



Frequently Asked Questions

RISING SCHOLARS NETWORK (VRC)

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1) ARE COLLEGES ELIGIBLE TO APPLY IF THE MINIMUM REQUIREMENTS HAVE NOT BEEN MET?

ANSWER: Yes. The application has been amended and the Minimum Requirements have been removed. Instead, the questions that were in the Minimum Requirements are now called “General Standards” and they are worth ten points. The total amount of points available in the application has been raised from 80 to 90. All community colleges are eligible and may apply.

2) WHAT IS CONSIDERED A “RISING SCHOLARS PROGRAM”? DID OUR COLLEGE HAVE A RISING SCHOLARS PROGRAM IF WE DID NOT RECEIVE A 2019 REENTRY GRANT?

ANSWER: For purposes of the RFA, any college that had a program to provide services explicitly for incarcerated or formerly incarcerated students had a Rising Scholars Program, whether or not they received a 2019 Reentry Grant. Any community college could open, create, or establish a Rising Scholars program at their campus and could receive technical assistance from the Chancellor’s Office and the Regional Coordinators. Colleges do not have to use the term “Rising Scholars Program,” so long as incarcerated and/or formerly incarcerated students are explicitly and directly the recipients of the college’s program services.

3) WHAT IS A ‘RISING SCHOLARS’ STUDENT?

ANSWER: Rising Scholars are students who are currently incarcerated or detained, or students with a prior adult conviction or juvenile adjudication. Students not incarcerated or detained, or who don’t themselves have a prior conviction or adjudication, should not be counted as Rising Scholars students for purposes of this RFA.

4) WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO ‘SERVE’ RISING SCHOLARS STUDENTS?

ANSWER: Any time a formerly or currently incarcerated student seeks services and they are provided support by the program, that is considered served for purposes of this RFA. If you have provided assistance once or repeatedly, the student can be counted.

5) CAN WE ADD A NARRATIVE TO EXPLAIN A “NO” RESPONSE?

ANSWER: The Chancellor’s Office expects that all applicants will have a number of “no” responses for which they have an explanation. The application does not have a space for those explanations because the Chancellor’s Office does not have an objective means by which to evaluate them. Changing an applicant’s score because of a narrative explanation would be inherently subjective and unfair to other applicants. The application, therefore, does not have a space for explanations. If a criterion is not fully met and completed by the end of the time period, applicants must select “no” even if the applicant has an explanation.

6) WHAT IF OUR COLLEGE’S SG04 AND/OR SG15 DATA IS NOT ACCURATE IN THE CHANCELLOR’S OFFICE MANAGEMENT INFORMATION SYSTEM (COMIS)?

ANSWER: As noted in the application, the Chancellor’s Office will use COMIS for the General Standards” questions and for the tie breaker. The Chancellor’s Office may also look to COMIS if a response to questions 1 through 60 is being verified. The Chancellor’s Office and the Rising Scholars regional coordinators have been notifying colleges with Rising Scholars programs for over a year that COMIS would



likely be used to make funding determinations if categorical funding were obtained. If an applicant believes their data to be incorrect, a letter may be submitted signed by the college President or Superintendent, explaining the discrepancy and providing correct information. Applicants should expect that such letters will be accepted only for this first year of funding, and that the Chancellor's Office will rely on COMIS in the future. Letters should be submitted by email to MAnderson@cccco.edu and lwoodyar@cccco.edu.

7) WHAT COUNTS AS DEDICATED SPACE?

ANSWER: Question 8, required for all applicants, requires that the college designate an office or other defined space on the campus explicitly for the Rising Scholars program. The space need not be exclusively used by the Rising Scholars program, but must be a permanent space on campus where the Rising Scholars program and Rising Scholars program staff are located. The space should have an address, building and/or office number, or equivalent.

Question 47, required for applicants with an on-campus, jail or youth program, requires that the college provide a dedicated and defined space large enough for Rising Scholars students to meet and congregate. The space must be exclusively for Rising Scholars students and the Rising Scholars program.

Budget Information

8) IS BUDGET INFORMATION REQUIRED IN NOVA?

ANSWER: The application does not require colleges to submit a proposed budget. Colleges will submit a budget proposal upon receiving the grant award. More information will be provided after preliminary awards have been announced on March 30.

9) WILL THERE BE RESTRICTIONS ON USAGE OF FUNDING?

ANSWER: Rising Scholars funding must be used to support incarcerated and/or formerly incarcerated students. Applicants submitting an application in category 1 (prison) must use the funds to support students in prison and applicants submitting an application in category 2 (campus/jail/juvenile) must use the funds to support students on campus and/or in county jail and/or in juvenile detention. Applicants may use the funds for students in both categories but colleges making this choice will be required to report on student outcomes in both categories. Successful applicants will be asked to submit a budget after the grants are approved in the Board of Governors meeting on May 23. Successful applicants may choose how to spend the funds in the manner that they believe will best achieve positive student outcomes. In building their budgets, colleges should be aware that Rising Scholars grants are Prop 98 funds. Other budget restrictions, if any, will be provided after preliminary awards have been announced on March 30.

10) WHAT IF WE WANT TO SERVE RISING SCHOLARS STUDENTS BUT DON'T QUALIFY FOR FUNDING IN THIS ROUND?

ANSWER: The Chancellor's Office intends to offer a grant opportunity for colleges that did not receive a 2019 Reentry Grant and do not qualify for funding in this RFA.