CSUN | CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY NORTHRIDGE

Identity-Based Resource Centers
Research and Proposal

Research Team

Freddie Sánchez, Ph.D. | **Marquita Gammage, Ph.D.**

Student Research Assistants

Kaylee X. Josefina
Naim Muhammed
Tracee Porter
Kamau Pruitt

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY
Identity-Based Resource Centers Research Project

Identity-Based Resource Centers are inclusive spaces for students to be their authentic selves and provide co-curricular engagement opportunities for students to develop deeper understanding of their identities and those of others.

Goal

The University seeks to understand the benefits of establishing identity-based resource centers at CSUN, including how such centers align with university priorities and demonstrate university values such as diversity, equity, inclusion and social justice in support of student success. Further, the university seeks a fully vetted plan of action that provides a roadmap for the establishment of high-quality identity- based resource centers that meet the needs of CSUN students.

We must develop an

Equity-Minded - Race Conscious Culture at CSUN

Report Includes:

- Student Demographics - Equity Gaps
- Summary of Methods
- Findings
- Recommendations
- Future Call to action

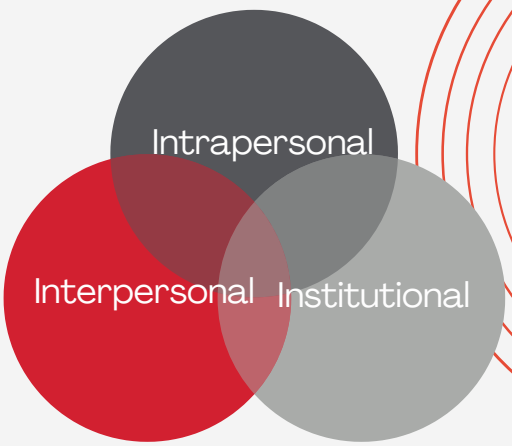
High Impact Practices

Community Engaged Justice

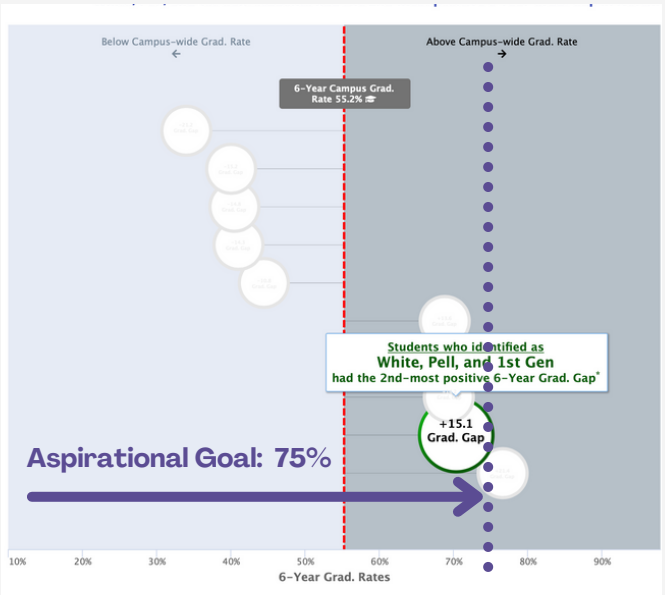
Inquiry Driven Culture

Intellectual and Cultural Humility

(Source: Office of Student Success)



Source: Chancellor's Office Dashboard



Racial Equity in Focus:

2nd highest 6 yr Grad Rate:
White/Pell/1st Gen 70.3%

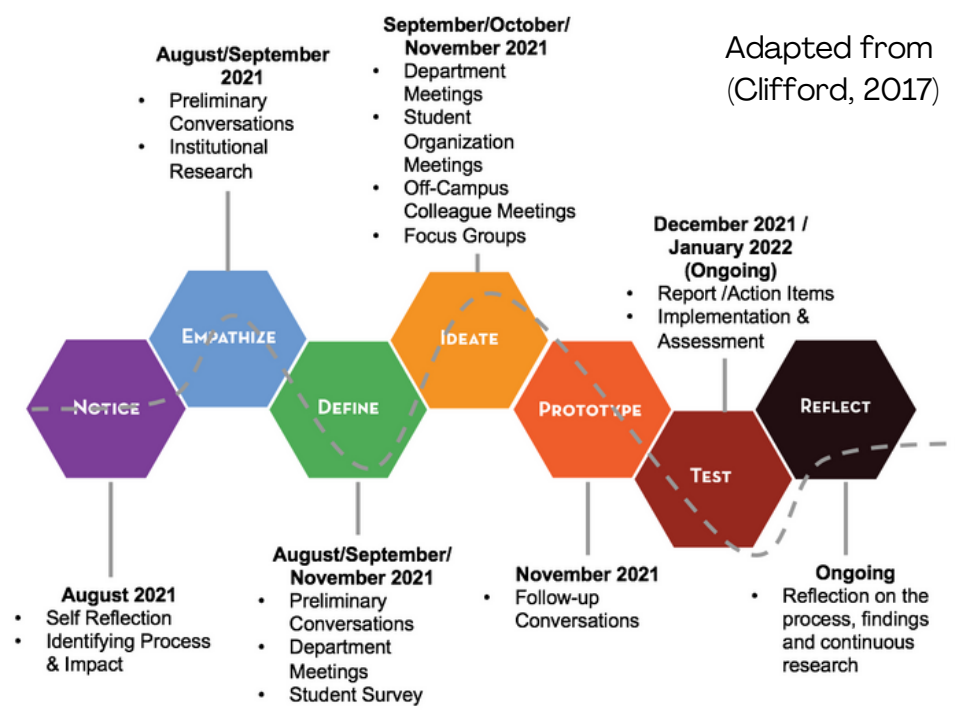
Equity Gap
Black/Pell/1st 6yr grad rate: 34% - 70.3%
Highest Rate = - 36%
+72 Black/Pell/1st Gen

Equity-Centered Design Thinking Process

Equity-Centered Design Thinking promotes multiple iterations of problem-solving, including the ongoing interrogations of systemic inequities, which provides stakeholders multiple opportunities to cyclically define, refine and imagine possible solutions that may address the problem. This model also creates an opportunity for researchers to be attuned with thei values, cultures and mindsets that impact the most marginalized.

The Framework

(a) ***Notice*** and understand research team individual values, identity, biases and assumptions, with a key understanding of the impact the research team (designers) have on the process
(b) ***empathizing*** with stakeholders
(c) ***defining*** specific problems of practice
(d) ***ideating*** a multitude of solutions



(e) developing a **prototype** or strategic plan of implementation
(f) **testing** implementation strategies while documenting the opportunities and impediments of the prototype.
(g) **Reflecting** is an ongoing part of the process, which allows the researchers (designers) to be transparent with the design thinking process.

