

CSU

The California State University
OFFICE OF THE CHANCELLOR



**ADVANCING BLACK STUDENT SUCCESS
AND ELEVATING BLACK EXCELLENCE
IN THE CSU
A CALL TO ACTION**

**THE CHANCELLOR'S STRATEGIC WORKGROUP
BLACK STUDENT SUCCESS REPORT**

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

3
Letter from the Co-Chairs

4
Assumptions and
Affirmations

6
Overview

9
Methodology

10
Listening Sessions

12
Recommendations

18
Conclusion

19
Workgroup Membership



LETTER FROM THE CO-CHAIRS

“ Each generation must, out of relative obscurity, discover its mission, fulfill it, or betray it.”

Frantz Fanon

Dear CSU Community:

This year marks the 160th anniversary of the Emancipation Proclamation, a document signed by President Abraham Lincoln intending to free the slaves from bondage in the United States. And while milestones such as this are a cause for celebration, they are also an occasion for reflection of when even our most noble aspirations fall short. Although nearly four million slaves were freed, those in some border states were not covered by the document. Among

those supposedly freed, half a million did not live long enough to experience their freedom. Clearly there was a profound incongruence between what the document promised and what people of African descent actually experienced.

Today the California State University, along with its 23 universities, is called on to reflect where our aspirations to educate and support all of our students may be falling short for those who are Black. While the CSU has celebrated its first Juneteenth symposium, there is a growing groundswell that urges the system to acknowledge and address the ways we may be failing our Black students and not fully realizing our highest priority of student success for all. As a consequence, a Black Student Success Workgroup was convened to explore and address this issue.

Our charge as a workgroup was to examine what is critical and essential for the CSU to become a national leader in advancing Black student success. We began our journey by evaluating what currently exists to support Black excellence in the system and by inviting Black students, faculty and staff to share their experiences and recommendations with us. What these and other activities subsequently revealed was a gap between our collective aspirations and a more challenging and complex reality. Thus, our recommendation that the CSU system abandons the romantic illusion of Black equity in the system was further reinforced by the those who participated in our listening and focus group sessions.

Today, the CSU is called on to effect a cultural change that will impact the lives of not only our current class but the generations of Black people to follow. While culture change and organizational excellence are difficult to achieve, they are not impossible—especially when the nation’s largest and most diverse four-year institution of public higher education draws upon its many resources with unusual intentionality to realize the full measure of its impact.

Indeed, it is a consequential time for the CSU. The recommendations in this report are a call to action. This report is a litmus test for CSU leadership, including the Chancellor’s Office, the Board of Trustees and university presidents, as well as administrators, staff, faculty and union leadership to decide if their commitment to Black excellence moves from endorsement to advocacy and action. This is not an effort that can be led by one group alone. In our minds, closing the gap between our aspiration to be a leader in this space and how that vision is actualized will take all of us.

Sincerely,

Thomas A. Parham, Ph.D.
Co-Chair, Black Student Success Workgroup
June 2023

Saúl Jiménez-Sandoval, Ph.D.
Co-Chair, Black Student Success Workgroup
June 2023

ASSUMPTIONS AND AFFIRMATIONS

ASSUMPTIONS FOR CHANGE

We begin this report with a set of assumptions that guided our work and are reflected in the following pages and narratives. These include:

- Our belief that the CSU system and its Board of Trustees are genuinely committed to realizing a greater measure of promise and possibility in creating a wholesome environment where culturally appropriate learning, academic instruction, programmatic initiatives and organizational excellence can more positively impact the lives of Black people affiliated with the university.
- There is a reciprocal relationship between Black student success and the experiences of Black faculty, staff and senior executives. Thus, we cannot address or achieve Black student success without also confronting the challenges faced by Black staff, faculty and senior executives.
- The environmental ambiance on some campuses characterized by perceptions of less than welcoming experiences as well as instances of microaggressions, microassaults,

microinvalidations and systemic and individual racism can be addressed with greater measures of accountability on faculty, staff and senior administration.

