



CALIFORNIA
STATE UNIVERSITY
NORTHRIDGE

Black Student Success Council (BSSC)

Meeting Minutes
December 13, 2019

Welcome

- Welcome by Theresa and Debra.
- Introduction of Kenny Pineda, the new ASA from the Africana Studies Department.

Thematic Discussion & Reconnections

- Deion shared that he had a conversation with President Harrison. He was invited on behalf of the coalition of students of color, and shared that they all had a conversation about the rich tapestry and diverse cultures that are present in the student body of the university. He was glad that there are such topics being talked about on campus.
- Theresa asked group 3 to share and identify any current programs and initiatives that cater to students of Black descent.
- Group 3 preferred to discuss initiatives after they got back into their group.
- Theresa inquired with Group 4 about the event "We Are One" (November 21, 2019), and asked the group to give an overview of what the student's responses were to the event.
- Deion noted that 10-13 students were present, and they were given an overview about the organizations, Black Student Success Council and other initiatives on campus. He noted that many of these students felt that their schedules were not considered when planning events at CSUN. In addition, the students felt that there was a disconnect between the student body, faculty and staff.
- Theresa suggested that there should be a meeting between BSSC and the Black Student Leadership Council (BSLC) at some point in the beginning of the year (2020).

Student Success Initiative

- CSUN Graduation Initiative GI 2025: A 6-year initiative designed to improve retention and graduation rates. While this initiative may show improvements in some areas, Theresa suggested that there are other variables that may need the BSSC's attention.
- Theresa explained that there is a gap between students that are well-served and students that are underserved, often referred to as the "Equity Gap".
- Janet added to Theresa's explanation that the 2025 graduation initiative is designed to eliminate the gaps completely. However, as it currently stands, the gap is not shrinking at CSUN. While other CSUs have managed to decrease the gap, CSUN's numbers have remained stagnant since 2016.
- Referring to an email from the Chancellor's Office, Debra stated that CSUN has a 12.8% equity gap from students of historically underserved communities. She stressed the importance of working towards a solution. She added that CSU Northridge continues to maintain the largest gap of all 23 CSUs.
- Theresa stated that the class of 2019 represents the student cohort who will ultimately determine the success of the GI 2025 Initiative.
- Janet stated that students statewide are coming into the university unprepared. According to the numbers that Janet shared, as it currently stands, 49% of CSUN students are in remediation Math and English.
- Ryan asked if the equity gap numbers and statistics are truly a fair representation, and encompasses the reality of each campus. He was concerned that not all campuses may be as "diverse" as CSUN, or cater to the same demographics and underserved feeder communities.
- Kandace asked how students are evaluated/assessed to determine if they need academic intervention and remedial courses. She expressed concern about the assessment process.

Stretch Composition/DFU Rates

- Theresa asked Kent Baxter if he had recent data for the Stretch Writing courses, and if it yielded any promising results.
- Kent explained that out of 700 students who took the assessment, CSUN is still waiting for results that would demonstrate if the program was productive, and if it provided benefits for the students.
- Theresa requested that data for Black students in the writing program are reviewed. The DFU rates in the AFRS department writing courses are of paramount importance.
- Kandace wondered how the DFU rates are assessed, and how these courses are reviewed. What are some of the reasons why there are DFUs – instructional or pedagogical parameters?
- Elizabeth Riegos shared that Chemistry 100 has some of the highest DFU rates on campus. She explained that even privileged high schools have higher standards for their students than CSUN. She suggested that the university needed to focus

on best practices and other strategies that can bolster the effectiveness of the education on campus.