Mixed Methods Research

- **Conversations & Focus Groups**
  - **Staff, Faculty & Administrators**
  - **Students**
- **Student Survey**
- **Off-Campus Conversations**

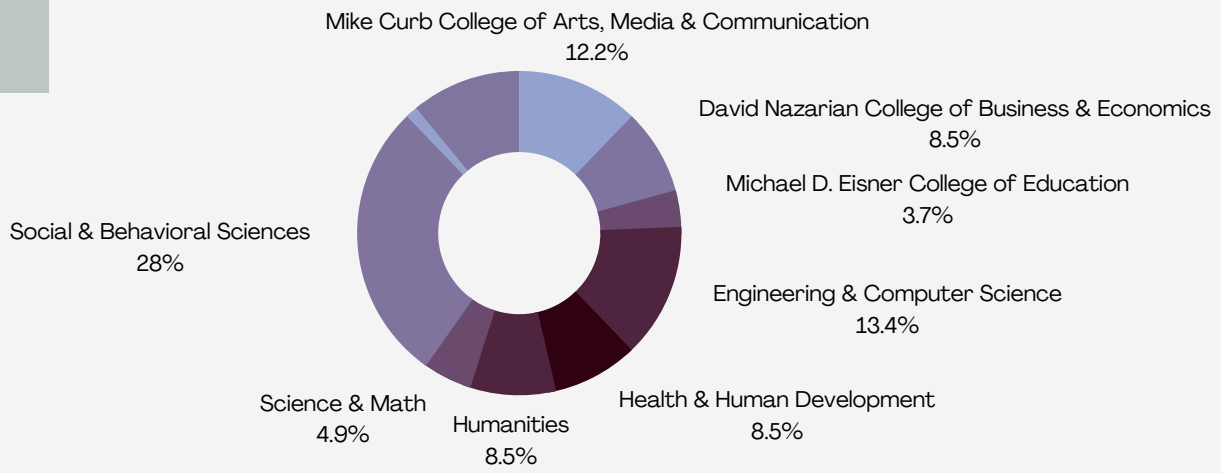
Total Participants

- **83 meetings and focus groups**
- **274 unique CSUN individuals participated in the meetings**
  - **82 Students**
  - **192 Faculty/Staff/Administrators**
- **14 off-campus colleagues**
- **427 Student Surveys Completed**

Participant Information

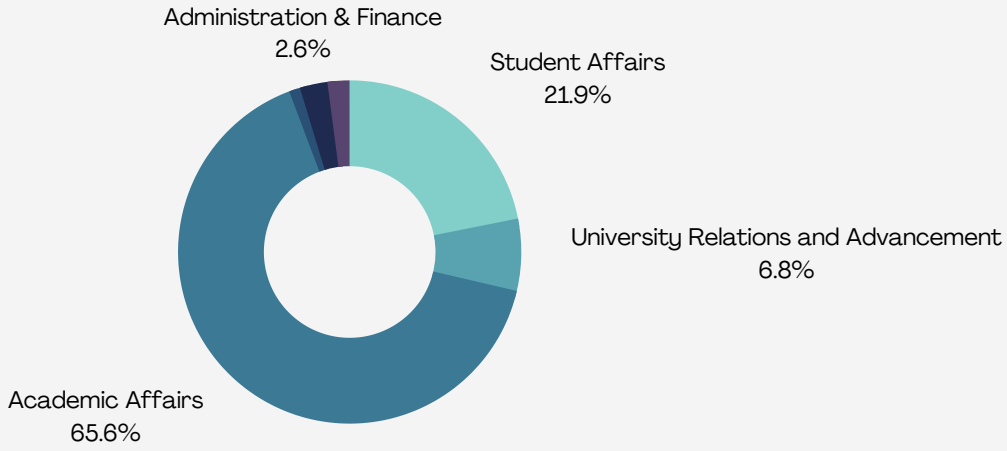
Unique Student Participant Demographics

Total #: 82



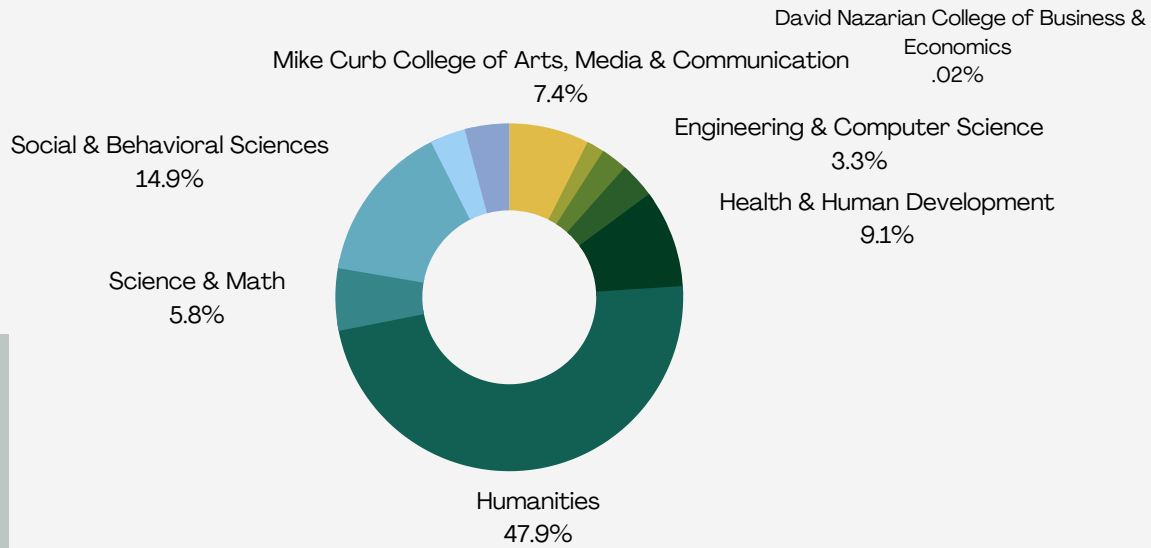
Unique Staff, Faculty, Administrator Participation

Total #: 192



Total #: 121

Only Academic Affairs Participants



Recommendations and Priorities

More than Identity-Based Resource Centers are needed to support students' identities and promote student success

