

Black Student Success Council (BSSC)

Meeting Minutes

October 19, 2021

Welcome

- Theresa and Debra welcomed everyone to the Black Student Success Council (BSSC) meeting.

CSUN Roadmap, Chancellors Campus Equity Action Plan, Campus Re-Population, Initiative on Campus Policing

- Theresa shared the following updates with the Council regarding what's happening around campus, and provided the link to the CSU Roadmap to the Future based on President Beck's priorities at <https://www.csun.edu/provost/road-map-future>. It's important that the Black Student Success Council is plugged in and grounded in those strategic plans. and that we're moving down the road simultaneously with the rest of the university.
- CSU Chancellor Joseph Castro wrote a letter to the CSU President's regarding how to move forward with the GI 2025 Graduation Initiative. Theresa noted some of the recommendations that were made by the committee and put forth to the president. The Advisory Committee has outlined the following five recommendations that are intended to intensify the focus on equity:
 1. Targeting DFW with faculty/students and thinking about how we can approach this from an equity minded lens.
 2. Ensuring robust and directed academic advisement for our students.
 3. Expanding data sharing and campus level data and transparency through an equity minded lens.
 4. Prioritizing course availability.
 5. Supporting student basic needs.
- Debra added that the new Basic Needs Suite in the University Student Union has been added to the campus operational budget and approved by the President. \$6.3 million dollars has been designated to help develop a basic needs suite in the University Student Union which will house a community kitchen, CSUN Food Pantry, CSUN Centralized Basic Needs and Matty's Closet. Maria Elizondo has been hired as the assistant director for the Basic Needs area and we will add two Care Coordinators to help students get the services they need.
- Theresa noted that the Campus Re-Population Plan includes having approximately 25% of courses offered online while 75% will be face-to-face in the spring. Students are still dealing with some level of anxiety about coming to campus on a regular basis, so if we can serve as the collective voice for the Black students we should endeavor to do so, whenever possible.

- Debra discussed the Initiative on Campus Policing that is facilitated by a consulting firm called PMJ Consulting, to assess current policing practices on the campus and come up with a strategic plan and framework for moving forward. The four people working on the project are Dr. Joshua Moon-Johnson, Dr. Emily Prieto, Dr. Raja Gopal Bhattar and Nick Bailey. The report should be completed by end of this calendar year. Debra encouraged BSSC members to participate.
- Del also encouraged members to meet with the consultants if they have the opportunity to do so. The Black Faculty and Staff Association will be meeting with them on October 20, 2021.
- Takiya asked if they are showing any models that we can give input on, or if they are just asking for input? Coming from a campus where there was an incident of a Black male being killed in the dorms for a mental health issue, Takiya was concerned about plans to partner police officers with appropriate professionals that can assist. Del responded that they want to hear about people's experiences on this campus and our impressions of policing. At this point, they are not recommending a model for us to follow. They are just gathering information from different groups.
- Natalie informed the Council that if you wish to share your story with the consultants to please reach out to her and she will provide a link to allow people to share that information with them.
- Mechelle asked if an email was sent to the campus community regarding this initiative because she did not remember receiving one? It is believed that a communication was sent last fiscal year.
- Natalie noted that Dr. Watkins wanted to offer several townhalls to help make sure everyone who wishes to participate could do so.

BSSC 2021-2022 Goals/Objectives Review and Voting

- Theresa provided a brief review of the Black Student Success Council's proposed goals and initiatives from last year and what the Council has been doing in each area.
- The Council was then asked to complete a poll to rank the following six proposed 2021-2022 goals, objectives, and recommended action steps in the order of priority:
 1. CSU: Equity Plan: GI 2025 Graduation Initiative, Reducing Equity Gaps & High DFU Rates
 2. Elevate Student Voices – Create Narratives of Black Student Life (Emphasize Success Stories)
 3. Intentional Focus on FTF and FTT Student Success and Community Building
 4. Impact of University 10 – Point Action Plan Examine University DEI Structures
 5. BSSC Visibility, Outreach & Student Connections
 6. Leverage BSSC Member Strengths: Assessing Outcomes, Advocacy & Action Plans
- The results of the poll will be confirmed and sent out before the next meeting.

