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

FROM: James E. Todd, Vice Chancellor of Academic Affairs
Terrence Willett, Assistant Vice Chancellor of Research, Data, and Analytics

RE: TOP to CIP Transition – Implementation Guidance

Purpose

In January 2026, the California Community Colleges system will begin the transition from the system-only use of the Taxonomy of Programs (TOP) codes to the nationally recognized Classification of Instructional Programs (CIP) codes, in alignment with the Fall 2027 transition deadline (outlined in memo ESS 25-72). This transition represents significant and time-intensive work for colleges and districts; however, it is intended to streamline reporting over time, reduce duplicative coding requirements, and strengthen the quality and comparability of systemwide data. This memo provides implementation guidance, timelines, and resources to support the knowledge-building and coordination required for a successful transition.

Background

To align with national data standards, reduce dual reporting requirements, and provide consistent, meaningful information for planning and decision-making, California Community Colleges are transitioning from TOP codes to nationally tracked CIP codes for instructional programs and courses. Changes in Title 5 related to equity-focused curriculum and assessment, objectives and outcomes, and discipline assignment, along with the passage of AB 1111 (Berman, 2011) requiring alignment with Common Course Numbering (CCN), also present an opportunity to fully adopt and embed CIP codes across the system.

General information about CIP codes is available through the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), including the CIP FAQs on our website and the full list of current CIP codes.

CIP code descriptions include standardized language that identifies program type:

- "program that prepares individuals to" (CTE)
- "program that focuses on" (non-CTE)
- "this CIP code is not valid for IPEDS reporting" (noncredit)

CIP codes are updated nationally every ten years, with the next revision scheduled for 2030. The Centers of Excellence reviewed and revised the TOP-to-CIP Crosswalk originally developed in 2021, using IPEDS data and system awards.

Both TOP and CIP are six-digit coding systems (first two digits indicate discipline, first four digits indicate sub-discipline, and all six digits indicate programmatic area). Because most TOP codes historically relied on only the first five digits, a single TOP code may align with multiple CIP codes. As a result, colleges will often encounter a one-to-many relationship when selecting CIP codes.

The revised TOP-to-CIP Crosswalk identifies a recommended CIP code along with additional aligned options and indicates which codes are CTE and noncredit. The Chancellor's Office Curriculum Inventory (COCI) connected interface tool with drop-down CIP selections will further support evaluation and selection.

Moving Away from TOP Codes

Over many years, California Community Colleges have used TOP codes to track certain noninstructional or administrative activities. As part of this transition, instructional coding reported federally will be clearly separated from noninstructional activities, improving clarity and consistency across reporting systems. CIP codes may only be assigned to instructional programs (credit and noncredit).

Other current uses of TOP codes (e.g., facilities, human resources, finance) will transition to non-CIP categories. In many cases, numeric codes will remain the same but will carry a new classification or label. The label "TOP codes" will be fully phased out.

Phased Approach To CIP: Starting with Curriculum

The transition from TOP to CIP will be implemented in phases, with full operationalization targeted for September 2027. The foundational step is for colleges to **select and submit appropriate CIP codes for all instructional programs and courses (credit and noncredit) into the COCI by Dec. 31, 2026**. Accurate instructional coding in COCI is essential for all subsequent transitions, including activity codes and fiscal processes.

To reduce administrative burden during this period, the Chancellor's Office has established expedited processes. Between now and Dec. 31, 2026, submission of CIP codes replacing TOP

codes will not trigger a new control number in COCI. After that date, changes may require a new control number.

While colleges must submit CIP codes by Dec. 31, 2026, MIS reporting will continue to require both TOP and CIP codes through spring 2027. Reporting for summer 2027 and subsequent terms will accept CIP codes only. The Chancellor's Office is committed to keeping the dual-reporting period as brief as possible while ensuring accurate, validated reporting.