Modeling Inclusive Excellence

Building an Equity Infrastructure

Advancing an Equity-Rich Campus Culture

1

Ethnic & Race Identity-Based Resource Centers*

- **Black & African Diaspora Center**
- **Asian, Pacific Islander & Desi American (APIDA) Resource Centers**
- **Latinx/a/o Resource Center**
- **Native Resource Center**
- **South-West Asian & North African (SWANA)**
- **Additional Priority:**
  - **Project Rebound Center**
  - **Prayer, Reflection & Meditation Space**

2

Thrive Center

- **Adult & Re-Entry Student Resource Area**
- **First-Generation Student Resource Area**
- **Parent Scholars Student Resource Area**
- **Transfer Student Resource Area**

3

Campus Welcome Center

- **One-stop Hub of Resources**

"We need the cultural centers – not just because they are on identity but because of the focus, values and missions in it." (Student Focus Group)

*Final names of cultural centers TBD

Identity-Based Resource Centers Structure

- Equitable Staffing Structure
- Core Staff Model (Director, Assistant Director, Admin Support, Counselor, Professional Coach, In-House Advisors (culturally compatible))
- Faculty Fellows
- Student Employment (Paid Opportunities)

- Equitable Funding & Funding Security
- Centralized Location *Sierra Hall
- Assessment & Data Analyst

- Strategic Partnerships
- RISE Center
- Foster Collaborative Relationships with Existing Houses and Resource Centers
- Foster Intercultural and Intersectional Exchange
- Provide Intercultural and Intersectional Programming
- Campus Engagement

Two Examples in Action

Black Representation

"More support for black students! Black counselors , black teachers not just in Africana studies." – Student Survey

Phase I Example: Black & African Diaspora Resource Center + Black House

Black & African Diaspora Resource Center

Staffing
- Director * Coordinator * Administrative Support * Student Staff Support

Additional Support Staff
- In-House Counselor (Starting 3/week)
- In-House Advisor
- (Starting 2/Week)
- Data Analyst/Assessment
- Faculty Fellow

Services
- Strategic Recruitment Efforts
- Intentional Advising & Counseling
- Referral Services
- Faculty Engagement & Partnership with Ethnic Studies Center
- Alumni Engagement

Engagement & Sense of Belonging
- Students
- **Partnerships**
- Recruitment & Retention Efforts
- Other Ethnic Identity-Based Resource Centers
- **Mentorship**

Black House

Staffing
- Director * Student Mentors

Services & Programs
- Leadership Development
- Student Organization Support
- Cultural Relevant & Meaningful Programs
- Black History Month Alignment
- Community Engagement/Family Engagement
- Intersectional Programming with Pride Center, DREAM Center, VRC & WRRC and other Cultural Houses

Phase II Example: Parent Scholars Resource Area

"I believe having resources for parent scholars that brings children on campus for them to be a part of family-friendly events on campus is important." (CSUN Student)

Who are Parent Scholars?

- 22% of UGs in US (NCES 2015)
- 4.3% of all College Students (GAO 2019)
- In California 13% of financial aid applicants (2018)
- 52% Don't Earn a Degree
- Black (37%), Pacific Islander (30%), American Indian (29%) and Latinx/a/o (25%)
- Minoritized student parents incur higher debt and are even more unlikely to graduate.

Create a Parent-Inclusive Campus

- Resources and Drop-In Child Care, After Hours & On Weekends
- Parent/Family Friendly Restrooms and Changing Tables
- Seating for Pregnant Women in Classrooms and Beyond
- Increase Lactation Spaces Across Campus
- Increase Family Housing
- Include Childcare Expenses in Cost of Attendance

Establishing a Parent Scholar Resource Area

- Advocacy for Parent Scholars
- Resource Support & Onsite Advising and Counseling
- Family friendly study/work spaces
- Drop-in childcare
- Financial Aid Assistance

Phasing-In Approach

- **Spring 2022**
  - Black House Support
  - (Pilot Black Resource Center Components)
    - Develop Strategic Partnerships with UCS
      - Counseling Support at Black House (2/Week)
    - Academic Advising Support (2/Week)
      - Work with At-Promise Students
  - Work with SOAR on Intentional Recruitment Process
  - Develop Partnerships Across Campus on Black Resources (HUB)
- Start Conceptualizing the Ethnic-Identity-Based Resource Center Cluster (Sierra Hall)

- **2022 -2023 Academic Year**
  - Pilot on Cultural Houses
    - Chicano House
      - Hire Full-Time Director
    - Glenn Omatsu House
      - Hire Full-Time Director
    - La Casita
      - Hire Two Full-Time Positions (CATS & AIS)
      - Identify independent space for AIS
  - Assist strategic plan for Ethnic Identity-Based Resource Centers Cluster
  - Develop Strategic On and Off- Campus partnerships
  - Develop Counseling & Advising Strategies for Pride Center, DREAM Center, Veterans Resource Centers & WRRC (Operationalize the Plan)
  - Start conceptualizing the creation of the Thrive Center

Next Steps: Further Call to Action

1. Build a Welcoming, Equitable and Inclusive Campus Culture
2. Maintain and Sustain High Impact Programs that Cultivate Student Success
3. Develop Equitable Financial Aid and Housing Structures
4. Develop Supportive Transportation Services

Research Team

Research Team Leads

Freddie Sánchez, PhD

Dr. Freddie Sánchez serves as the Associate Director for Programs and Inclusion at the University Student Union at California State University, California (CSUN). He earned his PhD in Education with a commitment to research on democratic schooling, social justice and equitable educational outcomes for all students from the Joint San Diego State University and Claremont Graduate University program. Dr. Sánchez oversees the University Student Union's diversity, equity and inclusion areas including the DREAM Center, Pride Center, Veterans Resource Center, Diversity & Inclusion and USU Programs departments. He also serves as a lecturer for the First-Year Experiences program and the Educational Leadership & Policy Studies Department at CSUN.

Marquita Gammage, PhD

Dr. Marquita M. Gammage is a Full Professor in the Africana Studies Department at California State University, Northridge (CSUN). She earned her PhD in African American Studies from Temple University. Dr. Gammage 's research explores racial equity and academic success of African American students, high impact practices and asset-based pedagogy. Additionally, her research examines the calculus of media effect on the sustainability of anti-African racist ideologies through the intersection of race, gender, and media. By analyzing current popular media productions (reality TV, television dramas, social media, etc.) paired with an Afrocentric historical and cultural lens, her research demonstrates how the continued misrepresentations of Black womanhood in the media can be predictive of future public policy initiatives that endanger the freedom and liberties of African Americans.