Student Voices

- Ashley Talley, Vice President of the Black Student Leadership Council (BLC) shared that the main goal of the BSLC is to have our Black student voices heard on campus. She noted that Black students feel like they aren't really heard or listened to on campus and that this affects their mental health and discourages them from wanting to speak up.

- Ashley stated that it is important to focus on the mental health of Black students.
- Gigi asked Ashley and Kayla if there was a way that we could have Black students to speak up more and respond to surveys? Kayla responded that it has to do with comfortability and feelings of belonging on campus. Some students don't feel like they are a part of the campus community or that their opinion matters.
- Vera asked the students what they feel some of the challenges will be for Black students when they transition back on campus in the spring and how can we help meet those challenges? Kayla suggested showing visibility and having tables set up to welcome students on campus and help show them who we are and that we see them as a part of the campus community. Ashley felt it would be helpful if the faculty and the campus leaders developed more of a relationship with the students in the beginning. Ashley also suggested connecting with students via social media and with in-person events, rather than using surveys to connect.

Guest Speakers Dr. Freddie Sanchez and Dr. Marquita Gammage: Identity-Based Centers

- Debra introduced Dr. Freddie Sanchez and Dr. Marquita Gammage who presented information on their work in developing a recommendation regarding Identity-Based Centers on campus and how the BSSC can assist.
- They noted that President Beck has commissioned them to provide, "Comprehensive approach to identifying ways we might create physical and aspirational centers of educational equity that integrate proven strategies in the elimination of equity gaps and show our students that identity is power."
- There are 4 identity-based centers on campus - Pride Center, the DREAM Center and the Women's Resource and Research Center which are slated to be housed in the Rise Center, which is currently under development.
- There are also identity-based cultural centers affiliated with academic departments.
- They will provide recommendations to the university by January.
- Dr. Gammage added that the focus on Black students came from an analytics report showing that Black students were the most underserved group on CSUN's campus.

Question 1: How can CSUN enhance the student experience, specifically with providing culturally relevant resources?

- Kayla suggested CSUN hold more cultural nights and provide safe spaces to allow Black students to meet with tutors and advisors.
- Del suggested visible celebrations of Black contributions to this campus and surrounding community.
- Ashley suggested having resources for the Black queer community.
- Vera suggested outward facing murals/artwork that would be enriching and empowering to see while walking around campus.
- Del added the need for a change in campus perception of large groups of Black folks gathered together.
- Theresa agreed that having visual, culturally relevant imagery/public art installations that highlight various culture's historical legacy and contributions are imperative. These things enhance our under-represented students', staff, faculty and administrators sense of belonging and connectedness.
- Takiya noted the need to intentionally and professionally focus on the African diaspora in campus programming to help Black students contextualize themselves

and their personal/ professional path beyond the experiences that led them to their current point.

Question 2: If identity-based resource centers were created, what resource centers & services would you like to see?

- Kayla said she would like to see workshops that focus on mental health and teaching students practical tips and tricks for dealing with procrastination or managing stress.
- Vera suggested financial literacy workshops to help manage finances in college and after.
- Takiya suggested facilitating the Black student's ability to network on campus and professionally.

Dr. Sanchez asked if there are things you might have seen in other places that we could do on this campus but have not done? Are there things that we do well in other parts of campus that we can tailor for Black students?

- Mechelle suggested having a central place for Black students and Black faculty to meet.
- Vicki added the need to support Black students in our STEM programs.
- Takiya suggested we contextualize the contributions of Black scholars nationally and internationally.
- Theresa suggested we teach various literacies (financial/technological, etc.)
- Debra added scholarship opportunities and the creation of a Black student leadership conference.
- Vicki suggested adding tutoring and advisement services.
- Vera suggested having a shuttle to the Black House and cultural spaces that are in the same area.
- Takiya noted that Black students need champions who will raise their concerns when they are not in the room, someone dedicated to this advocacy is imperative.
- Theresa added the importance of having opportunities and spaces for networking, mentoring, advising, scholarship, research, creative projects and engaging in culturally relevant practices (learning from elders, alumni etc.)
- Debra added support for Black clubs and organizations so they can be more impactful-NSBE (National Society of Black Engineers), etc.

Dr. Gammage asked the Council what they thought a space like that would look like?