- Janet clarified that DFU meant the rate at which students earned a D, F, or U. When looking at Black students, she stated that there is a 12% DFU rate in 115, 18% in 114, and a 15% gap in 113. The data collected was over a 4 -year span.
- Theresa stated that the DFU rates in her department are a top priority. Looking with specificity, she said that she and the faculty are taking into account all variables that may pose a challenge including, institutional barriers (classroom sizes), time of class, technology, tenured and newly hired professors, as well as student challenges.
- Theresa asked for further solutions to the DFU problem from the committee and invited everyone to share possible ideas to mitigate the high rates.
- Vicki was curious to know how the early alert system was performing.
- Elizabeth Adams explained that they are planning to expand the system in the Spring of 2020. Although there is a finite capacity for the initiative, the early alerts outlook seems promising. DFU rates have been lowered with the early alert systems.
- Boris Ricks believed that a significant problem for DFU rates is student attendance and tardiness.
- Tiffany shared an experience in which a professor had a micro-aggression toward his students. Tiffany made the connection that some faculty may be contributing to the DFU rates.
- Elizabeth Riegos noted that in order to tackle DFU rates and related problems, the university must provide resources. She acknowledged that the university is aware, but must take action on the matter.
- Deion stated that classes must be welcoming to their students and that professors need to show more concern for their students.
- Delphia suggested that there may be institutional barriers on campus. Professors teach in different schools and fail to focus on students. She also explained that outside influences such as food insecurity, house insecurity, and other institutional problems that are roadblocks for students, must be addressed.
- Theresa asked about the implications of the legalization of marijuana and possible solutions in preventing students coming to class under the influence.
- Milton explained that there may be external influences that professors can address. Milton believed that professors may contribute to students' absences when they do not provide a personable demeanor and care about their students.
- Kandace believed that tenured professors and lecturers may have different motives that may not be aligned with student success. She suggested that there needs to be other ways to help students by revisiting the ways professors are hired.
- Deion asked: "How can a student change his/her experience with a professor?" Kandace answered by explaining that students need to start by having a

conversation with their professor and explore the proper channels if the conversation fails to deliver a solution.

- Vera suggested that the “First Year Experience” should be visited as a strategy to promote student success. She also suggested that food insecurity, among other factors, could be a contributing factor for poor student performance. Vera was concerned that CSUN’s food pantry is not open daily. Vera suggests that the food pantry should be opened daily; it would provide much needed relief for students needing meals.
- There was a majority consensus in the committee that students should take advantage of student support services that are available to them.
- Delphia explained that the university does not provide students with the necessary awareness for student support. She added that things such as the Academic Grievance Form is available for students, but that not many students know of it. She stressed the importance of students knowing how to navigate through campus resources.
- Vicky clarified that the food pantry currently has staffing support problems. Currently, there is only one student assistant that works 20 hours a week. Vicky concludes that expanding hours is of great importance, and she agrees that it would be a great step to helping students.

Searching for a Solution

- Debra suggested that there is a need for financial support in spearheading more support services for CSUN students, including extended hours for the food pantry. She suggests that while there is an urgency to provide a solution to the many problems underserved students face, and that action must be taken. She invites everyone in the committee to share possible solutions and to proactively work towards the goals.
- Theresa explained that all of the narratives and stories discussed in the meeting need to be put together in a structural way to be presented to the Provost on behalf of the Council. Theresa will request a meeting with Provost Walker.
- Theresa proposed that the Council regroup, and realign priorities so that we look more intentionally at the DFU rates and equity gaps.
- Debra suggested working and expanding on current solutions. For example, providing grants for students who are on track to graduate and plan to take summer classes.
- Elizabeth Gutierrez suggested that there should be summer grants for students of color. Furthermore, she added that some departments across campus may not provide students sufficient information about opportunities at CSUN.
- Gigi noted that the university needed to understand the true meaning of diversity. She believed that there is a lack of inclusivity and acknowledgement on campus.

Final Remarks

- Theresa suggested that the Council members return to their groups and organize all ideas discussed within the parameters of their original group goals. She requested that each group view their proposed goals and re-arrange them into four to five different categories, prioritizing each section with the level of urgency.
- Debra added that it is important to prioritize and organize ideas. She believed that this approach would work best in order to concentrate efforts when asking for resources.
- Ryan suggested that in the new president's forum there should be a BSSC representative and the narrative of the equity gap and DFU rates should be brought up.

Announcements

- February 28th, 2020 – HARAMBEE Community College Conference
- February 25th, 2020 – HARAMBEE High School Conference
- Afrikan Black Coalition (ABC) conference Jan. 17-21 at Fullerton.

Meeting adjourned