Student Research Assistants

Kaylee X. Josefina

Kaylee X. Josefina is a graduate student in CSUN's Michael D. Eisner College of Education. She is currently pursuing a Masters in Higher Education Administration and Leadership. During her undergraduate studies at California State University, Channel Islands, she served as a national Transfer Student Ambassador for NISTS in 2020. Kaylee believes firmly in expanding access to undergraduate research opportunities for underrepresented students. Kaylee is also an advocate of creating welcoming environments that are inclusive of everyone, regardless of gender, race, orientation or faith.

Naim Muhammad

Naim Muhammad is a 5th year senior majoring in Africana Studies. He is an advocate for developing equitable opportunities at CSUN. Naim developed an interest in African American history in 2016 when his high school Hip-Hop culture teacher educated him on the history of Africa before colonialism and the contributions of African people in America. As an Africana Studies major, he was an active organizer in a non-violent protest to keep ethnic studies as a graduation requirement. He was also one of 20 students chosen amongst over 100 applicants in Ethnic Studies Pathways Project (ESEPP). ESSEP is a program that connects students to K-12 teachers and counselors with Ethnic Studies backgrounds in order to prepare them to pursue careers in education.

Tracee Porter

Tracee Porter is a senior at California State University, Northridge where she is majoring in Africana Studies with a concentration in Social Sciences. Her interest in Africana Studies began in 2007 when she took her first Black Studies class at Los Angeles Valley College. She learned about the rich and vibrant history of African Americans and the inequities and inequalities facing not only African Americans, including people from African descent across the diaspora. In Fall of 2020, Tracee started her studies at CSUN and has conducted research on the needs for African American Mental Healthcare professionals, the need for Identity Based Resource Centers on campus, and how gentrification is destroying Black Los Angeles.

Kamau Pruitt

Kamau Pruitt is a senior at California State University, Northridge majoring in Africana Studies. He is a proud first-generation Educational Opportunity Program (EOP) student who began his higher education journey at CSUN in 2017, three weeks after graduating from high school. He was motivated to continue his education because of the effect he had with his family, peers, and strangers when articulating inner-city issues with clarity and charisma; it gave him the confidence to believe higher education was possible.

PROJECT OVERVIEW

Project Overview

On Friday, September 10, 2021 during CSUN President's Annual Welcome Address,[1] President Erika Beck announced that California State University, Northridge would be engaging in a discussion focused on better serving historically underrepresented students. President Beck noted she wanted the campus to develop a *"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."*

In this report, we identify identity-based resource centers as inclusive spaces for students to be their authentic selves and provide co-curricular and academic engagement opportunities that will provide students an opportunity to develop a deeper understanding of their identities and those of others[2]. Although there is not a universal identity-based resource center model, these centers promote community outreach, help students develop social justice practices, provide academic support, focus on student retention and offer other holistic learning experiences[3].

Thus, this project sought to understand the benefits of establishing identity-based resource centers at CSUN, including how such centers align with university priorities and demonstrate university values such as diversity, equity, inclusion and social justice in support of student success. This report provides a vetted plan of action that details a roadmap for the establishment of high-quality identity-based resource centers that meet the needs of all CSUN students.

[1] https://www.csun.edu/presidents-welcome-address-2021

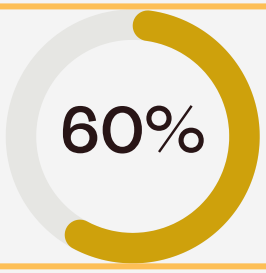
[2] Patton, L.D. (2010). *Culture Centers in Higher Education: Perspectives on identity, theory and practice.* Stylus Publishing, LLC.

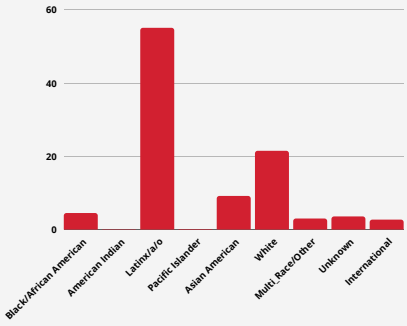
[3] Lozano, A. (2010). Latina/o culture centers. In Patton, L. D. (Eds.), *Culture Centers in HigherEducation: Perspectives on identity, theory and practice (pp. 3-25).* Stylus Publishing, LLC.

WHO ARE OUR STUDENTS

The Majority of Our Students Are From Underrepresented Racial Communities

60% of all CSUN students identify as Latinx/a/o, Black/African American, American Indian and Pacific Islander. We are a Hispanic-Serving Institution with students representing global communities.



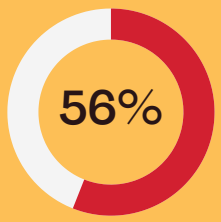


CSUN Serves Students of Diverse Backgrounds

55% of CSUN students identify as Latinx/a/o representing the largest group of all students. African American/Black, Indigenous and Pacific Islander students are least represented. Black students represent only 4.5% of the student body and less than 1% of all Black undergraduate students in California (IPEDs 2020). American Indian and Pacific Islander students each make up less than 1% of the total student population.

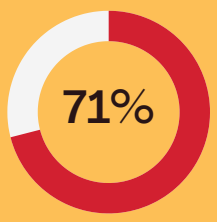
56% of CSUN Students Identify as Female

Pell Eligible



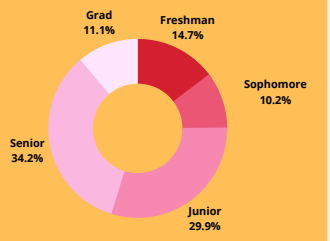
56% of CSUN undergraduate students are Pell eligible. This means that the majority of our undergraduate students have financial need beyond their families contributions.

First-Generation



71% of undergraduate students at CSUN are 1st-generation students. This means that while their parents did not earn a four year college degree, CSUN students are pursuing/ obtaining college degrees.

Class Level



The majority of CSUN students are Juniors and Seniors.

Advancing Diversity, Equity and Inclusion for All

"Ranked second in the nation for its diverse learning environment by the Wall Street Journal, CSUN is driven by the principles of diversity, equity and inclusion. The university is fervently committed to creating a community built on a rich and robust diversity of backgrounds, perspectives, ideas, beliefs and experiences."