- The fate of Black students, faculty and staff cannot be relegated to external factors alone and they must play a part in their situation or recovery. Indeed, the Black community plays a significant role in creating the conditions that allow each of us to thrive and to eliminate attitudes and behaviors that students find unsupportive.
- Achieving many of the outcomes proposed in these recommendations requires targeted intentionality and resource allocations to support broad-based initiatives.
- If the CSU is to realize its commitment to supporting a strong Black presence and demonstrated excellence within its 23 universities, change cannot be relegated to programmatic initiatives alone. Change must be engineered at the level of the cultural deep structure in which the system interrogates its mores, values, customs, practices and traditions that inform and shape historical precedent and future aspirations



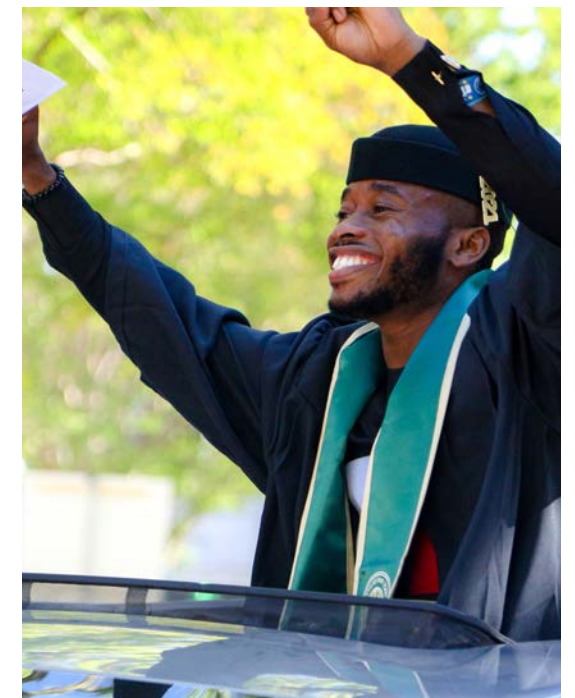
AFFIRMATIONS FOR STUDENT SUCCESS

We also provide the following affirmations of what constitutes student success:

- Potential for excellence in all forms pulsates in every one of us. It is not enough to simply help our Black students survive, it is our moral imperative and obligation as the nation's largest and most diverse higher education system to help Black students thrive.
- When Black students succeed, we as an institution of higher education succeed. Black students do not interrupt our work, they are the reason we do this work.
- Students arrive to the CSU with different lived experiences, talents and aspirations. Each student brings their unique self to our learning environment, and we do not assume there is a singular definition of a Black student or Black student success.
- We measure our success by each student's definition of their success. Our role is not to prescribe a single path of success; it is to support student growth in ways that are most important to them.
- And because Black student success is inextricably linked to faculty and staff, specifically Black faculty and staff, it is necessary and essential that both faculty and staff experiences and their collective success are considered in any discussion on the Black student experience in the CSU.
- Black excellence and success are aligned with the substance of things hoped for by the ancestors and elders who dreamed of learning environments for Black students that allowed for the dissemination and acquisition of facts, information and functional workplace skills amid an ambiance of rigorous debate, critical thinking and support for one's humanity that increase the trajectory of one's life circumstance and ultimate success.

“We are reminded to abandon the romantic illusion, as Dr. King said in 1967, of Black equity. In our case, of Black equity in the CSU. I invite us to develop a divine dissatisfaction with the way things are as opposed to how they might be with greater intentionality.”

President Parham, Strategic Workgroup Co-Chair and based on remarks at inaugural Juneteenth symposium



For this report to align with the original charge, the term Black student is also intended to encompass an African American student as well as students of African descent.

OVERVIEW

“ I was made in the CSU. I am a proud alum and the system worked with me. I know this can be a CSU that works for Black students, staff and faculty. I intentionally came back to bring models of Black excellence to the CSU. This can still happen in the CSU.”

Strategic Workgroup Member



In October 2022, Interim Chancellor Jolene Koester urged CSU leadership to redouble efforts in supporting and advancing Black student success. She framed this effort within Graduation Initiative 2025, which has contributed to increased graduation rates systemwide but has not yet been able to close stubborn equity gaps. Specifically, the system has seen an ongoing decline in both Black student enrollment as well as retention.

