

Black Student Success Council (BSSC)

Meeting Minutes

April 13, 2021

Welcome

- Theresa and Debra welcomed everyone to the Black Student Success Council (BSSC) meeting and thanked the Council for making the adjustment to their schedules so members could attend the Advancing Equity In a Climate of Resistance and Change presentation by Dr. Frank Harris last week. Debra also thanked the Council and acknowledged that the BSSC has a growing presence on campus thanks to the work the Council has done over the past year.

Leveraging Strengths: Black Students & Health and Wellness

- Dr. Sandra Darden introduced herself to the Council and provided a brief background on her work at the university before sharing a presentation on Black students and health and wellness.
- Sandra provided some information on the history of the Klotz Student Health Center along with its operating hours and the services it provides.
 - Hours are Monday-Friday 9am-12pm and 1pm-4pm
 - Located near the G3 parking structure and south of the University Student Union
 - Phone: 818-677-3666
 - Website: www.csun.edu/shc
- The Health Center has 60 employees (8% are Black).
- Current on-campus Services include:
 - Acute and emergency dental and primary care
 - Sports Medicine
 - Pharmacy
 - Laboratory
 - X Ray
 - The Student Health Center's Business Office
- Services being offered through Telehealth due to the pandemic include:
 - Primary Care
 - Counseling for reproductive health
 - Nutrition
 - Smoking Cessation and wellness
- Opportunities for students include:
 - Clinical Access and Shadow Experience (CASE) for students interested in health careers
 - Student Health Advisory Committee (SHAC) which allow students to advise the health director of their wants and needs

- Peer Health Educators can receive course credit for making presentations in classrooms
- Sandra presented the following data collected from the Student Health Center's electronic medical records and CSUN's Admissions and Records covering July 1, 2019 to June 30, 2020.
 - Average age of patients is 19-24
 - Regarding patient gender, they had 12,247 females, 6,083 males and 86 identified as Transmale, Gender-nonconforming, Genderqueer, or Non-binary
 - Out of approximately 8,300 patients, 591 (around 7.1%) were identified as African American
 - Most common type of visit were Primary Care, Nursing, Massage Therapy, and Sports Medicine
 - The top diagnoses included Laboratory examination, screening for respiratory tuberculosis, chiropractic dysfunction of the thoracic region, and massage
 - The least common diagnoses included surveillance for contraception, dental plaque, general pain, and sprain of thoracic ligaments
 - Appointments by ethnicity show that approximately 25% of the visits to athletic training were made by African American students, and the most common visits made by African American students were for athletic training, dermatology, physical therapy, and sports medicine
 - The least common visits by Black students were for wellness and nutrition.
- Sandra summarized the following data based on the 2018 National College of Health Assessment which is an online survey done every two years to assess students health, attitudes, and behaviors. According to this data:
 - 77% of Black students rated their overall health as excellent, very good, or good compared to 75% of the general student population
 - About 45% of Black students report that their academic performance is affected by anxiety and sleep difficulties
 - Slightly more black students were affected by depression (39%) when compared with 29% for the general student population
 - 56% of Black students reported that their stress level was less than average while 45% reported their stress level as more than average or tremendous
 - 77% of Black students compared with 81% of the general student population reported that in the last 12 months they have felt overwhelmed by all they had to do
 - 47% of Black students, compared to 48% of the general student population reported feeling hopeless, lonely, or seriously considered or attempted suicide
 - 94% of Black students reported feeling safe on campus during the day and 69% of Black students reported feeling safe on campus in the evenings
 - In the last 30 days 46% of Black students reported using alcohol, 21% reported using marijuana, and 4% reported using E-cigarettes
 - In the last 30 days condoms were used for sex by Black students 12% versus 8% of the general CSUN population for oral sex, equally at 44% for vaginal sex, and 36% versus 28% for anal sex
 - 46% of Black students reported that they have been tested for STIs, while only 36% of the general student population reported being tested

- 51% of Black students reported that they are currently trying to lose weight, versus 59% of the general student population
- Black students got less sleep than the general population over the past 7 days, by 6%
- In summary, a low percentage of Black students used the Student Health Center in 2019-2020 mainly because the office is peripheral to campus, there's a lack of knowledge that it exists, health care in young people is a low priority, and lack of trust in the health care system.
- Outreach efforts have included the University 100 class for incoming Freshmen, which includes a tour of the Health Center, Health Fairs, the Oasis Wellness Center, and classroom lectures by staff.

