consciousness so they can take their learning with them outside our campuses.

Umoja Counseling: Affirming, Integrated, Intentional: Umoja counseling is intentional and deliberate. It transcends the school environment and helps to empower students to make positive changes in their lives and the lives of their communities. We seek out the student, not waiting, immediately exploring what is going on with our students. Seeking out our students and not waiting holds our students close, keeps them in school, believing in themselves, each other and the Umoja program. To do best by our students, accuracy and wisdom matter. Umoja counseling has no walls, no time clock; dialogue is open and responsive, based in building relationship. There is a communal dimension to Umoja counseling.

The Porch: To say at all times “What Is Really Going On Here,” a learning environment should be open, respectful, playful; there should be argument, dissection and revision. It should be

⁴ The Umoja Practices can be accessed on the Umoja Community website at <https://umojacommunity.org/umoja-practices>.

personal, political and philosophical. The Porch can often be candid and sometimes even painful. Storytelling is privileged and sometimes song breaks out. Porchtalk invites humor, noise, sometimes unruliness. A classroom with such honesty and visibility can produce frustration and also acceptance. Needless to say, trust is at the foundation of a Porchtalk learning environment and trust has to be earned, modeled, practiced, openly reflected upon, and revisited. Porchtalk is intentional, for example, the instructor looks for an opportunity to draw out, celebrate and dignify the quieter students, so all the voices in the room make up the Porch. The Porch is a place where our students safely communicate and advocate for themselves.

Live Learning: Live learning is risky; it is freewheeling and open. The instructor yields control of meaning and understanding in the classroom while keeping a keen eye on learning as it is emerging. Live learning implies that the learning experience is generative and performative. In a live learning situation, the exact content and learning experience are not known before the class session begins. Surprise and original language burst out all over the classroom; the instructor facilitates and culls the learning that is happening. Live learning intentionally captures and documents learning in real time. It is a way of having a discussion that really flies, while focusing the insight, capturing it on boards and in notebooks, so the discussion does not disappear after the students leave the class session. It is democratic and analytically rigorous at the same time. Live learning demonstrates to the students through their own words that language is powerful; ideas and texts are rich and can be made their own. Most importantly live learning demonstrates to the students that they are smart, deep.

Language as Power: When we recognize and validate the language that our students bring to the classroom—that which they create amongst themselves—our students open up to the power of language. We can help them to develop a sense of pride, ownership and responsibility in their own speaking and writing. By so doing, we can bring our students inside the conscious experience of wielding language, all types of language—academic, standard, Black English, theoretical. Our classrooms can be a multilingual experience which provides an impetus for our students to represent themselves while crossing bridges into other, unfamiliar language they are bound to encounter in their lives. When our students experience language as power, curiosity, playfulness and agency replace what might have been standoffishness and uncertainty.

Tapping African American Intellectual, Spiritual, and Artistic Voices: Informed by their distinct history, African Americans have created a unique African diaspora experience expressed through myriad intellectuals, artists and spiritual leaders. Umoja sees individuals like Phyllis Wheatley, David Walker, Frederick Douglass, Ida B. Wells Barnett, Robert Johnson, W.E.B. Dubois, James Baldwin, Maya Angelou, Alan Locke, Thelonious Monk, Malcolm X, Romaine Bearden, Aaron Douglas, Langston Hughes, Ra Un Nefer Amen, Cheikh Anta Diop, bell hooks, and many, many others as ancestral bridges—a way of reaching back while moving forward. The Umoja Community encourages our practitioners to continually mine the work of African Americans in the interpretation and construction of knowledge in our classrooms. We invite our students and ourselves to claim this richness that resides, so often, below the surface.

Awareness of Connectedness to African Diaspora: Umoja students are interconnected to African peoples around the globe. Umoja practitioners can facilitate an awareness of how students' actions impact all African people. This sort of practice intentionally traces the historical, political and cultural lines emerging from Africa. This practice encourages a global African consciousness in an effort to foster collective responsibility, empathy and self-awareness. This practice also actively asks that students join their voices and stories with the voices and stories of peoples across the diaspora. In this way, Umoja students will become aware of the diaspora and articulate their place in that experience.

Community–Building Communal Intelligence: Community is absolutely fundamental to an Umoja learning experience, for the students, the faculty, and the staff. Umoja practitioners intentionally call out and support students' talents in an effort to build community and self-esteem. By tapping the intellectual and social capital represented by our students, we build community and greatly enhance the meaning of our classrooms/offices. Beyond helping keep our students in school, building community causes students to be accountable to each other's learning. Communal intelligence implies that we teach a willingness to see your own suffering and that of your sisters and brothers and taking responsibility for it. Community transcends our courses and services and reaches into the "I am, because you are."

Acceleration – English, Math, ESL, and Counseling: The vast majority of our students begin community college in basic skills courses, and like many students, they often do not make it to transfer level English and Math. Students are warehoused. So, often our students are taught from a deficit perspective; Umoja flips this and engages students from a capacity perspective. One-way acceleration has been talked about as a shorter pathway through sequences, moving students more quickly through basic skills to transfer level courses. Of course, shortening sequences, when it makes sense, matters. Many Umoja instructors are working with new accelerated curriculum expressions. The Umoja Community recognizes that faculty must design and own the curriculum which they offer students and that local authorship and expression is fundamental to the success of accelerated curriculum redesign. Umoja encourages "deep acceleration", where faculty go beyond structural changes into questions of pedagogy, practice, student capacity and current theories around adult learning. Furthermore, Umoja asserts that counselors are integral to the success of any innovative curriculum and pathway being offered to students.