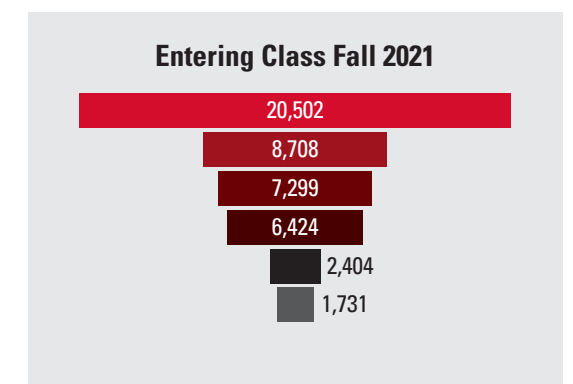
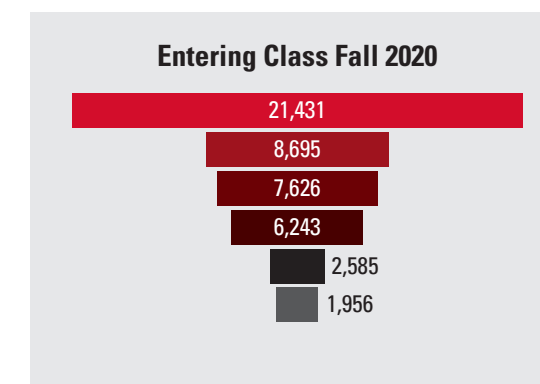
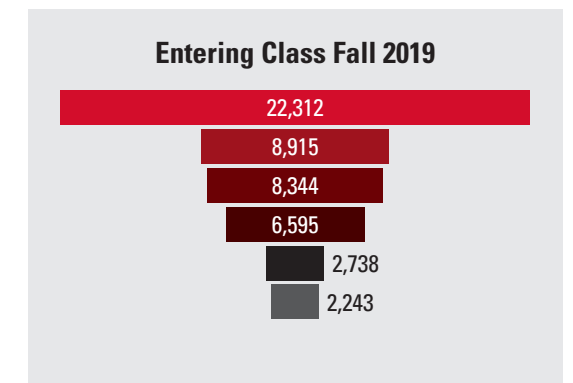
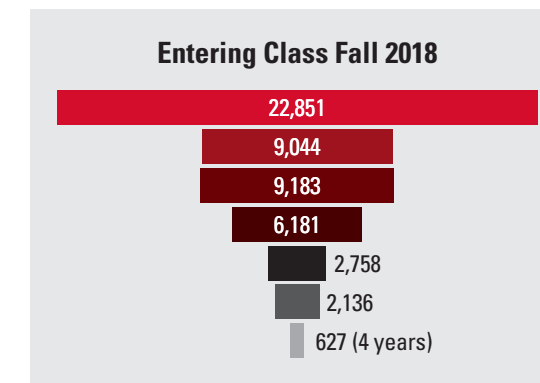
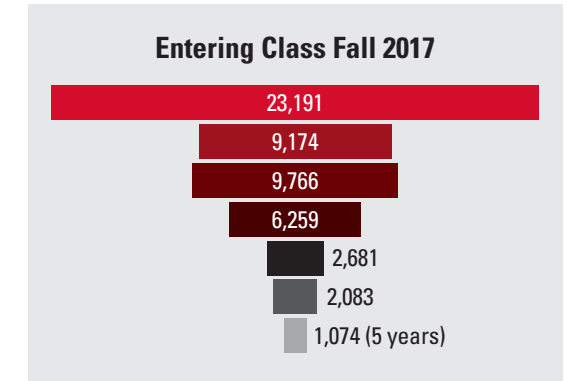
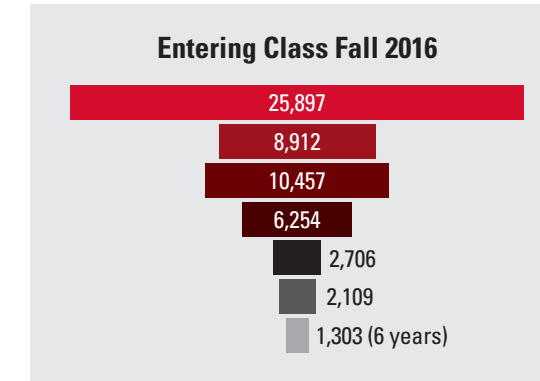
A strategic workgroup was formed encompassing representatives selected intentionally for both their expertise and knowledge in the areas of student success, and specifically Black student success, and who worked at a wide range of universities throughout the system. Members met regularly as a full workgroup as well as in smaller teams centered around such key topics as attracting more Black students to the CSU, supporting student retention and persistence for Black students once enrolled, examining campus culture and belonging, and exploring the role of faculty and staff in Black student success.

The following report summarizes the workgroup’s approach to evaluating and understanding the state of Black student excellence in the CSU. It examines existing practices and identifies those that could scale systemwide and provides recommendations to those that hinder Black student progress. Qualitative research in the form of listening forums also ensured the centering of key voices in order to ground recommendations from the perspective of the CSU Black student experience.

The result of this work is a call to action for the CSU to think broadly and act boldly. Through 13 systemwide recommendations, the workgroup seeks to catalyze the cultural change urgently needed to advance Black student success.

THE JOURNEY TO AND THROUGH THE CSU

The path to a CSU degree for a Black student in California is not an easy one. In fact, in looking at the class of 2022 who enrolled in fall 2016 as first-year students (full-time and part-time students), only 48 percent earned their degree in six years. As Black student enrollment and persistence continues to decline, the CSU is facing a potential future where Black students and Black excellence may be unrecognizable if action is not taken.



“ Currently there’s less than a 50-50 chance Black students will graduate from the CSU. We don’t like those odds.”