Local Implementation Team and Process

Districts and colleges are encouraged to establish a local TOP-to-CIP process to identify and prioritize tasks associated with changes to curriculum systems, databases, policies, reports, websites, third-party vendors, and other impacted areas. As described in memo ESS 25-72, establishing a local, cross-functional team can support efficiency, shared understanding, and coordinated implementation across the areas of Academic Affairs (including faculty senate leadership and curriculum chairs), Student Services, Fiscal Services, Data, Human Resources, Facilities, IT, and others.

Data Integrity

Foundational to all aspects of this work is ensuring accuracy, consistency, and reliability of instructional data. Colleges are encouraged to embed data integrity protocols and validation checks—both human and technological—into all impacted tracking and reporting systems. These practices will support successful systemwide adoption and long-term reporting improvements.

Support and Resources

Detailed process guidance will be shared during the **Chancellor's Office System Webinar on Feb. 4, 2026, at 9 a.m.** Webinar details are provided on the TOP-to-CIP Transition Website. Additional supports include the Chancellor's Office TOP-to-CIP Transition website with FAQs, regularly scheduled Office Hours, and ongoing collaboration with Academic Senate for the California Community Colleges (ASCCC), the Chief Instructional Officers (CIO) Executive Board, Workforce and Economic Development Division (WEDD), noncredit programs, the Fiscal Standards and Accountability Committee, and other system partners. A timeline of steps one and two is on the TOP-to-CIP website.

The Chancellor's Office interface tool will be released in the coming weeks and will include a drop-down list of recommended instructional CIP codes for colleges and districts to evaluate and submit through COCI. Questions or requests for individual guidance may be directed to TOP2CIP@CCCCO.edu.

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Non-Instructional and Administrative Codes

TOP codes previously used for tracking non-instructional or administrative activities will transition to other classification categories locally and systemwide between now and fall 2027. Questions regarding administrative code transitions should be directed to the Chancellor's Office College Finance and Facilities Planning Division or to TOP2CIP@CCCCO.edu.

Noncredit Programs

Noncredit program personnel should review noncredit-specific CIP guidance available on the TOP-to-CIP Transition website, including the Noncredit TOP-to-CIP Map. CIP codes designated for noncredit programs fall within two-digit series 32–37. Career Development and College Preparation (CDCP) programs eligible for enhanced funding are classified under CIP code 32.xxxx (Basic Skills and Developmental/Remedial Education).

A **Noncredit Open Office Hour** will be held on Feb. 10, 2026, at 1 p.m. Details are provided on the TOP-to-CIP Transition Website.

Actions Required and Next Steps for Colleges

The following actions are required to support a coordinated and accurate transition. The Chancellor's Office recognizes the substantial effort involved and appreciates the expertise, coordination, and time required across colleges and districts to complete this work. Colleges are encouraged to approach the transition collaboratively and strategically.

- **Establish a local TOP-to-CIP implementation team and/or process** to outline priorities, track milestones, and coordinate changes across curriculum, technology systems, databases, policies, documents, and communications.
- **Coordinate with Academic Senates and Curriculum Committees** to evaluate instructional programs and courses using the COCI Interface Tool and select appropriate CIP codes. Colleges must submit instructional CIP codes by Dec. 31, 2026. During this period, CIP changes will not trigger new control numbers. ADTs and CCN will be assigned common CIP codes by the Chancellor's Office in collaboration with ASCCC and C-ID.
- **Use CCN funding** to support TOP-to-CIP transition activities, including classified professional overtime, faculty stipends, temporary staffing, and consultant support for system updates.
- **Expedite processes where feasible**, such as batch approvals or uploads, while maintaining data integrity standards.
- **Coordinate with Chief Business Officers** to ensure instructional activity codes are accurately classified and that budget development for 2026-27 is aligned with CIP-based instructional coding.

- **Communicate with local boards of trustees and external partners** regarding the purpose, scope, and outcomes of the transition.

Contacts

Questions or requests for individual guidance may be directed to TOP2CIP@CCCCO.edu.

Linked Resources

- TOP-to-CIP Transition Website
- National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) CIP Code List
- NCES CIP FAQs

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