

## Black Student Success Council (BSSC)

Meeting Minutes

December 7, 2021

### Welcome

- Theresa and Debra welcomed everyone to the Black Student Success Council (BSSC) meeting and announced some members would join the meeting late.
- Theresa thanked all members for joining the meeting during their busy schedules and taking the time to engage in the work of the BSSC on behalf of CSUN's students of African descent.
- Convenors and groups have been meeting to engage in conversation regarding the topics assigned to each group. Break out rooms will be utilized during this meeting for each group to follow up on those topics and to share with the Council afterwards.
- The guest speaker, Associate Vice President of Student Success, Dr. Melanie Bocanegra will be sharing the work that her office is doing, and what could be done to move forward common goals.
- Meeting dates for spring 2022 were announced as follows:  
Tuesday, January 25, 2022 3:00 p.m. - 4:30 p.m.  
Tuesday, February 15, 2022 3:00 p.m. - 4:30 p.m.  
Tuesday, March 8, 2022 3:00 p.m. - 4:30 p.m.  
Tuesday, April 5, 2022 3:00 p.m. - 4:30 p.m.  
Tuesday, May 3, 2022 3:00 p.m. - 4:30 p.m.  
The meetings would continue to be virtual in the interest of facilitating competing priorities and schedules.
- Debra recognized the end-of-year exhaustion, but said there is still a lot of work to be done, and thanked everyone for their contributions and hoped to continue moving forward.

### BSSC 2021-22 Goals/Objectives Break-Out Rooms & Report Out/Action Steps

- Theresa said that USU Executive Administrative Analyst, Jennifer Kim, would be serving as the note taker and meeting support assistant on behalf of Michael Clemens. Jennifer prepared the breakout rooms for the discussions for each group. There would be 20 minutes for discussion before the 3:30 p.m. time certain for Dr. Bocanegra's presentation.
- Theresa reviewed the four priorities and the convenors for each group as follows:

1. CSU: Equity Plan: GI 2025 Graduation Initiative, Reducing Equity Gaps & High DFU Rates (Convener: Dominique Moye)
2. Intentional Focus on FTF and FTT Student Success and Community Building (Convener: Vera Hampton)
3. BSSC Visibility, Outreach & Student Connections (Convener: Del Williams)
4. Elevate Student Voices – Create Narratives of Black Student Life (Emphasize Success Stories) (Conveners: Theresa White and Pero Akinbohun)

- Each group was instructed to discuss the following:
  1. How does the group plan to achieve its goals/objectives? Please identify strategies and action steps that your group will employ.
  2. Please identify targeted deadlines for the action steps (Note: we recognize that the specific strategies may be accomplished within the next 7 months --December to June -- although some will be ongoing and may carry over to the next fiscal year).
  3. How often will your group meet?
  4. Do you foresee any specific issues/challenges that might mitigate the group’s ability to move forward? If yes, please identify.
  5. What other campus departments/resources (if any) will your group utilize to move closer to completing your objectives?
  6. What are the anticipated outcomes?
  7. What resources/support does your group need to meet the anticipated outcomes? (Please be specific)
  8. In what ways can the BSSC Co-Chairs support your efforts?
- Each group should decide who would be reporting to the Council after the group discussions. Breakout rooms were opened for 20 minutes.

<b>Group Number</b>	<b>Participating Council Members</b>
1. CSU: Equity Plan: GI 2025 Graduation Initiative, Reducing Equity Gaps & High DFU Rates	Dominique Moye (convener)  Boris Ricks  Elizabeth Adams  Kent Baxter  Janet Oh  Mechelle Best

