

BLACK STUDENT SUCCESS WEEK POLICY AGENDA

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WEEK

The Black Student Success Week Coalition was established in 2020 in response to an urgent need for state leaders to take action in supporting Black students and as a timely resource for stakeholders to move intentionally in the spaces they occupy to support Black student success. Rooted in the collective vision that came out of the [African American Male Education Network \(A2MEND\)](#) and [Umoja](#) Community statewide summits, **we are a coalition of campus and national and system leaders, faculty, students, and advocates committed to ensuring Black students across California have the tools they need to succeed in reaching their college goals.**

This document is an urgent call to action. It outlines the state priorities that we believe will be key to increasing Black student access immediately and in years to come. As the California Community Colleges work to see through the [Vision 2030](#), state policymakers have the opportunity to continue the important investment in affordability, enrollment, and growth to close racial and regional equity gaps.

California is home to the fifth largest Black population in the United States, where a majority of Black undergraduates attend a California Community College. Despite this, California continues to systematically underinvest in Black students' educational journeys when it comes to higher education funding, perpetuating economic inequity for Black Californians and the maintenance of a permanent underclass. In 2020, we released the [Follow the Money Report](#), which referenced the funding disparities for Black students within California's higher education systems. Our recommendation remains that the state of California must provide equitable funding across its higher education systems with an explicit focus on closing racial equity gaps in lower-division courses. **Failing to support this key student population represents a major loss for our communities and economy. Now is the time to SUPPORT BLACK STUDENT SUCCESS**

Informed by the wealth of knowledge, research, and lived experiences of Black students, faculty, and leaders across our higher education system, the following legislative and budget commitments will be key to ensuring colleges and universities across the state have the resources and guidance necessary to support Black students in reaching their college dreams.

MAKING COLLEGE AFFORDABLE

The Issue: The Cal Grant Equity Framework has the potential to expand access to financial aid to more than 150,000 additional students, and over 109,000 at the California community colleges, alone – a 59.6% increase. Black students are disproportionately impacted by the current Cal Grant limitations. There is a potential to increase eligible Black students by 7.7% under the new program.

We know the troubling reality remains that California is facing a budget deficit. However, investing in financial aid for Black students is the greatest lever for their success and the success of our State.

The Ask: We respectfully request the legislature and Governor to hold true to their promise of a reformed Cal Grant program that aims to serve thousands more students each year. Recognizing the budget reality of the 2024-25 budget cycle, we ask that the Governor and legislature make a commitment to prioritize Cal Grant 2 in the immediate budget cycle.

MAINTAINING EVIDENCE-BASED STUDENT SUPPORTS

The Issue: We believe the strongest method for increasing Black student success is by funding intentional, student-centered services and programming, ensuring consistent, long-term support and resources. Impact programs cannot sustain themselves without an ongoing commitment that allows continuous growth, maintenance of student/counselor relationships, and student success.

Programs like Umoja, African American Male Education Network and Development (A2MEND), and the Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCU) Transfer Pathway project have a proven track record of building more inclusive and supportive communities for Black students across the state and are a critical safeguard in ensuring their enrollment, retention, and success.

The Ask:

- **Enrollment and Retention Funding:** Maintain the \$200 million one-time funding for California community colleges to address declining enrollment and retention. We additionally request language to specify that colleges must utilize funding to implement high-impact strategies that best serve and support minoritized and historically underserved students.



- **Umoja Funding:** Maintain the ongoing investment of **\$9,178,000** in Umoja programs. The Umoja program is a community and critical resource dedicated to enhancing the cultural and educational experiences of African American and other students.
- **African American Male Education Network and Development (A2MEND) Funding:** Maintain the ongoing investment of **\$1,100,000** in A2MEND. Black men, in particular, face some of the largest declines in enrollment and success at California colleges. A2MEND continues to partner with community college districts across the state to provide culturally relevant professional development for practitioners and vital mentoring for Black men to enroll and succeed in college.
- **Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCU) Transfer Pathway project Funding:** Maintain the **\$1,400,000** funding to support the current partnerships and explore opportunities to increase the number of HBCUs that participate in the project. The objective of the California Community Colleges Transfer Guarantee to HBCU Program is the development of transfer pathways that will facilitate a smooth transition for students from all of the California Community Colleges to partnered HBCUs. These pathways will simplify the transfer process, reduce students' need to take unnecessary courses, and shorten the time to degree completion, saving student costs.