Strategic Workgroup Member

- Black/AA Public HS Graduates in CA
- Black/AA Public HS Graduates who completed A-G
- All Black/AA First-time Student Applications to CSU
- All Black/AA First-time Student Offers of Admissions to CSU
- All Black/AA First-time Student CSU Enrolled (includes part-time students)
- Black/AA First-time Student Returning for Second Year (includes part-time students)
- Black/AA First-time Students Earning a Degree by Summer 2022

Note: Applicants, Admitted, Enrolled, and student success counts include students beyond the pool of California public high school graduates.



1 IN EVERY 20

K-12 students in California are Black students¹

43%

California Black high school graduates eligible for a UC or CSU¹

95%

Number of CSUs with Black Student Union/Black Student Association²

42%

Number of CSUs with first-year seminars addressing Black student experiences²

58%

Number of CSUs with Black Residential Learning Communities²

21%

Black college students who feel discriminated against in their academic program³

22%

Black college students have caregiver responsibilities³

12 OF EVERY 100,000

Black 18-20-year-olds died by suicide in 2020⁴

¹California Department of Education 2021/EdTrust West fact sheet

²Black Student Success Campus Resource Survey

³Gallup/Lumina Foundation Report 2023

⁴California Department of Public Health/Ed Source Jan 25, 2022

METHODOLOGY

As part of the overall charge to consider the framework for Black student success in the CSU, the larger workgroup chose to organize into smaller groups focused on specific levers that support Black excellence. Each group was encouraged to be bold in their aspirations and recommendations to reimagine Black excellence in the CSU and potentially for higher education as a whole.

The Recruitment Cycle (Recruitment/ Application/Admission/Yield)

This group explored trends and opportunities for Black students beginning in K-12 that could lead to a greater percentage of eligibility, application, admittance and, ultimately, enrollment in a CSU. Specific attention was placed on technology enhancements, early interventions in academic preparation and enrollment supports. There was ongoing discussion of marketing the CSU from the lens of Black excellence and what would make a Black student say “yes” to the CSU.

Student Retention, Persistence and Academic Success

This group evaluated strategies targeted specifically at Black students to increase retention after the first year and promote a higher percentage at the four-year and six-year graduation mark. Building on existing Graduation Initiative 2025 equity priority work, members explored what activities could bring back students who had left and what institutional supports are needed to ensure a student’s academic success.

Campus Culture, Community and Belonging

This group considered what conditions create a campus culture where Black students feel like they matter and belong. Conversely, the group also considered what conditions within campus cultures are hindering student success. What obstacles (macro- and microaggressions, biases and assumptions) are brought into the academic and cocurricular spaces that the CSU needs to dismantle? Are there programs and services that should be implemented systemwide?

The Role of Faculty and Staff on Black Student Success

This group focused on strategies to support the recruitment and retention of Black faculty and staff, including helping to foster a community of care with access to peers with shared cultural values. From this framework, the group also discussed professional development opportunities for faculty and staff to engage in culturally specific activities; strategies to increase the development for equity-minded pedagogy; and practices that strengthen faculty and staff engagement with, and in support of, Black students.



LISTENING SESSIONS

OUR APPROACH

The workgroup determined it could not offer recommendations without consulting the stakeholders these strategies were designed to serve. As a result, three virtual listening forums were hosted in February 2023. Each session focused on a specific stakeholder group: CSU Black students, CSU Black faculty and CSU Black staff. More than 250 stakeholders were engaged, with each listening forum averaging 80 or more participants from all 23 universities. Each forum included smaller break-out discussions hosted by a facilitator.

In addition, the workgroup participated in an off-site retreat in March 2023, which included guest speakers providing additional perspectives from their lived experiences. They included a Project Rebound student, community college Umoja Success Program representatives, and an executive from a nonprofit focused on Black student success.

The following are highlights of themes and sentiments from these events. Attributions are not provided to allow for confidentiality.

Student Listening Session

- “I go to the Black Resource Center. I like having a place away from home, a way to connect to other Black men on campus. A place to talk, just have a voice. A place to share problems or aspirations.”
- “Money and resources are put into getting Black students to attend CSU, but no effort is put into retention. There are too few Black faculty and staff, and these small numbers don’t have enough power or job security to be effective in support of Black students.”

- “Black student success is not embedded in the campus community. If not for the Black faculty and staff, we would not have representatives.”
- “When I got here, I didn’t know about any Black organizations, it’s not really out there. I felt lonely and apprehensive at first. I didn’t see people in my class that looked like me.”
- “I can’t in good faith tell others to come to our schools.”

