

## Black Student Success Council (BSSC)

### Meeting Minutes

April 27, 2021

#### Welcome

- Theresa and Debra welcomed everyone to the Black Student Success Council (BSSC) meeting. Debra congratulated Shiva and Vera who were both recipients of the Polished Apple Award presented by the University Ambassadors.

#### Leveraging Strengths: Black Students & EOP

- Shiva Parsa introduced herself and Thomas Macias before giving a presentation on CSUN's Educational Opportunity Program (EOP).
- EOP designs, administers, and supports programs that deliver access and retention services to CSUN students.
- Students in EOP are historically low-income, historically educationally disadvantaged, first-generation college students.
  - Students/families have to show a 10-year span of being low-income.
  - Historically educationally disadvantaged includes where a student grew up, where they went to school, what their environment was like, and what resources they have, or do not have.
- EOP emerged from the Civil Rights movement of the late 1960s, as a response to the call for access and equity to higher education. There is an EOP at all 23 California State University campuses. EOP remains a critical component of the California State University system because of its commitment to providing access and innovative support services to thousands of underrepresented students.
- EOP Criteria includes:
  - Applicants must be highly motivated, historically low-income, educationally disadvantaged, first-generation college students (parents have not completed a four-year college degree, siblings do not count).
  - EOP applicants must also meet the income guidelines found at [www.csun.edu/eop/criteria](http://www.csun.edu/eop/criteria)
  - All applicants are interviewed for the program (currently interviewed around 1200 EOP applicants for the fall)
  - Students have to show verification of income once admitted into the program
  - EOP brings in 450-500 freshmen every year and 150-200 transfer students
  - All admitted students must complete a transitional program, referred to as learning communities, that begin in the summer and continue over three semesters.
- EOP Provides:
  - Assistance in completing Cal State Apply & EOP applications

- Transitional experience for first-time freshmen and first-time transfer students--- these programs are designed to give student's a head start toward a successful college experience, and the opportunity to begin building community with other students
  - Mentoring
  - Academic support services
  - Holistic advisement
  - Student engagement with one another
  - Financial support for eligible students through the EOP grant
- Additional Educational Opportunity Programs include:
  - EOP Transitional Programs that help students bridge the gap between high school, community college and CSUN
  - The Milt and Debbie Valera EOP Resilient Scholars Program is designed to provide access and support to former foster youth
  - The Faculty Mentor Program provides mentoring services, training, and resources for faculty, staff, and students
  - EOP/Trio Student Support Services Program (SSSP) is dedicated to building a community of support and offers CSUN students the opportunity to participate in program services designed to develop the necessary skills to reach their academic and professional goals
- EOP Satellites:
  - EOP at CSUN in a decentralized program meaning it is not housed in one area
  - EOP satellites can be found in the academic colleges to provide advisement for students
  - Additionally, EOP has what are called "service satellites" located in Financial Aid, the Learning Resource Center, the Career Center, and the University Counseling Center
  - EOP also has one outreach counselor who goes to high schools, and one who goes to community colleges
  - EOP developed a service learning class for students to go out to their communities to show that college is possible. This year will be the first time that the service learning class will be offered in Africana Studies

#### Questions for Shiva

- Debra asked about the demographic information of EOP students including the total number of Black students in the program. Shiva noted that EOP students used to make up around 10% of the student population (close to 4000 students). Once we incorporated the fact that every student had to do a transitional program our numbers went down, our graduation rates went up, and we have an issue with the coding system in PeopleSoft (how students are identified as EOP). Currently we have around 2200 students who are enrolled. For the incoming class of 2021, less than 20% of our students are African American. Our number one priority is to increase African American outreach efforts by reaching out to more to areas such as Lancaster and the Inland Empire. EOP is also working with SOAR to connect with local high schools.
- Theresa asked how many students were expected for the incoming class? Shiva responded that for freshmen between 400 to 475 and transfers between 150 and 200.