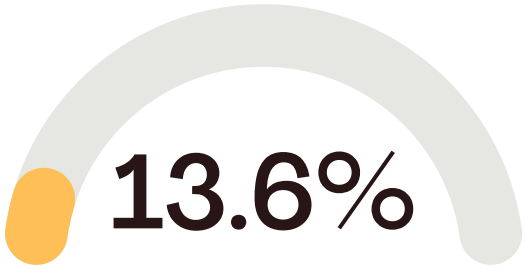
56% New Transfer

In Fall 2021, 56% of new students were transfer students a growth of 3% from the previous year. 46% of students fall within the age range of 19-22. Another 44% are 23 and older. Over 85% of Latinx/a/o undergraduate students are 1st generation. Among African American undergraduate students, over 60% are first-generation students.

Data retrieved from CSUN COUNTS. Underrepresented racial communities is denoted by racial and ethnic groups that have been traditionally underserved in higher education. Gender identity is defined by female, male and non-binary/other.

WHAT ARE THE EQUITY GAPS

Equity Gaps represent the disparities in educational outcomes and graduation rates across race/ethnicity, social economic status, and parental education.

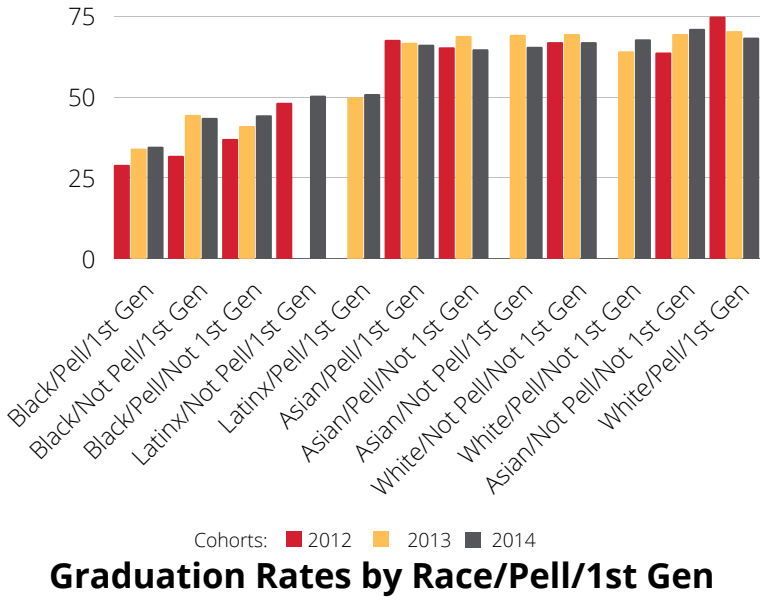


Racial Equity Gaps continue to grow at CSUN.

Over the past 3 years, the gap between URM and Non-URM students who graduated within 6 years was roughly 12 percentage points. The preliminary URM equity gap for the most recent cohort (2014-13.6 percentage points) shows a slight increase over this average. Source: CSU Office of the Chancellor GI2025

Racial Equity Gaps are the Highest at 36% Among Black Pell Eligible, 1st Generation Students

When we calculate the equity gap based on comparing the Black/Pell/1st-Gen students to White/Pell/1st-Gen students (2013 Cohort 6 year grad rates) as our reference group (as opposed to a campus average weighed down by this gap), the racial equity gap grows to – 36%. Similarly for the 2014 Cohort 6 year grad rates based on comparing our most disproportionately impacted students, Black/Pell/1st Gen students, to our highest graduating group, (Asian/Not Pell/Not 1st Gen) the racial equity gap is 36%. The graph below displays graduation rates by race, pell and 1st Gen of students with the lowest and highest graduation rates. Source: CSU Student Success Dashboard, CSUN COUNTS



Graduation Rates by Race/Pell/1st Gen

The Pell Equity Gap is at 7.6%

Over the past 3 years, the gap between Pell and Non-Pell students who graduated within 6 years was roughly 8 percentage points. The preliminary Pell equity gap for the 2016 cohort (7.6 percentage points) has remained relatively constant over the past 3 years. Source: CSU Office of The Chancellor GI2025 Prelim Report

The 1st Gen Equity Gap is at 10.5% (FTF)

Over the past 3 years, the gap between 1st Gen and Non-1st Gen FTF students who graduated within 6 years was roughly 11 percentage points. The 1st Gen equity gap for the 2014 cohort (10.5 percentage points) has remained relatively constant over the past 3 years. Source: CSUN IR Data on CSUN Students.

African American FTF One-Year Continuation Rates are the Lowest at 75%

African American first time freshman students (Fall 2019) retention rates were the lowest of all racial groups. As of fall 2021, 38% of these students were no longer enrolled. Source: CSUN IR and CSUN Counts

54% of Black Males Leave CSUN and Never Earn a Degree

Over the last three graduating cohorts (2013-15) an average of 54% of African American males leave CSUN and do not earn a four year college degree. The Fall 2016 cohort disenrollment rate among African American males is **50%** as of Fall 2021. For Black/Pell/1st Gen males roughly **63%** leave and do not earn a degree (FA 21 Cohort). Around **55%** of Black/Pell/1st Gen females leave and do not earn a degree (FA 21 Cohort). Source: CSUN Counts Student Success Dashboard

Current CSUN Identity-Based Resource Centers & Cultural Houses

California State University, Northridge is home to various identity-based resource centers and cultural houses that support the student experience on campus. Currently, CSUN operates four resource centers that honor the student experience and cultivate an environment where students are empowered to be themselves. Current resource centers include: DREAM Center, Pride Center, Veterans Resource Center and the Women's Research & Resource Center. The university also operates cultural houses connected to the ethnic studies department and academic colleges: The Black House, Chicano House, Glenn Omatsu House and La Casita. These various resource centers and houses have diverse reporting, staffing and funding structures that support their operations.

Resource Centers

Dreamers, Resources, Empowerment, Advocacy, and Mentorship (DREAM) Center

The DREAM Center provides resources and services to undocumented students, mixed status families, staff, faculty, allies and future undocumented students in order to foster a more inclusive campus community. Since its founding in Spring of 2015 as the DREAM Project and housed under EOP, the DREAM Center has undergone various changes, including in 2020 when the University Student Union approved to administratively oversee the operations of the center.
The DREAM Center supports over 1,200 confirmed CSUN undocumented students. It is estimated that CSUN is home to over 1,500 undocumented students – one of the largest in the California State University system.

Pride Center

The Pride Center, established in 2012 under the University Student Union, supports lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, questioning, intersex and asexual (LGTBQIA+) students, faculty and staff. The Pride Center provides programming and educational outreach to enhance the campus climate and increase respect and safety for the LGBTQIA+ community.