Faculty Listening Session

- “This is supposed to be ‘the people’s university’—we could do more, and we have to do better. I applaud this effort and my expectations are very high. I don’t want it to just be a show—we need a cultural shift. If this is performative, I’m not down for it.”
- “The Black community is not homogeneous—[we] need to recognize heterogeneity to help people feel the CSU is their CSU.”
- “[I want] recognition that the work Black faculty engage in is also emotional in addition to scholarly. Leadership doesn’t understand the cultural tax on Black faculty—spending a lot of time with students on top of all their other work. Black students talk amongst themselves about the Black faculty so these faculty are sought out for mentorship. Black faculty don’t receive support for this, then they are denied tenure and promotion. Faculty then might choose to go to an institution that will help support the faculty and help them to grow.”

- “[I would like to see] opportunities for Black faculty and staff to come together and socialize. Need space, time and opportunity to come together in community outside of February/ Black History Month. Responsibility of doing that falls on Black faculty and staff, and they’re already overburdened. Black students are few in number, but they’re thirsty to meet Black faculty.”
- “I’m thinking about leaving now. I’ve been losing a lot of faculty that I’m close to. The inability to support the students coming in at the level one would want contributes to this. I’m seeing the racism on campus and seeing Black students leave. This is hard and demoralizing.”

Staff Listening Session

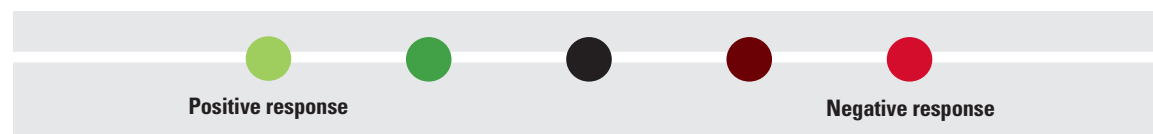
- “Programs such as EOP continue to uplift the Black community. They support students, but they also keep staff and faculty engaged in ongoing dialogue related to providing support and mentorship for all Blacks on campus.”
- “[I want] students to know that the institution is interested in them before it’s time to recruit them. Parents have been communicated with in a way that means something to them—and answers their questions. Sometimes people need to be invited.”
- “We need to be happy as professionals in order to encourage others to come to campus. Colleagues need opportunities, support, compensation.”
- “Soul and passion are the hallmark of doing diversity work on a campus. The task is overwhelming, and we feel pressed on all sides. The CSU is a fragmented system not willing to address the structural racism.”
- “[We are] feeling the pain of the students, anti-Black feeling, feeling beat down, tired of fighting. It’s not getting any better. We’re fighting over crumbs while everyone else is getting the full cookie. There is a lack of critical mass—Black enrollment has gone down for staff, students and faculty.”

Workgroup Retreat Featured Speakers

- “People like myself, who come from areas of gang and drugs, we weren’t taught to go to high school. I was taught to go to prison. At the age of 13, I was in South Los Angeles gangbanging. I came from a dysfunctional household. No one visits my junior high, people don’t want to be around there—not even the military. I dropped out of school and was on my own at 16. I found myself in a courtroom and went to prison for 18 years.

Racism on campus—more of it comes from each other and around staff that bypass me. Retention rate is low because we don’t feel like we belong.”—CSU Project Rebound Student
- “9-to-5 hours don’t work for our students. People are successful when they are supported and when they believe you believe they can do it. When students run into trouble, they call us. We navigate schools [for them] because the student hasn’t made the connection. I have to foster the warm handoff in order for the students to be successful. I had a student come back in tears [from a CSU] telling me: ‘I don’t like it. I don’t have anyone to help me.’”—Community College Partner
- “A lot of students didn’t come from traditional families. [Participating in the Umoja program] allows students to see family. We are in this together. Life is difficult. Things we know to be temporary they don’t see as temporary. Their mental health is changing. More students have systemic issues that we can’t address. We need African American counselors who can connect, especially to our male students.”—Community College Partner
- “These are the children from COVID. After being home, they are facing challenges on campus—including mental health issues. The advisors [of my organization] that recruit them also case manage them. They work on issues with fitting in, knowing how to resource navigate and addressing not being academically prepared.

We see us serving CSUs—we want our students to attend CSUs, and we want to provide CSU with great students. We’re a qualification organization. What we need in turn is an outstretched arm—a commitment to our population of students.”—Community Partner



RECOMMENDATIONS

Advancing Black student success and elevating Black excellence in the CSU requires that the system re-evaluate and, when necessary, reimagine long-held assumptions around student success. Stated simply and clearly, a one-size-fits-all approach to student success does not work. We must disrupt policies and procedures that inhibit rather than support the progress of CSU Black students.