- Theresa also asked for clarification on what kind of outreach could be done if a student has not applied or is not a part of the specialized group of high schools. Shiva noted that EOP provides information to high school counselors and former alumni to help reach potential students. Shiva also noted that EOP has gone from referring to potential students as "high risk" to "high potential" and that change has made a difference in how they see themselves and their willingness to enter the program.
- Theresa asked, if based on the university's commitment to up-level our outreach efforts to students of Black descent, is it possible to get another EOP outreach counselor [who will specifically focus on this demographic]? Shiva responded that she is going to look into it.

### **Student Voices**

- No students attended the meeting.

### **BSSC Focus Groups**

- Mechelle Best and Jessica Fred provided an update on some of the preliminary common themes they have encountered from the Black Student Success Council (BSS) focus group transcripts.
- To recap, there were 12 focus groups with 45 student participants. Four graduate student facilitators each facilitated at least two focus groups in fall 2020.
- Regarding initial questions related to *community* and *sense of belonging*, responses from students included the following:
  - "I was a part of more like a family because I have friends that I've had since freshman year, that I still have now. We were all Black, so we had something in common. When we had that we all kind of banded together because we were the only Black people in EOP. I built a strong connection and community and I still have that relationship with all of them now".
  - "I don't know if I feel like I belong. But I do feel like I have the right to be there. And I feel like I have a purpose to be there".
  - "At CSUN I have not felt like I was in any community".
  - "I can't say I belong".
- Students expressed that Black faculty and staff help to create a sense of community but there aren't enough. Quotes from students include the following:
  - "Certain subjects I would go to tutoring and it'd be African American faculty members and they will be like super helpful. I mean, I feel like African Americans have a connection with each other, because of our background and we connect in a certain way to look out for each other".
  - "I feel like because she's Black, I feel more comfortable talking to her and asking her questions, without her judging me for not knowing the answer."
  - "Only the one I recently shared. I think I remember her name, it was Professor Posey, she was the only one and I guess it affected me in a way of I'm still here, because if it wasn't for her I would have just been like, you know what, we're going to try this again. And, you know, so she's the reason I'm still here."
- Students also expressed that seeing other Black students helps to create a sense of belonging. Quotes from students include the following:

- "And coming to CSUN I didn't see much support like for Black students, African American students with people that look like me. I didn't see many people that looked like me, especially coming from, like an inner-city area where, you're usually immersed in different cultures and stuff. I didn't come to see that; I especially didn't see support for black students in general, like from staff or some other students."
  - "And I feel like since well I mixed and I'm half Filipino and I've just...I feel like that kind of plays into it. I see at CSUN or I've met a lot of Filipinos at CSUN so I do feel that sense of belonging. However, I've never met African Americans until I've attended this meeting."
- Jessica Fred presented several responses from students as it relates to food insecurity. About half of the focus groups had food insecurity. Responses from students included the following:
  - "It wasn't really an issue because it was always an expectation that in college you were going to struggle a little bit and you have to make due."
  - "I don't really worry about eating."
  - "It's not really affecting us."
  - "The majority of college students can survive off anything."
- Many students knew about resources available to them such as CalFresh and the Food Pantry. Responses included:
  - "I applied for food stamps."
  - "I saved up money and get some support from my family."
  - "No concerns. I go to the pantry and eat around campus."
  - "I stay aware of my finances."
- When asked about technology, as it related to COVID-19, student responses included the following:
  - "There was some hard shifting or adjusting that needed to happen from in-person learning to virtual learning. Some of those things are not necessarily IT (issues) or things they could fix. It's just kind of by nature of what you all are doing, and it's not necessarily conducive to online. Maybe figuring out some creative ways to possibly address that."
  - IT definitely needs to send something out saying, "These are your resources, specifically, so that there's not like a professor that's giving you information, or professors that are not getting you information."
  - "Like [when] school transitioned and there's slower response times. I don't need them, but there was one instance where I did, and it took a long time to receive assistance."
  - "Before, IT was accessible, responsive, and they were helpful, able to get you what you needed. Then after the pandemic, the response rate slows down a little bit. And even though they were able to help it just took a little bit longer."
  - "Before the pandemic I think it was easy to talk to IT. I downloaded many services."
  - "I'm not a computer geek, so just the Zoom. It was like trying to know the speaker and it was so hard. With the pandemic, basically you're on your own."
  - "In the class it's very hard to pay attention."
  - "I'm kind of less motivated to do schoolwork."