	<p>Dawn Ellerbe</p> <p>Takiya Moore</p>
<p>2. Intentional Focus on FTF and FTT Student Success and Community Building</p>	<p>Vera Hampton (convener)</p> <p>Elizabeth Riegos</p> <p>Shelline Warren</p> <p>Mechelle Best</p> <p>Ashley Talley</p> <p>Rashawn Green</p> <p>Gigi McGuire</p> <p>April Taylor</p> <p>Lissa Stapleton</p>
<p>3. BSSC Visibility, Outreach &amp; Student Connections</p>	<p>Del Williams (convener)</p> <p>Abram Milton</p> <p>Sandy Darden</p> <p>Kayla Simpkins</p>
<p>4. Elevate Student Voices – Create Narratives of Black Student Life (Emphasize Success Stories)</p>	<p>Pero Akinbohun (co-convener)</p> <p>Theresa White (co-convener)</p> <p>Deion Turner</p> <p>Vicki Allen</p> <p>Shiva Parsa</p> <p>Natalie Mason-Kinsey</p> <p>Jade Huell</p> <p>Brianne Posey</p> <p>Kandace Harris</p>

**Guest Speaker: Associate Vice President, Office of Student Success Dr. Melanie Bocanegra (3:30 p.m. to 4:05 p.m. time certain)**

- Breakout rooms were closed and Dr. Bocanegra was introduced and welcomed.
- Melanie thanked the Council for inviting her to speak and said that she would be going over the work that the Office of Student Success is undertaking. She said that she is looking forward to getting to know the campus better and meeting students and hearing from them this spring, as she started in her position just prior to the pandemic.
- Melanie shared her PowerPoint presentation and began by discussing the definition of equity and the importance of equity, as it relates to student success. The difference between equality, equity, and diversity was emphasized. She said equality is thought of as sameness, but the world is not created equal, and that different students have access to different support systems. She noted that students of marginalized backgrounds oftentimes have less access to these support systems, and do not get through academic systems as efficiently as other groups. Students have reported that these students feel the sense of inequity when seeking some support resources.
- Melanie defined diversity as the act of bringing a wide variety of students into the pipeline, but not necessarily addressing the root causes that are preventing them from navigating through the different barriers they may experience.
- Melanie stated that the Office of Student Success values data and setting specific goals which will address these issues, especially for the most impacted students. She noted that the Office has been working on equity training, how to be intentional about the work that is being done, and thinking strategically about identifying the root causes of these systematic issues, and strategies for changing them. The Office has partnered with faculty affiliates and campus constituents.
- Melanie continued by stating the goal of creating an equity-minded, race conscious culture, and identified 4 core values of operation:
  1. Intellectual and cultural humility
  2. Community engaged justice
  3. High impact practices and programs
  4. Inquiry-driven processes
- Melanie said these operations would be done in 3 domains: Institutional outcomes, Interpersonal domain, and Intrapersonal domain.
- Melanie presented that the GI 2025 Initiative is an example of an institutional outcome. She stated that CSUN's 6-year First Time Freshmen (FTF) graduation rate goal is 66% as part of GI 2025, and that CSUN is 11% away from achieving that goal. She described that percentage in terms of the number of individual students needed to close the gap. She explained that the way in which the gap is closed matters and that getting closer to the goal doesn't necessarily mean that

the campus is getting closer to equity. She emphasized that how race is discussed is important to addressing how to address equity on campus.