The following 13 recommendations shift priorities and resources from an institutional perspective to one that centers Black excellence in Black students realizing their own potential and success. For this report, recommendations have been categorized in three areas: strategies that directly support Black student success; strategies that support faculty and staff in support of Black student success; and strategies that result in the cultivation of climates where entire campus communities can see themselves reflected within the rich fabric of our universities.

These recommendations are designed to be actionable and presume sufficient resources to provide for sound and sustainable programmatic implementation that will affect systemwide cultural change.

“ I want strategies so big and bold that Black people will look at the CSU in a totally different way.”

Strategic Workgroup Member



SUPPORTING BLACK STUDENT SUCCESS

1. Create and Implement a CSU Early Outreach Plan

As the nation’s largest and most diverse four-year public system of higher education, the CSU has an obligation to promote and advance a college-going culture within California K-12 schools. To that end, all 23 universities must establish a comprehensive early outreach plan for students, including Black students. This plan will promote academic preparation and the pathway to a college degree in partnership with K-12 schools and the local community entities whose efforts at facilitating academic success complement efforts made by the CSU. Each university is also encouraged to consider how alumni and current students can be engaged in early outreach programming. This plan will be submitted to the Chancellor’s Office for review and approval.

Additionally, the CSU will leverage and expand programs hosted on campuses that offer students, including Black K-12 students, with hands-on experiences with CSU faculty, including faculty of color. Programs such as summer research can expose students to work supporting diverse communities to encourage a sense of belonging and further affirm a CSU education is the right choice.

2. Develop a Comprehensive Enrollment Strategy for Black Students

The percentage of Black students enrolled in the CSU is significantly less than the percentage of Black students in the system’s prospective student pool. To address this gap, every university will develop an enrollment plan that specifies recruitment goals for Black students based on proportional representation within their service region and the state (whichever is higher) and strategies to achieve these goals. These plans will integrate into a larger systemwide enrollment plan that provides enhanced funding to universities that reach their goals and decreases funding for those that do not.

The system, in coordination with the Admission Advisory Council, will also review the CSU’s use of the multifactor admissions model to find ways to give greater consideration in admissions decisions

for students participating in early outreach programs at the high school and community college levels. For community colleges, the system should establish a memorandum of understanding with Umoja and African American Male Education Network and Development (A2MEND) charters to expand the number of CSU-qualified students admitted to the university of their choice. Additional resources will be allocated to create a systemwide standard for an admission experience that is more inviting and welcoming for prospective students, including Black students.

3. Develop a Comprehensive Retention and Persistence Strategy for Black Students

Once a Black student is admitted to one of its 23 universities, the CSU’s obligation to student success in its many forms—including curricular and co-curricular—is just beginning. As evidenced by CSU institutional data, there remains a growing gap between Black student retention and persistence compared to other peer groups. To address this, the workgroup recommends that each university implement a retention and persistence plan based on disaggregated data for Black students, and other student groups with similar retention gaps.

All plans will be evaluated on the following four components: a personalized student support model based on needs and a case management approach for follow up; enhanced advising based on best practices, such as helping students to choose majors early, ensuring access to available financial resources and fostering strong connections to the campus; a focused campaign to reengage and reenroll students, including Black students, who have left the CSU before completing their degree; and a defined list of initiatives, services and high-impact practices that support Black student persistence and retention. Such practices include first-year experiences and Black student orientation as well as promoting greater Black student participation in at least two high-impact practices, such as internships, undergraduate research opportunities and study abroad. Ultimately each university should strive to have every student, including Black students, participate in at least two high-impact practices. These plans also should be adapted as needed for other student groups experiencing similar retention gaps.



4. Create Welcoming and Affirming Spaces

The ability for students to feel a sense of safety and belonging, which is foundational to student success, begins with creating intentional spaces where they are welcomed and affirmed. The CSU will invest in creating Black-designed and inspired campus spaces, living and learning residences in CSU housing, and Black Resource Centers on every CSU campus. It is also essential that each university creates a greater community ethos centered on providing a culture of care for students—especially those in crisis. As such, the CSU will invest in identifying culturally competent mental health professionals and hire campus police who understand the value and importance of community policing on a college campus. These efforts are essential parts of a larger cultural safety net for Black students.

“Black faculty and staff have struggled to survive in a higher education system not designed to let them thrive.”

Strategic Workgroup Member

SUPPORTING ALL FACULTY AND STAFF IN FACILITATING BLACK STUDENT SUCCESS

5. Develop and Implement Inclusive and Culturally Relevant Curriculum

The CSU will invest and support instructional faculty from all racial and ethnic backgrounds in developing inclusive, culturally relevant curriculum; evidence-based pedagogical methods; and exemplary classroom management practices designed to support Black student success. Additional areas of focus should include practices to reduce the perpetuation of racial microaggressions and racial battle fatigue.