- "Our learning is hands on and I'm taking classes where one class I needed 20 observation units, in another class I needed 15 observation units. Doing that online is just watching boring YouTube videos."
  - "One of my classes where we go to a local private school and give lesson plans every week for the rest of the semester and literally the week we're supposed to go was the week that we all got sent home because of COVID. We had to do everything online and my professor and all my classmates kept asking me questions and because I make videos I knew what to do, but if I didn't, I would have been screwed. You know how hard it is to have them read a book while giving a lesson plan?"
- The next step is to identify some solutions for these issues.
- Theresa thanked everyone on the BSSC who volunteered to help read the transcripts from the focus groups, and noted that the new graduate student assistant they plan to hire will be able to help us get up-to-date, and find solutions and strategies for moving forward.

### **Leveraging Strengths: Black Students & Tutoring and Library Resource**

- Rashawn Green introduced herself and discussed the role that the Learning Resource Center (LRC) plays in serving students.
- The Learning Resource Center was established to provide students with the resources they need to succeed in college, including workshops and tutoring for students and resources for faculty.
- The LRC has never collected data on the ethnicity and/or race of students. One of our projects over the summer is to explore ways that this might be possible.
- We had a little over 15,000 visits to the LRC in 2019-20 before the pandemic started and a little under 6,000 visits in the Fall 2020.
- Learning Resource Center programs include:
  - Tutoring in Math, Science, and American Sign Language
  - Upper Division Writing Exams (UDWPE) Workshops
  - Writing Center
  - Writing Workshops
  - Supplemental Instruction (SI) for helping students with writing, statistics, sciences, etc.
  - Grammar Lab and Conversation SWAP
  - Online Writing Lab
  - Faculty resources
- Writing Workshops that may benefit African American students include help with:
  - Pre-writing and Outlining: How to Integrate Seamlessly
  - Crafting a Standout Personal Statement
  - Writing the Annotated Bibliography
  - Writing a Winning Scholarship Essay
  - Cite Resources: APA, MLA, Chicago Style
  - Revising with Confidence
- The Grammar Lab offers one-on-one tutoring for students who want to polish their written English. If you need help with sentence fragments, subject-verb agreement,

punctuation, or any other aspects of written English, the lab's grammar consultants can help.

- Resources for Graduate Students include:
  - Writing Consultants
  - Thesis/Dissertation Writers' Retreat
  - Workshop Series and Drop-in Support Hour (DISH)
- Resources for Faculty include:
  - Embed LRC information in Canvas page
  - Presentations and Workshops
  - Prompt Feedback
  - Borrow a tutor program
- The Learning Resource Center works with several campus partners including International Exchange Student Center, Student Success, EOP, Matador Achievement Center, and Faculty Development.

#### Questions for Rashawn

- Takiya asked if the tutors who may be borrowed are graduate students or undergraduate? Rashawn responded that they can be either.
- Debra expressed her appreciation for the work they do and commented that everyone she has sent to the Learning Resource Center has come back a better writer.
- Debra, Theresa, and Rashawn discussed the difficulty of pulling together data from the various programs being used around campus such as EAB and PeopleSoft.
- Takiya asked if the Learning Resource Center needs a common calendar system for students to sign into and make appointments with any office on campus? Rashawn responded that something like that would be great, but since the campus already purchased EAB we had no choice but to utilize it.
- Kent noted that it would be helpful to have a system that connected a student's use of the Learning Resource Center and their performance in their classes.