Starting during the incoming class of 2017-2018, the CSU included sexual orientation and gender identity questions as part of the application process. It is estimated that over 10% of CSUN students identity as queer students (lesbian, gay, bisexual, queer, pansexual or asexual) and an additional .07% identify as trans or gender non-conforming students (CSUN Institutional Research).

Veterans Resource Center (VRC)

The VRC was established in 2012 under the University Student Union and supports CSUN student veterans' transition from military service to scholars. The VRC provides programs and services that promote academic, personal and professional development opportunities for student veterans, reservists and members of the National Guard and their dependents.

For the fall 2020, CSUN was home to 599 verified student veterans and 385 dependent students, thus having an impact on almost 1,000 military connected students.

Women's Research & Resource Center (WRRC)

CSUN is home to the oldest women's center in the CSU system, established in 1973. Since its inception, the WRRC has been located in various parts of the campus, has undergone several name changes and its services dependent on the needs of students. The WRRC is supported by the College of Humanities, Associated Students and Student Affairs. It offers students resources and services to support their identity development, provides a small food pantry, library resources and a lounge for students to connect. The WRRC is located on the Northwest side of campus on Halsted St., adjacent to several cultural houses.

Cultural Houses

Black House

The Black House was founded in spring of 1992 after protests led by the Black Student Union, which highlighted a negative campus climate and racism on campus. Since then, the Black House has undergone several changes, including the latest renovation in 2017 that brought vibrancy, cultural representation and a new beginning for the space located on the Northwest side of campus on Halsted St. The Black House celebrates the Black diaspora on campus and fosters student learning and achievement by celebrating Black and African American culture. The house provides resources for students that enhance their college experience, facilitates student success and aims to increase retention and graduation rates.

Chicano House

The Chicano House was birthed in 1969 as part of the 12 demands submitted to the CSUN administration on behalf of Chicano students on campus. As noted in demand ten "…the school fund a facility in the barrio that will serve as an information resource center which will be open to and staffed by community members" (Chicano Demands, 1969). After the 1994 Northridge earthquake, the third Chicano House was built in its current location, south of University Dr. and North of Bookstein Hall. The Chicano House is overseen by the Chicana and Chicano Studies Department and serves as a resource for students, faculty, staff and community members.

The Glenn Omatsu House

The Glenn Omatsu House, formerly known as the Asian House, was founded in 1992. The House provides meeting space for Asian American student clubs and organizations, as well as a study-center for student groups. The House promotes academic and creative endeavors beyond the classroom environment. Since 2008, the Glenn Omatsu House has been shared with the Women's Research & Resource Center, when the WRRC's house burned down. The house is adjacent to the Black House.

La Casita

La Casita is a shared space between Central American & Transborder Studies and the American Indian Studies departments. The facility was previously the Chicano House Annex and since 2013, it now serves as a joint cultural and community building space for both departments.

Faculty & Staff Representation

Current CSUN cultural resource centers and houses have diverse staffing structures that impact the way they deliver programs and services. The Pride Center, DREAM Center and Veterans Resource Center all have a similar staffing structure; they are operated and administratively supported by the University Student Union in the Division of Student Affairs. The three centers are overseen by two full-time staff (manager & supervisor) and student employees; the number of student employees vary in size depending on the need of each resource center. The Women's Research & Resource Center is overseen by one full-time staff Director, who also serves as a part-time faculty in the Gender & Women's Studies Department. The WRRC employs two student assistants and has several volunteer positions to meet the demand of the center.

Similar to the cultural resource centers, the cultural houses operate independently from each other. The Black House is the only cultural house with a full-time staff dedicated to supporting the operations of the space. As of Fall 2021, the Black House has one full-time staff Director and one student Black House lead coordinator. The Chicano House and La Casita are not staffed. The Glenn Omatsu House is operated primarily by the student-run organization, Asian American Studies Pathways Project (AASPP).

Funding, Programs & Services

Similar to the staffing structure noted above, the CSUN cultural centers and houses are funded independently from one another. The DREAM Center is funded primarily through Campus Quality Fee (CQF). The CSUN Campus Quality Fee program provides funding to programs that offer valuable technological and enhanced support services to students, as is the case of the DREAM Center. Since 2008, Campus Quality Fee proposals that serve to enhance the learning experiences of students on campus have been awarded funding based on a competitive yearly application process[4]. The Veterans Resource Center and Pride Center are both funded by the University Student Union fees assessed to students on a yearly basis. The Women's Research & Resource Center is funded by Associated Students, the Division of Student Affairs and the College of Humanities; each area funds portions of the WRRC operations.

The Cultural Houses are funded by their respective colleges and academic departments. As an example, the Black House is funded by the College of Social and Behavioral Sciences. The Chicano House is funded by Chicana and Chicano Studies, La Casita is funded by Central American & Transborder Studies and American Indian Studies and the Glenn Omatsu House is funded by Asian American Studies.

Several cultural houses operate programs that allow for the centers to remain open during limited hours. The Chicano House currently provides a physical space to operate the CSUN Project Rebound program. Project Rebound is a CSU system-wide program supporting the successful integration of formerly incarcerated students enrolled at CSU campuses. The program cultivates and amplifies "the many assets that formerly incarcerated students bring to the university community and the wider society" (CSU Project Rebound 2021 Annual Report). Funding

[4] https://www.csun.edu/studentaffairs/campus-quality-fee

provided by the CSU Project Rebound Consortium allows staffing for CSUN Project Rebound that allows the Chicano House to remain open. The Glenn Omatsu House provides a space for the Asian American Studies Pathways Project to conduct their services from the house. When AASPP student interns are working, they maintain the Glenn Omatsu House open and invite students to enjoy the study spaces in the house. Currently, there are no staff or programs helping operate La Casita.

The DREAM Center, Pride Center, Veterans Resource Center, Women's Research & Resource Center and The Black House, have daily operating hours and staffing that allow for continuous student support. Funding provided to operate these cultural resource centers allows for consistent support to students by dedicated staff that also implement programs and services in each space. The majority of the cultural houses are unable to maintain consistent operating hours due to their lack of staffing and funding.

METHODOLOGY:
EPISTEMOLOGY & RESEARCH DESIGN

Methodology
Epistemology & Research Design

This section provides an overview of the Equity-Centered Design Thinking epistemology used to conduct this study and it describes the mixed-methods research design guiding this research. The study incorporated individual meetings with key campus constituents, campus-wide focus groups, a student survey and informal interviews with off-campus colleagues overseeing identity-based resource centers.