Questions for Dr. Darden (Sandra)

- Takiya asked about the difference between what students were reporting in the surveys conducted by the Black Student Success Council last fall and what they are reporting to the Student Health Center. Sandra noted that she can not correlate the data from the National College Health Assessment with CSUN's data. Her impression was that in prior years they had more Black students coming to the Health Center, but she does not know why there seems to be fewer Black students visiting the Health Center today.
- Theresa asked about the type of outreach being done to let students know about the Student Health Center. Sandra mentioned that all incoming freshmen are given a tour of the facility, they have staff who are professors, have a presence at the Oasis Center, and provide class lectures at the professors' request, as well as health fairs.
- Theresa recommended developing some social media platforms to reach out to students, as well as making a connection with University Counseling Services.
- Olani noted that she was not aware of the Student Health Center when she first came to campus and many students are not aware that there are Black doctors in the center.
- Sandra noted that part of the problem they have with reaching students is their location on campus. They are far from the center of activity on campus.
- Debra added that one thing to consider is the ethnicity of the student health educators and to try to hire a more diverse group who the students can relate to.
- Debra also recommended that we note on the BSSC website that the Student Health Center has just hired a Black registered nurse.
- Olani noted in the chat that, "I think people also feel more comfortable going to other providers because of some of the fees that may incur by visiting the center/consultation. I think making certain that information is available to the students may increase participation."
- Shay made the comment that she "didn't have insurance when I was a student and the health center was a life saver."
- Nyla stated, that "The tours are very helpful for demystifying the center for students. Maybe there is a virtual tour?"
- Jessica mentioned that they would be happy to help distribute information to the students in housing.
- Boris noted that April is Minority Health Month, and asked if we could advertise the services offered?

- Takiya offered to assist Sandra if the Health Center would like to shoot a video that could be included in the *Becoming an Effective Online Learner* course or the University 100 course.
- Vera also suggested doing an Instagram live presentation on the Student Health Center.

Student Voices

- Olani informed the Council that some students were concerned about the upcoming virtual Black Graduation Celebration, which is happening Sunday, May 16th at 4pm. Some students did not know if the event was happening this year due to the pandemic, or where to go for information. The deadline to apply is (tentatively) April 16th. (Note: The deadline has been extended to April 26th).
- The application for a new Black Student Leadership Council President has been sent out. Black Student Union (BSU) Executive Board applications have also gone out. Information can be found on our Instagram Bios and will be sent to the Black Student Success Council (BSSC) for distribution.
- Theresa provided contact information for Brittany Swinson regarding Black Graduation. Kandace Harris also noted that she is also on the Black Graduation Committee with Brittany and recommended contacting Brittany directly.
- Olani provided information on where to direct students online to information regarding Black Graduation. Link is <https://www.csun.edu/blackgraduation>.
- Teiana asked if there was a way to have all the affinity graduations listed on the main Commencement webpage.
- Shelley recommended connecting with Anthony Bennett regarding getting the information on Black Graduation up on the main Commencement website.
- Theresa asked Olani to share the dates for upcoming elections for the Black Student Leadership Council. Olani responded that the election process should begin the week of April 20th with elections taking place on the 26th.

Leveraging Strengths: Black Students: Supporting Student's Basic Needs

- Dr. Shelley Ruelas-Bischoff thanked the Council for inviting her to share with the group and shared information about herself before beginning her presentation on Basic Needs.
- The CSU System began to conduct research on students experiencing food and housing insecurity in 2015 under Chancellor White.
- The link to the CSU Chancellor's Office study on Student Well-being and Basic Needs is <https://www2.calstate.edu/impact-of-the-csu/student-success/basic-needs-initiative>
- The Basic Needs Initiative is central to the 2025 Graduation Initiative efforts to address student engagement and well-being, which takes a holistic look at student's well-being both inside and outside the classroom.
- The foundation for student success has been captured by the Chancellor's Office through the "Six Pillars of Student Success" which include academic preparation, enrollment management, student engagement and well-being, financial support, data-informed decision making, and administrative barriers.
- In a 2019 CSU System wide Survey found:
 - 18% of students who identified as Black or African American and first generation reported homelessness or housing insecurity, which was the highest among first generation ethnic groups