- Melanie stated the significance of understanding how students of specific racial and ethnic identities are navigating the campus. She noted the disparity in graduation rates in Black Pell/1st generation students and White Pell/1st generation students. White Pell/1st generation students had the second highest graduation rate in 2013 at 70.3% and Black Pell/1st generation students were at 34%. These two groups had the same socioeconomic and generational status, but the difference was race. She said this demonstrates the importance of articulating how this equity gap is calculated and how it is thought about for specific student populations.
- Melanie paused for questions, comments, and thoughts.
- Once Council member asked, based on the data presented, if there needs to be more Black students graduating to close the gap, or more Black students enrolled in general. Melanie stated that 36% more Black students on campus are needed to graduate in 4-6 years. She said that the nuance is that the campus goal is a 66% graduation rate, but there are student groups who are already outperforming that goal, without interventions.
- Discussion continued about the definition of categorizing Black students and the impact it has on the equity gap and the data analyzed. It was noted that external factors should be the focus rather than the issue of how Black students identify. The gap percentage could be shifted depending on the definition of Black students, and it was hoped that a clear and accurate depiction of the status of the Black student population could occur.
- Melanie emphasized the difficulty in determining those numbers, but that the Office of Student Success is focusing on the student experience and changing the institutional practices to increase engagement. She expressed that this may be an opportunity to change the campus culture for these students.
- One Council member noted that the Black student experiences with faculty are often the issues that are expressed by the students. She said that it is assumed that college students know how to be college students, and that students often don't know procedures and processes to benefit their academic experience.
- Melanie said that the Office of Student Success has partnered with faculty and developed ways to support Associate Deans and their roles and responsibilities to students. She said that a culture of accountability and a race-conscious culture should start with everyone on the same page, but the difficulty is that not everyone is on the same page. She said they are doing what they can to meet people where they are.
- Another Council member discussed the extreme nature of the numbers affecting Black students. She agreed that instructional inequities negatively affecting Black students need to be addressed.

- A Council member agreed with the importance of getting the most accurate numbers and most accurate representation of Black students on campus, but she said that the nuances are too broad and the numbers are still bleak, whether the data is slightly skewed either way. She would like to place importance on what is happening in the classrooms and on campus that have made the experiences so starkly different for different groups of students and what is actually happening.
- Melanie stated that the data from Institutional Research can pinpoint some of the factors affecting persistence. She said that they would want to examine the data, figure out who was still enrolled, and find out what their experiences were, so as to come up with better ideas to help support them.
- Discussion continued about the need to remove certain employees from campus who are negatively impacting our students, but that certain policies make it difficult to remove them, even with evidence, evaluations and feedback, etc. It was stated that students often speak up, complain and file reports, but usually nothing is done about the situation. Actionable steps would illustrate that there are real consequences for actions that impact the success of Black students. It was asked how these issues could be moved up to higher administration to try to implement these suggested changes.
- Melanie discussed the cultural aspects of these policies and that the issue is that there isn't enough clarity on how these topics get addressed. She said that these topics need to be discussed in spaces where policies are made. She noted the isolating effect on students in cases where reporting has gone nowhere. Most offices and people are unaware of the outcomes of these actions, and therefore, people need to be informed and made aware of the need to change policies. The egregious nature of the data has opened up some discussions, but there needs to be more. There have been programs as a result of some of these discussions, including the Dr. Shaun Harper lecture from the Matador Success Committee. She noted the need for more courageous leadership to have difficult discussions take place in multiple spaces.
- Theresa said that the BSSC would like to work with the Office of Student Success to move these issues up the food chain, and to utilize the expertise of BSSC members, and the lived experience of students of African descent. She said the Council hopes to change opinions and policies based on these discussions. She noted that BSSC members have touchpoints with students, have connected with selected students, and hopes to use the synergy between campus departments and the Office of Student Success to bring about systemic change.
- Melanie stated that she understands the frustration in the lack of action. She emphasized the need to understand that this is a new way of thinking for many on campus and that there is a need to make the equity gap very clear, as a way to help them understand how bad the situation is.
- Debra added that accountability is huge and that there is a lack of accountability in various quarters. There are good programs, discussions, and feedback after

programs like Dr. Shaun Harper's lecture, but what else can be done? She said that some items of discussion are not actually policy related, but that there is a myth of what the policy is, and that is what becomes perpetuated. She acknowledged the CSUN Roadmap plan, but that there needs to be a courageous conversation with the President's Cabinet to express the issues and why we are failing students. She expressed the need to do things differently to bring real change. She noted that there is a lack of progress and that programs geared toward an audience that is already on board is ineffective. She advocated for greater change and that perhaps change may need to start with the BSSC.