Equity-Centered Design Thinking Framework

The foundational work of Design Thinking implemented through an equity lens served as the epistemological framework that guided the theoretical perspective in this study. Epistemology refers to the nature of knowledge acquisition[5]. In Design Thinking, knowledge gets created through reflection, identifying the problem through envisioning what could become and celebrates the creativity of the process[6]. The process is iterative in nature and emergent; it alternates between problem and solution and fundamentally created by empathizing, being imaginative and prototyping with the user[7].

Following the previous work on Design Thinking, Clifford (2017)[8] reimagined the Design Thinking framework to become equity-centered, which ultimately promoted multiple iterations of problem-solving, including the ongoing interrogations of systemic inequities, which provided stakeholders multiple opportunities to cyclically define, refine and imagine possible solutions that may address the problem. Equity-Centered Design Thinking creates an opportunity for researchers to be attuned with their values, cultures and mindsets that impact the most marginalized. As Khalil & Kier (2020)[9] note,

> While design thinking is a tool that leaders may apply when considering school wide initiatives, without attending to the culture, value, and ethos that affect a one's interpretation of problems and solutions, design thinking poses the risk of reducing decisions to a set of principles and steps that are exclusionary of vulnerable minoritized populations (p.76).

Furthermore, Equity-Centered Design Thinking, as noted by the *d.K12Lab Network*, a Stanford *d.School* project, created two additional phases (*Notice* and *Reflect*) which are important when designing a process that involves an equity lens and focuses on the most marginalized and often unheard. See Figure 1.

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[5] Jones, S.R., Torres, V. & Arminio, J. (2014). *Negotiating the complexities of qualitative research in higher education: Fundamental elements and issues*. New York, NY: Routledge.

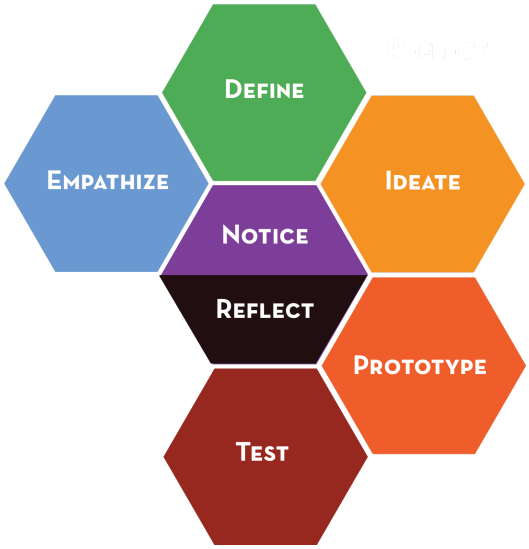
[6] Rylander, A. (2009). Design Thinking as knowledge work: Epistemological foundations and practical implications. *Design Management Journal, 4*(1), p. 7-19. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1942-5074.2009.00003.x

[7] Conklin, J. (2006). *Dialogue Mapping: Building Shared Understanding of Wicked Problems*. New York: Wiley.; Lawson, B. (2006). *How Designers Think*. Oxford: Architectural Press.

[8] Clifford, D. H. (2017). *Equity-centered design thinking* [PowerPoint slides]. d.k12Lab Network.Stanford d.School. https://docs.google.com/presentation/d/1S-7fZojfgGs3M3T110vaXZFztRvjmMdkCjJ4UiIQ5i0/edit#slide=id.g1f13b8acbf_0_459

[9] Khalil, D., Kier, M. (2020). Equity-Centered Design Thinking in STEM Instructional Leadership. *Journal of Cases in Educational Leadership, 24*(1), p. 69-85. https://doi.org/10.1177/1555458920975452

Figure 1. Adopted from (Clifford, 2017) illustrates Equity-Centered Design Thinking Process



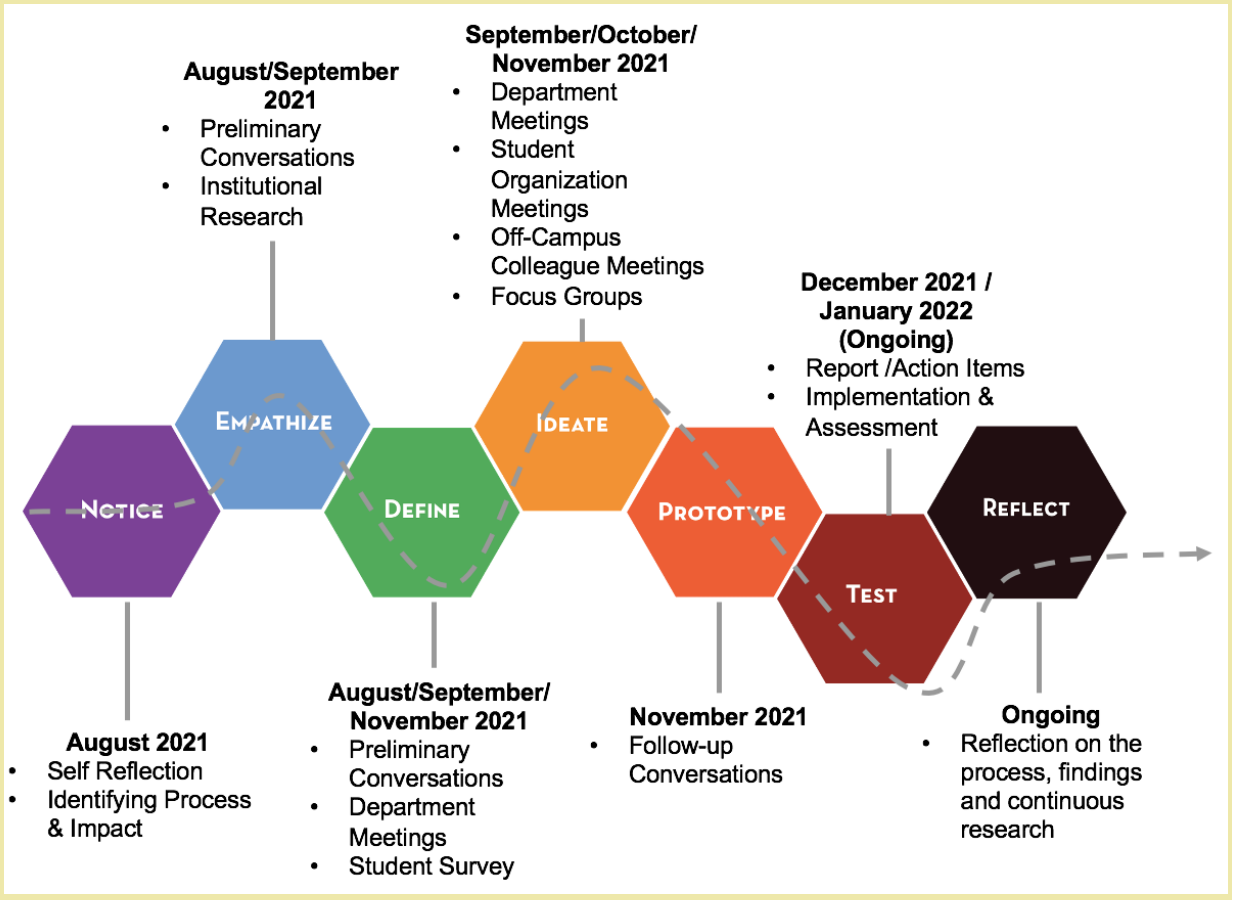
The original Design Thinking framework includes the following five phases:
(a) *empathizing* with stakeholders
(b) *defining* specific problems of practice
(c) *ideating* a multitude of solutions
(d) developing a *prototype* or strategic plan of implementation
(e) *testing* implementation strategies while documenting the opportunities and impediments of the prototype.