Each university will establish mandatory faculty development programs with proven strategies for better serving students from diverse cultural backgrounds, including Black students. Such programs should incorporate initiatives that focus on student potential versus the circumstances from which students arrive to the CSU. New faculty orientation sessions are also opportunities for engaging faculty with strategies to improve pedagogy and inclusivity in the classroom and address key obstacles such as D, F and withdrawal (D/F/W) rates.

Faculty development expectations should be reflected in the faculty collective bargaining agreement, and the Human Resources data system will need to be enhanced to more easily record, monitor and recognize participation in these faculty development efforts.

6. Standardize and Increase Black Faculty and Staff Recruitment and Support

The CSU will develop and implement a systemwide search criteria and process for new faculty hiring. Criteria will include required qualifications for all faculty searches so that selected candidates have a demonstrated knowledge, commitment and record of success in teaching, service and research with students that mirror the profile of the CSU's diverse students. Specific recruitment efforts should be targeted at those disciplines where Black faculty are few or nonexistent.

Each university will establish a university-level faculty review committee, appointed by the provost and chief diversity officer, that reviews candidate materials to determine whether they satisfy the criteria and before extending a campus visit to finalists. Strategies such as cluster hiring across colleges and compensation consideration for special skills that are consistent with terms from the collective bargaining agreement will be added to the process. Each university will commit to conducting a cluster hire in 2024-25 with faculty who study issues of particular concern to Black citizens and the areas where they live. Additionally, each university will articulate multiple methods of career advancement for all faculty and staff including Black faculty and staff.

7. Invest in Black Faculty and Staff Support

As creating a sense of belonging and community is essential to a healthy workforce and a thriving student population, all 23 universities will be expected to develop more opportunities and dedicated spaces for Black faculty and staff to gather. Each university will establish an Employee Resource/Affinity Group structure that provides financial resources and organizational recognition for Black faculty and staff to work in collaboration with university leadership to address diversity, equity and inclusion goals. Additionally, resources should be allocated to support faculty scholarly work and professional development interests of

all faculty and staff, specifically related to their participation and leadership with affinity groups and cultural associations including organizations with a focus on Black culture and tradition.

8. Incorporate Black Student Success in Faculty and Staff Evaluations

Each university will partner with faculty and Academic Senate leaders to deeply embed student success and equity measures into the recruitment, tenure and promotion (RTP) process for faculty and the evaluation process for staff and administrators. For example, the university can improve course evaluations by adding a qualitative question on whether the faculty member has created a welcoming environment for diverse learners.

Universities can refine RTP processes to require all faculty to document how they have contributed to the success of Graduation Initiative 2025 populations, including Black students. Equity goals in general, and those that meet the needs of Black students, faculty and staff in particular, should be added in university evaluation criteria for Management Personnel Program staff in academic and student affairs divisions.

“Black students, faculty and staff experience dignity and belonging in the CSU, where it shows a demonstrated proficiency in educational endeavors that allow Black people to thrive and reach their goals despite the institutional and societal racial inequality and center Black excellence at the core rather than the margins.”

Workgroup on Role of Faculty and Staff on Black Student Success

Black student success allows students to participate in a culturally relevant environment where they are safe, have a strong sense of belonging and are encouraged to explore a wide range of interests. It is also the ability of Black students to have empowering curricular and co-curricular experiences while graduating with a plan for future career and life accomplishments that celebrate their authentic Black identity.”

Workgroup on Campus Culture, Community and Belonging

SYSTEMWIDE INFRASTRUCTURE FOR BLACK STUDENT SUCCESS

9. Implement a Comprehensive Enrollment Marketing Campaign

As the CSU engages in its first comprehensive enrollment marketing campaign in more than a decade, the workgroup has identified that a necessary and subsequent phase should be an enrollment campaign focused on prospective Black students and their families. A systemwide Request for Proposal process will require a marketing agency that specializes in, and has a proven record of, successfully communicating with culturally diverse communities and which builds on existing CSU disaggregated data. As part of this scope of work, the marketing agency will conduct an analysis of both factors and messages that will attract Black students to apply to the CSU.

10. Develop a Structure and Process for Systemwide Data-Driven Practices

In alignment with Graduation Initiative 2025 and informed by existing institutional data, the CSU will create a comprehensive and cohesive infrastructure for CSU presidents and other university leaders to leverage data-driven practices. The system will create learning spaces whereby the universities consistently and regularly consult disaggregated data and campus climate data, among other information, to improve academic outcomes. The Chancellor’s Office and university presidents will meet regularly to ensure an environment that embraces a data-informed culture.