- 65.9% of those same students surveyed also reported food insecurity
- According to the 2021 Campaign for College Opportunity:
 - "Though Black people account for 5.5% of California residents, 40% of California homeless are Black and 14% of Californians issued CalFresh benefits are Black."
- Data specific to CSUN from the 2019 system-wide survey was provided to our campus (not disaggregated by race or ethnicity) indicated that 40% of CSUN students reported some level of food insecurity, which was about the system wide average at the time. CSUN students also reported struggling with housing insecurity (at least 4% of the student population at that time). The average for the system was reported at 10.9%.
- All of the basic needs resources that we have on campus have been compiled into our "CSUN With a Heart" website at <https://www.csun.edu/heart>.
- In our current virtual environment, this information has also been integrated throughout the Student Life and Support section of the "CSUN as One" website. Students are able to access information categorized by new, continuing, and graduate students. The CSUN as One: Student Life and Support webpage can be accessed at <https://www.csun.edu/csunasone/student-life-and-support-v2>
- Basic Need Resources available to students on campus include the following:
- CSUN Food Pantry
 - The pantry has remained open since the beginning of the pandemic and has even expanded its hours of operation from two to four days (Monday & Tuesday 9am-1pm and Wednesday & Thursday 1pm-5pm)
 - The pantry provides emergency nourishment and basic necessities at no cost to any student enrolled at any CSU campus currently living and/or working in the Los Angeles San Fernando Valley area. The CSU has a reciprocal agreement that allows any CSU to use the CSU pantry that is closest to where they currently reside
 - Students can pick up pre-packaged food and basic necessities (social distanced protocols are in place)
 - There is also a Pop-up Pantry that provides fresh produce and pantry items
 - Throughout the pandemic the pantry has seen between 50-70 students a week
- CalFresh Outreach
 - CSUN has received federal grant funding to support student's awareness of CalFresh eligibility, along with application assistance. We have been awarded a second 3 year grant cycle through 2023-24
 - CalFresh Outreach is a nutrition assistance program, formally known as food stamps or SNAP-ED, that helps low-income individuals buy the food they need and allowing for the incorporation of fresh produce
 - We have assisted in submitting an average of 400 student applications per year, and have not lost momentum with these numbers during our current virtual environment
 - We also have a CalFresh Healthy Living Grant which was awarded to us last year and allows us to provide nutritional cooking classes and classes on living a healthy lifestyle to our students
- MataCare Emergency Grant
 - Provides funding to help students with unforeseen and urgent emergency expenses

- The amount of grant money a student receives depends on the nature of the request and availability of funds. The average award prior to the pandemic was around \$550; that amount was increased in Spring 2020, given the pandemic
- Temporary Emergency Housing
 - The Temporary Emergency Housing program provides emergency housing for a short period of time at no cost to eligible students (up to 20 days, depending on availability of space and resources)
 - Housing is self-funded meaning its operational budget comes primarily from rental fees
 - We actively seek grants and donations to support the Temporary Emergency Housing program so that those costs are not subsidized by rental fees
 - We also have partnered in this program with our Masters of Social Work (MSW) colleagues who work with housing staff. They provide two MSW interns who meet with students to help them access housing and other basic needs resources, both on and off campus
- University Counseling Services
 - University Counseling Services has been operating virtually throughout the pandemic to offer telemental health to students
 - They have also partnered with the Student Health Center for the You@CSUN campaign which provides a platform for students to access resources for mental, physical health, academic support, and other key resources on campus
- Legal Support Services
 - CSUN is offering free or low-cost legal support to our students through the Dream Center's partnership with CARACEN as well as the AS Legal Support Clinic which, works in partnership with Southwestern Law School. Both programs have been operating virtually since the pandemic began
- Matty's Closet
 - Will reopen upon return of in-person instruction
- Additional resources available include:
 - EOP/TRIO SSS
 - Marilyn Magaram Wellness Garden
 - CSUN Food Recovery Network
 - Institute of Sustainability Food Garden
 - Women's, Infants, and Children (WIC)
 - Women's Research and Resource Center
- Next Steps
- Dr. Ruelas-Bischoff shared that our campus has been able to quickly implement a large number of basic needs programs with our current decentralized model.
- Given the breadth and complexity of several of these programs, she has recently proposed a new, centralized Basic Needs model for the campus that would facilitate 1) a more coordinated response to responding to students in distress and 2) provide coordinated leadership and oversight for key basic needs program.
- Part of this new centralized model will include the addition of Basic Needs Care Coordinators who will serve as visible "point persons" for the campus community when a student in need of basic needs support comes to our attention. Their primary focus will be to connect as quickly with the student as possible, assist students in accessing