- Takiya thought the space should be centrally located.
- Natalie also said it should be a centrally located, convenient space.
- Vera said close to parking and a drop off area via shuttle. For example, TSENG is in a great location, right next to parking and the bus stop.
- Del suggested a space with both indoor and outdoor facilities at the center of campus.
- Theresa noted the importance of having a holistic space that is front facing (and centrally located on campus), with representatives from students, staff, faculty, administrators and alumni all working together. It should have culturally relevant food, art, music, a place where students can work with faculty/staff to conduct research, and where they can become more technologically savvy.

- Kayla added that the space should be open where reservations aren't needed to have access. Students should be able to walk in and out as they please and still feel welcome.
- Takiya added that it should be tech savvy. It should also have study spaces with windows so we can see our Black students being studious.
- Lissa suggested having a video phone for students to use (for Deaf and Hard of Hearing students) and displays of student artwork.

Question 3: Where would you like to see this facility housed?

- Takiya said the library lawn.
- Natalie suggested TSENG.
- Theresa suggested Sierra Hall (first, second, and third floors facing east).
- Gigi also said TSENG.

Question 4: Where do you see other ethnic identity spaces in relationship to this one?

- Del likes the idea of a village but feels that Black students may be lost in the mix of other ethnic groups.
- Vera liked the idea of a high-rise with separate spaces for each group's needs.
- Takiya suggested a building with glass walls and located on the main thoroughfare of campus.
- Theresa agreed with the need to have some shared spaces but is concerned about how the amount of space is divided between the various groups, given the varied ethnic group demographics (i.e., less than 5% Black, 9% Asian American, less than 1% Indigenous, over 50% Latinx).

Question 5: How do you see the role of identity-based resource centers in aiding faculty/staff with supporting Black student success in particular?

- Theresa noted its importance in the retention and recruitment of Black faculty and staff on campus. Recruitment and elements for retention should be promoted simultaneously.
- Takiya said it creates a home base. She noted that the main support received is affirmation of what is going on in the environment. It also facilitates networking.
- Debra mentioned the benefit of having a community luncheon perhaps once a month where people can connect with one another. She also noted that it would provide a space for people to go who may have some concerns or need support, information and resources.
- Mechelle noted that it would also serve the needs of CSUN's employees and create a better work environment for them.
- Shay added that it would give staff a central place to direct students when they have a problem or just want a sense of community.

Dr. Sanchez asked if we see the space as an opportunity for recruitment and retention? How about alumni engagement?

- Lissa said yes.
- Debra agreed.
- Theresa agreed.
- Vera suggested incorporating it into the onboarding process. She states that when she started, she met with so few people. The only Black person I saw was Gigi in that space. She noted that the onboarding for staff of color needs to look different.

Question 6: What are some of the things you want us to consider as we develop our proposal?

- Shay noted that the resource should be centrally located on campus, meaning not hard to find.
- Del suggested creating policies on campus that would support Black Faculty and Staff especially staff getting involved in the Black center.
- Takiya replied that the reputation of the region negatively impacts the ability to recruit to the campus so making it overt that CSUN is a safe and welcoming place for Black people is important for the campus and surrounding community.
- Rashawn said location and size of space is important. She noted that it should not be sterile, it should be safe and state of the art.
- Shay added, that it should represent all students of African descent (LGBTQIA+, International Students of African descent, Deaf and Hard of Hearing students, etc.).
- Vera suggested thinking of the Google experience; funding resources, educational workshops, policy and process changes that supports access, and a comfortable space.
- Theresa added thinking of things that contribute to student success; Front facing (centrally located) space that accommodates all facets of our community (student, staff, faculty, admin), resources and funding (scholarships, internships etc.), technologically sophisticated, culturally engaging, etc.
- Kayla said a safe space, support, focuses mainly on student needs, open without reservations needed, workshops, trusted faculty/workers in the location, has information/brochures on scholarships, opportunities, resources, etc.
- Mechelle noted that this is an opportunity for CSUN to affirm its commitment to the community of people of African descent.

Announcements

- Mechelle said she would send out a couple of invitations for people to join her at Castaic Lake on Friday between 1pm and 3pm.
- Takiya invited everyone to the first CSUN Engagement Conference on October 29th from 10am to 2pm.

Adjourn