11. Create Systemwide Policies on Addressing Unprofessional Conduct

Effective change in CSU culture and behavior requires that the system articulate consistent policies that address student, staff and faculty conduct that diminishes Black student success but which falls short of the Title IX or discrimination, harassment and retaliation (DHR) thresholds. Such systemwide policies ensure a baseline of conduct and expectations when complaints regarding behavior—including macro- and microaggressions—are expressed by Black students, staff and faculty. Policies will also state a clear set of interventions and procedures, as well as annual DHR training, to disrupt behavior that undermines and threatens Black student success. Each university will establish a campus climate team so that key leaders can support initiatives that infuse each campus with strategies for enhancing culturally diverse and respectful communications; develop appropriate responses for addressing biased speech or conduct that is not subject to discipline based on First Amendment protections; and provide support for those students, faculty and staff impacted by the biased conduct. A systemwide training will be developed and implemented for all faculty and staff participating in campus climate teams.

12. Launch the CSU Statewide Central Office for the Advancement of Black Excellence

In order to support the recommendations contained in this report as well as create the opportunity to cultivate and innovate new approaches and best practices for student success, the workgroup proposes the funding and launch of a CSU

Statewide Central Office for the Advancement of Black Excellence. The statewide central office can serve as an organizational catalyst for all 23 universities by identifying promising practices, investing in their growth through underserved community grants and amplifying their impact within the system and potentially nationwide. Ultimately, the CSU Statewide Central Office for the Advancement of Black Excellence would grant designations accompanied by one-time and recurring funding to universities exemplifying a thriving experience for underserved communities, including Black students, faculty and staff.

13. Create Structures for Systemwide Accountability

It will take a bold, systemwide commitment to courageously pursue Black student success at all levels. These recommendations serve not only as markers for success but as measurements of the CSU’s progress as a whole. As such, the Black Student Success Workgroup implores the system to have all CSU faculty, staff and administrators participate in an in-person professional development training on addressing anti-Blackness in higher education. Such a module should be commissioned by the Chancellor’s Office with the goal to implement immediately. It is also recommended that the system will undertake an audit to evaluate Black faculty representation as well as Black staff in areas critical to the success and retention of Black students as part of its accountability work. Finally, the CSU will publish an annual report on progress made, or not made, to ensure transparent and full accountability.

The workgroup also strongly suggests the convening of a systemwide advisory group comprising university presidents and thought leaders to carry this work forward. This group should be empowered to acquire and allocate funding for the variety of initiatives outlined in this report as no such resources currently exist for Black student success in the CSU or through federal and/or state funding (unlike other historically underrepresented groups). To seed these activities, an initial \$10 million should be allocated in 2023-24 to catalyze these efforts. Moreover, Black student success should be included in presidential performance reviews and could result in increases in university funding allocations when they achieve each of the recommendations.



CONCLUSION

A CLEAR COMMITMENT

Crisis can expose weaknesses, reveal character and create opportunities. The last three years alone have made us a collective witness to crisis—a global health pandemic, financial and political instability, the social injustice of the murders of Black men and women.

While there is a greater awareness and sensitivity to the reality of Black life in America, this acute attention has also shone a spotlight on the gap between our aspirational and actual selves in the CSU. The mission set before all of us in the CSU community—Board of Trustees, the Office of the Chancellor, our university leaders, faculty, staff and students—is to close that gap and realize the full potential of Black excellence in the CSU.

While we understand the original charge of the workgroup was to provide recommendations to the next regularly appointed CSU chancellor, the workgroup respectfully submits consideration of, and potential vigorous and positive action related to, these recommendations now. We recommend that implementation and measurement continue for the next two years with the CSU commitment to evaluate progress and reassess recommendations by 2025.



WORKGROUP MEMBERSHIP

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THE CHARGE

The Black Student Success Workgroup's charge is to draft recommendations to advance a strategic plan to position the CSU as a nationwide leader in Black student outreach, recruitment, enrollment, persistence, success and graduation. Following their work to establish the strategic direction and action steps to advance Black student success, the implementation of the workgroup's recommendations will involve collaboration with a broad and inclusive cross-section of institutional stakeholders from across the system.

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This report was the culmination of interviews, listening sessions, surveys and other activities conducted over the course of spring 2023. The workgroup was led by Executive Vice Chancellor of Academic and Student Affairs Sylvia A. Alva and facilitation of the process and group engagement was led by Associate Vice Chancellor for Student Affairs, Equity & Belonging Dilcie Perez. The report was edited by Lori Putnam with additional support provided by Jolene Coleman, Christina Cruz, Audrey Eftychiou, Duan Jackson, Carolyn O'Keefe and Sara Zaragoza.