

BLACK STUDENT SUCCESS WEEK



2025 POLICY PLATFORM

Support institutions that invest in Black student success (AB 335).

In 2024, the Legislature took a groundbreaking step in passing [SB 1348](#) by former Sen. Steven Bradford, which created a new designation for Black Serving Institutions – colleges and universities that serve at least 10 percent Black and African American students. [AB 335](#) by Assemblymember Gipson offers a unique opportunity to equip Black-Serving Institutions with the fiscal means to expand academic and basic needs supports and build brighter futures for students of color. An investment in our institutions which are on the frontlines of serving our Black students is an investment in Black student success.

Invest in college affordability and meeting students' basic needs.

Black students are more likely to confront food and housing insecurities, which means they are significantly less likely to be on track to achieve their goals, and are more likely to have lower grades and experience a myriad of difficult choices that inhibit their ability to succeed. According to a 2023 report of the CEO Taskforce on Affordability, Food, and Housing Access, 72 percent of Black students experienced housing insecurity within the past year, 39 percent faced homelessness, and 62 percent confronted food insecurity. Despite these concerning trends, the number of Black students attending community college has increased by nearly 13 percent since 2022. Now is the time to holistically address their affordability challenges through systemic solutions that include a laser focus on racial equity.



Cal Grant Reform:

Due to eligibility restrictions, Black students cannot equitably access the state's largest financial aid program. We must continue to support Black students on their path to persistence and completion by reforming the outdated Cal Grant Program, which has left too many Black students behind. We encourage the Governor and Legislature to prioritize the implementation of the Cal Grant Equity Framework, which would enable over 11,000 additional Black Californians to fully realize their college dreams.



Affordable Student Housing:

The lack of affordable housing options for Black students results in financial uncertainties that are counterproductive to their educational aspirations. Student housing is more than just a tool for college completion—it provides Black students with the economic stability and predictability they need to focus on their college studies and thrive in their campus environment. We ask the Legislature and Governor to consider new investments that would enable community colleges to construct housing projects for low-income students.



Universal FAFSA / Financial Aid Office Funding:

California's financial aid programs are designed to make college affordable but not all students are aware of these options. Embedding the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) directly within enrollment and outreach practices for Black students will assist them in making better informed financial decisions. To support this work, we must also ensure community college financial aid offices are equipped with the staffing, professional development, and culturally responsive training to appropriately understand and respond to the lived experiences of Black and African American students.



Create equitable pathways to high-wage careers for Black students.

Eliminating equity gaps for students of color is more than just a moral and economic imperative. For far too long, our Black students have faced access disparities to a higher education, thus perpetuating generational poverty and producing a permanent underclass. The growing misalignment between educational pathways and career opportunities, particularly for historically underserved populations, creates an irrefutable economic divide that is unfair, unjust, and inequitable. Our Black students CAN succeed in today's ever-evolving economy. Recognizing their capacity to serve as learners and future workforce contributors is a key strategy for closing racial equity gaps.



Career Education Master Plan:

The Governor's Master Plan for Career Education provides an innovative framework for education and workforce training that equips all Californians with the skills needed to succeed in the 21st-century economy. The Master Plan recognizes that scaling up non-traditional workforce pathways can accelerate socioeconomic mobility for underserved Californians who have not yet found their way to college. The recommendations of the Master Plan will help increase access and attainment among our current and prospective Black students, improving their economic outlook.



Credit for Prior Learning:

Black Californians are seasoned with abilities that will be critical to filling the jobs of tomorrow. However, community colleges do not have the infrastructure in place to recognize all forms of learning, whether it occurs in the classroom, on-the-job, or in the military. Allowing Black students to benefit from credit for prior learning not only honors their previous workplace experiences but can save them on average of six to ten months in degree completion.



Apprenticeships:

Apprenticeships eliminate the barrier between education, training, and employment to create seamless career pathways. These programs provide students with the chance to earn credit toward a certificate or degree through on-the-job training or experiential learning in the classroom, while earning a wage that addresses their financial needs. Yet Black students are underrepresented in apprenticeship programs. Additional investments in community college apprenticeship programs would incentivize closer collaboration with employers to conduct targeted outreach for Black students facing barriers to participation.



Dual Enrollment:

Dual enrollment is a powerful equity lever for increasing access to higher education for underrepresented students by allowing high school students to earn college credit before they graduate. Dual enrollment improves students' economic mobility but Black students do not have equitable access to these life-changing learning opportunities. We encourage the Legislature to consider policies that would remove barriers to participation, with a specific focus on increasing Black representation.