- Discussion continued about how faculty evaluations and students' feedback are often unread or ignored and nothing has been done. It was stated that there has been a culture on the CSUN campus about not having uncomfortable conversations with the faculty. It was noted that advisement is often pinned as the problem, but many of the issues come directly from what is occurring in the classroom with faculty. It was noted that the Faculty Affairs Administrative Manuals, Section 600 and 700 need to be revised in order to bring effective change in addressing faculty members who impede progress and academic success for students of African descent. It was said that discussions need to be had in spaces where policies can be changed.
- More discussion followed regarding the need for more accountability in hiring and evaluating faculty. It was said that accountability in all areas need to be reexamined, but that there are larger issues that need to be focused on by the University. Disruption is necessary to bring forth change.
- Theresa brought the discussion to a close by thanking Melanie for being in the space longer than planned. She noted the passion of the Council and stated that they would continue to work to move the issues forward in the Office of Student Success and other entities on campus. Several BSSC members voiced that the data and numbers related to student success and Black students is unacceptable.
- Melanie supported the need to define how to center practices around impacting the Black student population on campus. She said that everyone needs to know their roles in how they are affecting students and what's happening to their students in these areas. She stated that the cultural shift is difficult to see top down, but it really happens at a grassroots level, that alignment needs to happen and that there needs to be discussions on where to start. She said she was happy to be in this space and to be part of these discussions.
- Theresa said the Council is looking forward to working together and being able to leverage all the strengths in this space, and in moving these topics forward.
- The BSCC continued to discuss what the meeting with the President's Cabinet would entail and when it might occur. A timeline, goals, and agenda were discussed, but some noted that even a meeting without an agenda could also be useful.

- Debra added that the meeting would need to be with the entire President's Cabinet and not just a few members. She noted that Vice President of Student Affairs and Dean of Students, Dr. William Watkins, would need to be informed. She suggested a separate meeting to strategize their points to the President's Cabinet.
- Elizabeth added that there should be more discussion with regard to the emphasis on what is happening in the classrooms. It was noted that only a few members have experience and exposure to faculty, and that there needs to be a way to engage with Academic Affairs leadership in a productive way to have the necessary conversations. She said that there are a number of factors, including policies, decision-making processes, and the unionized environment, that make conversations difficult to have, but that they need to figure out how to have those conversations.
- A Council member stated that students feel disempowered in the process of evaluating and complaining about the faculty, and having no response to those complaints. He noted that there should be a longer period of time to add and drop classes, but that policies with regard to dropping classes prevent adjustment to the late/add drop policy. Discussion included the limited options in changing these policies due to the interconnected policies across departments, such as in Student Affairs, Financial Aid, etc. It was added that even though policy change is limited, there are other ways faculty could inform and support students by letting them know how they are doing and what grades they should expect prior to the drop period.
- Theresa summarized that the Council should have a conversation to determine the points that will be discussed with the President's Cabinet, including the reassignment of time (replacing faculty in the classroom, entitlement, etc.) and policies and practices that aren't working and that need to change. She said there are six weeks between now and the first BSSC meeting in spring, and asked the group to think about logistics and how to move forward.
- Debra asked the Council if they would be willing to have another meeting to discuss the President's Cabinet meeting before the end of the fall semester. Those who said they were able to meet were as follows:
  1. Debra
  2. Theresa
  3. Del
  4. Mechelle
  5. Kayla
  6. Vera
  7. Elizabeth
  8. Sandy
  9. Kent
  10. Shelline

- A Doodle poll would be sent to schedule the meeting to discuss the President Cabinet's meeting. It was asked that everyone take some time to think about, and prepare for this meeting.
- Theresa said she felt appreciative of the group and the passion and heartfelt discussions that ensued in this meeting. She is looking forward to bringing to light the issues, policies and practices that are not working for the Black community.
- Theresa closed the meeting by wishing everyone happy holidays and hoping that everyone take time to enjoy the break, and to take care of themselves.

**Adjourn**