#### 10-Point Action Plan & DEIG

- Natalie Mason-Kinsey provided an update on the 10-point Action Plan and the Diversity, Equity, Innovation Grants (DEIG).
- The tentative due date is Sep 15, 2021 for the DEIG grant awards. More information about the award amounts and dates will be coming out as soon as the President approves it. The hope is to get this information out before the faculty leave for summer.
- Regarding the 10-point Action Plan, we have reduced the number of workgroups from 10 down to 5 workgroups.
- #1 Student Success Focused Workgroup
  - Integrate new recruitment, retention, and graduation plans for Black students
  - Engage Career Services and expand their focus on career readiness for students who identify as African American, or who are from the African diaspora
  - Additional funding for mental health concerns, including funding additional counselors, therapists, advocates, and social workers
  - This workgroup is being headed up by Dr. William Watkins and Provost Mary Beth Walker
- #2 Faculty and Staff Focused Workgroup

- Provide funding and an action plan to recruit, retain, and promote Black faculty, staff and administrators
  - Working with faculty development to include culturally relevant pedagogy and helping faculty to review their curriculum and infuse anti-racism into the classroom
  - This workgroup is being headed up by Provost Mary Beth Walker and Dr. Marcella DeVeaux from Faculty Development
- #3 Creation of an Institute and Events to Celebrate the Black Experience
  - Funding, resources, and action plan to create an Institute/Center for Research and Resources on Equity and Black Culture
  - Create an annual Conference on Black Lives and Black Voices
  - This workgroup is headed up by Dr. William Watkins
- #4 Honoring Black History and Culture
  - Develop an oral history project and visual/digital arts installation, showcasing the histories and contributions of local Black communities
  - This workgroup is headed up by Vice President Rob Gunsalus and Theresa White
- #5 Anti-Racism and Social Justice Training
  - Ensure that staff are provided with anti-racist and social justice training and mentorship in their professional development series
  - This workgroup is co-chaired by Natalie Mason-Kinsey and Vice President Colin Donahue

**Questions for Natalie:**

- Debra made the comment that what is concerning to her is that we need a document that can go out to the campus and explain where we are with these discussions and what the process is. The need for accountability and enhanced communication also is important to ensure that we can give a report at the end of the year on what the workgroups have accomplished. Natalie noted that this has been a topic of conversation in her meetings with the new Chief of Staff and the President.
- Theresa expressed her thanks to Natalie and suggested that it would be helpful if the President's communication team could help get some information out to our campus about the work being done. Natalie responded that she has asked Jeff and Carmen if we had any testimonials/good stories that we can use to promote positive things happening on this campus.
- Gigi asked about the second round of the DEIG grant. Can folks apply for the grant again if they already received it last year? Natalie responded that yes people who received the grant last year can reapply this year, but need to turn in their final report so it can be reviewed before a new grant is approved. Goal is to get the template to people before commencement. Natalie noted that the due date for the final report is July 29, 2021.

**Announcements & Adjourn**

- Debra announced new *From Here to Career* program coming out around the end of August for hiring student assistants to work on campus. The program's goal is to have 200 students participate for the next fiscal year. Supervisors also will be given tools and

resources and students will participate in workshops to increase their career readiness. She will send information to the group once she receives it.

- Gigi announced that she was approved by Dr. Watkins to do an initiative with the Umoja community to work with L.A. Community Colleges to help increase the number of Black transfer students to CSUN. She is looking for a graduate student to assist. Also, Gigi was selected to instruct the Black Excellence University 100 Course.
- The last BSSC meeting of the year is on May 11, 2021 at 3pm.
- The BSSC Happy Hour is scheduled for May 14, 2021 at 5pm.