PROTECTING PATHWAYS TO SUCCESS

The Issue: While California colleges and universities make promises to support Black students in reaching their college goals, **stated commitments alone do not lead to increased Black student success.** Colleges must be committed to taking action to better serve their students. To truly be a Black-serving institution, colleges should support Black students from the moment they enter the doors of the institution to when they exit the doors as graduates. Colleges must assess and reflect on the data coming out of their institutions and understand areas of strength and opportunities for improving Black student success. Being a Black-serving institution means an institution incorporates data-driven policies and practices into every facet of its community to create a truly Black student-centered institution.

A key lever to establishing pathways to success for Black students is dual enrollment, a practice of enrolling high school students in college-level courses. Dual enrollment and College and Career Access Pathways (CCAP) are often the first introduction to college for many students and serve as an entry point to higher education. However, high schools and colleges continue to [fail to support Black students in accessing dual enrollment pathways compared to their peers](#). Without equitable access to dual enrollment and CCAP opportunities for Black and other minoritized students, we cannot make progress in closing racial equity gaps in college access and success.

As California works to reach ambitious high-skilled workforce goals, our community colleges must continue to create high-skilled career pathways for Black students. Guided Pathways set a framework for how California colleges create such pathways and can be built upon to provide all California college students with access to a high-skilled career. Many community colleges offer two-year and certificate nursing programs. However, to address the nursing shortage in California it is critical for community colleges to offer bachelor's degree programs in nursing.

The Ask: [Support Black Student Excellence: Senate Bill 1348 \(Bradford\) California Seal of Excellence in Serving Black and African American Postsecondary Students](#) establishes the California Seal of Excellence in Serving Black and African American Postsecondary Students Act of 2024 to recognize campuses that excel at providing academic resources to Black and African American students with a state seal, provided they meet the specified conditions. We recommend changes to include a mechanism to hold institutions accountable for improving Black Student Success.

Support Equitable Access to Dual Enrollment: We support the Governor's proposal to expand the number of dual enrollment agreements to more equitably increase access to higher education across the state. Dual enrollment programs are a key access point to higher education for thousands of students across the state. Increasing enrollment in these programs for Black students and communities of color across the state is vital for closing racial equity gaps in terms of college access and success. Ensuring dual enrollment programs do not pose a financial burden for high school students will ensure all students seeking dual enrollment access may do so regardless of income, background, or location.

In addition, we support [Assembly Bill 359 \(Holden\) Pupil instruction: dual enrollment: College and Career Access Pathways](#) partnerships, which amends the dual enrollment program and College and Career Access Pathways (CCAP) partnerships to align with best practices from other dual enrollment programs and to streamline access to dual enrollment for K-12 students throughout the state. To strengthen this policy, we recommend assessing the 60-day approval process to provide more time for colleges and high schools to discuss proposed dual enrollment partnerships in a way that invites collaboration and discussion with core institutional stakeholders, community stakeholders, and local governing boards.

Support High-Skilled Career Pathways: [Senate Bill 895 \(Roth\) Community colleges: Baccalaureate Degree in Nursing Pilot Program](#) would develop a Community College Baccalaureate Degree in Nursing Pilot Program. Fifteen community college districts with nationally accredited nursing programs would be selected by the California Community Colleges Chancellor's office to offer a Bachelor of Science in nursing degree. The bill would also require the Legislative Analyst's Office to conduct and submit to the legislature an evaluation of the pilot program. This bill would provide Black students across California community colleges access to a high-skilled nursing degree, create greater career opportunities, and fill an urgent nursing gap for our state.