resources, and following up with students/campus partners as needed.

Questions for Dr. Ruelas-Bischoff (Shelley)

- Del asked how quickly an existing student can be brought into Temporary Emergency Housing if needed? Shelley responded that this often depends on a case-by-case basis, but that housing will work as quickly as possible to provide help and recommended connecting with Natalia Figueroa.
- Vera asked Shelley if she anticipates an increase in the use of services once the campus begins to repopulate, and have there been conversations about extending the service hours for students who may need assistance after normal business hours? Shelley responded that we do anticipate an increase in demand once students return and we are working to be prepared for that. Also, as our population continues to grow, we are always looking for ways to stabilize our funding resources, (e.g., getting more donations and philanthropic support as well as advocating for permanent funding resources), and how we continue to staff up in a way that will help us better meet the students needs.
- Jessica stated in the chat, "Someone from the Heal Project reached out the other day to ask me about what hygiene products or food items Black students may want at the pantry to see how they might be able to assist. I asked Black Girl Magic participants, they gave me some suggestions and I sent those over. Perhaps we can suggest other items."
- April also stated in the chat, "maybe there can be training and a "certificate" for staff/faculty AND students to be an identified as Care Coordinator/advocate or something similar. Having someone in each department would be an idea to perhaps strive for."
- Theresa asked if Shelley has any data on the extent to which students of African descent use these services? Shelley noted that some individual departments have that data (e.g. ,financial aid) and that others (e.g., food pantry) have not yet collected/distilled that data, so that's something that we recognize we need to do more of, and are working towards.
- Shelley added that she and her team in the food pantry are working now with Dr. Nellie Duran and several other faculty to create a basic needs climate assessment, as well as some training and curriculum resources for faculty to use in their classrooms to help educate students about these resources.

Board of Trustees Report:

- On March 23, 2021, the Trustees of the California State University agreed to a resolution establishing a Biennial Symposium Recognizing African American History and Achievement and Promoting Anti-Racism Work.
- The members of the Council were provided a copy of the resolution.
- Natalie Mason-Kinsey has submitted a bid for CSUN to host the first symposium in 2022. She is also planning an event in 2021 around Juneteenth.
- Theresa and Debra expressed the need to get more information regarding things like funding and the importance of going beyond this resolution to see that real change is actually implemented on this campus and within the CSU system.
- Natalie has been invited to share some additional information about the resolution at our next meeting.

Announcements & Adjourn

- Theresa also noted that we received approval and funding to hire a Graduate Student Assistant to help the Black Student Success Council (BSSC). Information will be emailed to the Council.
- April noted that she is working on a project around the topic "What I wish professors knew" that could use student support. Looking for students who are willing to share their perspectives and opinions on video, which will then be used in faculty development programming. Please contact April Taylor at ataylor@csun.edu for information.
- Mechelle asked if anyone knows what is happening with the committees that were set up regarding the Working Groups associated with the University's 10-Point Action Plan? She also reminded the Council that we still need help reviewing the transcripts from the focus groups. Theresa responded that dates are being scheduled for the workgroups to meet and begin discussions. Debra noted that Natalie also will be able to provide us an update on this at our April 27 meeting.
- Theresa noted that we will try to take time during the next meeting to discuss our takeaways from the lecture by Dr. Frank Harris, in addition to receiving an update from Mechelle and Jessica regarding the focus groups.