Occupy Study Spaces on campus: Studying in the Village—a dedicated, welcoming Umoja space where students study and spend time together—builds community and nurtures academic success. Designed by students and staff, the Umoja village is a sacred space that offers opportunities to increase exposure to historical and cultural experiences from the African diaspora. The Umoja village is an expression of and celebration of our students' voices and model for how students can approach their homework. Encouraging, even requiring, studying on campus works well with our students because it models, practices and affirms sustained and effective study habits for our students. We must positively and actively foster studying, deep concentration and creativity for our students to be successful in their academic pursuits.

Mentoring: “A wise and trusted counselor or teacher.” A major reason that students drop out of college is due to feelings of isolation or alienation. Mentoring is a practice that allows students to make a more personal connection with someone who can offer support, guidance, and encouragement while dealing with the challenges of managing school and life. Many Umoja programs offer mentoring for students in a variety of formats that may include faculty and staff mentoring, mentoring from the community and peer mentoring.

Mattering: Mattering is intersectional-cultural, social, political, civic, spiritual. Given the years of institutionalized educational inertia, which often includes potent doses of failure and disaffection, we are being asked to create learning experiences that reclaim mattering and give agency to our students as matters. It matters what we teach; we must take a risk to include content that fuses suffering, identity and freedom. Mattering increases context while making choices about what is urgent. As matters students’ experiences and perspectives become a critical resource to the knowledge and analyses emergent in the class and in the program.

Umoja as a Power Base: Umoja Community programs use their infrastructure, their resources, and their community as a model for Black achievement across the campus, state and nation. The dearth of ideas regarding Black student success, calls us out to participate actively and openly in the analysis and decision-making about how to reverse the tide. We share awareness with our students of their shoulders being leaned upon by their brothers and sisters, their mothers and fathers and many others. Our students, as leaders, are trained and empowered to engage faculty, administrators and staff alongside and on behalf of their peers to voice their desire to achieve their educational dreams and goals. Our students, as leaders, are empowered to partner with faculty in the spirit of dual commitment-“ I commit to you, you commit to me.” When we embrace our position, Umoja becomes more than a program; it is a privilege that will be leveraged, a power base from which action and commitment to success for historically under resourced students and others.

Encircling Diversity: Encircling diversity affirms my “I am” as we stand in a place where we feel embraced and connected to everyone and empowered to rebuke all forms of cultural domination of any kind. Encircling diversity brings about a fully-present student and challenges the community to make justice and freedom a primary question; in MLK’s words, “Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere.” When we encircle diversity, we are more than merely tolerant, we seek deep understanding and celebration of the way someone different than ourselves speaks, thinks, imagines, and becomes. When we encircle diversity, we acknowledge and appreciate our oneness and diversity becomes a resource, and a strength, to our Umoja community.

Gifting: Sharing what we learn honors and extends learning. Umoja students become teachers and pass wisdom as they gift their learning to their family, their community, their peers in the program, and at Umoja events. Preparing the gift of learning by collectively identifying what is most meaningful, what is necessary and why this learning gift matters is an act of grace that helps us become accountable to each other’s collective intelligence for purposes that uplift the community. Umoja practitioners believe that knowledge and practice are communal and meant

to be freely gifted. When we give a learning gift, we become conscious and thoughtful about belonging to each other's achievement; our students become one thousand wide and ten thousand deep.

Everybody's Business: We are a village, acting in accord, and unafraid to be seen and heard as we do our work, leveraging every voice and source of information to do our best by our students. We gather and share information about our students. As Umoja professionals, we feel that including everybody in our distinct disciplines and work duties shares knowledge and builds commitment. In Umoja a counselor is an English teacher, a Math teacher is in the history class, an administrative assistant is a tutor, and everybody is a coordinator. We know what each other is up to, in an intimate, detailed way, so that we can support and reinforce each other. We cover and pitch in on each other's work, even while we maintain our areas of expertise. When a program event or program need comes up, we all inquire and support. And particularly when it comes to our students, we all stay aware of their progress, their challenges and crises, and their successes.

Appendix C: Umoja Community Resources and Supports

Type of Resource or Support	Description
Winter Retreat	Annual training held in January provides coordinators with training, resources, and networking opportunities before they begin their spring semester.
Summer Learning Institute	Annual, mandatory event held each June for new Umoja affiliated programs. Current Umoja programs are also invited to attend the event which provides training, professional development, resources, networking, curriculum, and pedagogy, system updates, and much more to strengthen Umoja programs.
Annual Conference	Annual conference held November is focused on students and students are the majority of the attendees. However, advisors, educators, and others interested in success of African and African American students also attend.
Umoja Days	Day-long event held on a community or four-year college or university campus dedicated to celebrating the talents, disseminating resources, and exploring the unique pedagogical richness of the Umoja learning community with the larger campus; opportunity for four-year institutions to do a soft recruitment pitch to Umoja students.
Site visits	Visits that assigned Umoja Regional Coordinators make to local Umoja programs to provide technical assistance, capacity building, examples of effective practices, and other resources to assist the local program manage and grow.
Regional Coordinators	Individuals with experience with and expertise in the Umoja practices who are assigned to regions to provide them with resources noted above.
Curriculum	Outline of course of study linked to Umoja practices.
Case Studies	Summary of longitudinal research usually conducted over time Case Studies relevant to effective practices and Umoja Practices.
Effective Practice Examples	Activities, approaches, and strategies including the 18 core Umoja practices that have found to be associated with students' academic and personal success
Sample Pedagogy	Methods for and practices associated with teaching with an emphasis on the Umoja Practices.