The two additional phases that are part of Equity-Centered Design Thinking are bookends of the process. The *Notice* phase is incorporated at the beginning of the process which focuses on the research team (the designer(s)), ensuring that the researchers have a cognizant understanding of their own values, identity, biases and assumptions, with a key understanding of the impact the research team (designers) have on the process (Clifford, 2017). This is similar in nature to understanding the research team's individual positionality with the study being conducted, which increases credibility of the study[10]. The *Reflect* phase is an ongoing part of the process, which allows the researchers (designers) to be transparent with the design thinking process (Clifford, 2017).

Figure 2. details how Equity-Centered Design Thinking was implemented throughout this research process focusing on input from students, faculty, staff, administrators, off-campus colleagues and extensive institutional research.

[10] Charmaz, K. (2014). *Constructing grounded theory*. Washington, DC: SAGE Publications.

Figure 2. Equity-Centered Design Thinking Implementation Timeline (Adopted from Clifford, 2017)



Research Design and Data Collection

This study employed several data-collection methods in order to increase the trustworthiness or confidence in the research findings. The study consisted of focus groups with students, faculty, staff and administrators, meetings with various academic departments, student affairs programs and off-campus colleagues to help us understand the impact of identity-based resource centers at other institutions. The study also included a survey completed by current CSUN students.

Preliminary Conversations

In order to understand the complexity of identity-based resource centers and its impact on student success, several preliminary meetings were held to understand what was taking place on campus. The research team held individual meetings with each ethnic studies department chair in August and September 2021 as part of the *Empathize* and *Define* phases of Equity-Centered Design Thinking. As part of these phases, individual meetings were also held with CSUN's Chief Diversity Officer and the Executive Director, for the University Student Union who's "New Heart of Campus" project could be impacted by the findings of this study. Below, Figure 3 highlights preliminary meetings with constituents.

Figure 3. Preliminary Conversations (Empathize & Define Phase)

Department Name	Number of Participants	Date
Africana Studies	1	August 12, 2021
American Indian Studies	1	August 10, 2021
Analytics Team	3	August 12, 2021
Asian American Studies	8	August 12, 2021
Black House	2	August 24, 2021
Chicana/o Studies	1	August 7, 2021
Central American & Transborder Studies	1	September 16, 2021
Chief Diversity Office	1	August 26, 2021
University Student Union	1	September 2, 2021
Total Number of Meetings: 10	**Total Number of Participants: 19**	

Note: The Analytics Team is a group of CSUN faculty, staff and students who participated in a CSU analytics research project in 2020 and their findings and recommendations could provide direction for this study. The Asian American Studies department invited colleagues from the CSUN Library to participate in the preliminary conversation because of their interest in creating an Asian Pacific Islander Desi American (APIDA) Center.

Student Survey

On October 22, 2021, an email was sent to all CSUN enrolled students inviting them to participate in our research study. In total, 427 students completed the survey. The survey included the IRB approved consent form and a 26-question survey with demographic, likert scale and open-ended questions. The consent form and questionnaire were administered using Qualtrics, an online survey software. Prior to submitting the survey instrument to IRB, the instrument was shared with the four student research assistants to review the instrument and provide feedback - the students served as members of a pilot. The student research team also provided feedback that contributed to a richer focus group protocol and a better-developed survey. All the feedback received through this process was incorporated into the final focus group protocol and survey. The completion of the survey was part of the *Define* phase of Equity-Centered Design Thinking as it provided key elements to understand campus climate and the need for identity-based resource centers on campus.

Below, Table 1 provides details on demographic information of the survey participants. As noted, 427 students participated in the surve and a majority of the students identified as cis-gender women (55.27%) and over 2% of the respondents identified as Trans* students. There were 16 students who responded, “Not Sure”, most answered the subsequent open-ended question responding a sexual preference or were unsure about the question. Latinx/a/o students were most represented in the survey, with 34.19% of the responses, followed by white students (26.46%). Over 10% of students responded as “Other”, with most mentioning two ethnicities. Lastly, most of the respondents were upper division students (23.89% Juniors & 27.87% Seniors) and graduate students accounted for 32.79% of respondents, although they only represent 11.1% of the student enrollment. The College of Social & Behavioral Sciences was the most represented college in the survey with 20.14% of participants; this percentage is consistent with the college

breakdown for the campus, which encompasses 20.7% of all enrolled students. The rest of the demographic information can be found in Table 1.

Table 1. Student Survey Participant Demographic Information

Variables	Participants	
	n	%
Gender		
Cis Man	99	23.19
Cis Woman	236	55.27
Gender Queer	13	3.04
Non-Binary	23	5.39
Trans Man	5	1.17
Trans Woman	4	.94
Another Identity	22	5.15
Not Sure	16	3.75
Missing	9	2.11
Ethnicity		
African/African American/Black	31	7.26
American Indian/Alaska Native	12	2.81
Asian/Pacific Islander	45	10.54
Caucasian	113	26.46
Latinx/a/o	146	34.19
Middle Eastern/Southeast Asian	29	6.79
Other	44	10.30
Missing	7	1.64
Age Group		
Under 18	1	.23
18 -23	197	46.14
24-29	96	22.48
30 and Over	133	31.15
Classification (Academic Standing)		
Freshman	37	8.67
Sophomore	29	6.79
Junior	102	23.89
Senior	119	27.87
Graduate Student	140	32.79
College of Study		
David Nazarian College of Business & Economics	44	10.30
Engineering & Computer Science	46	10.77
Health & Human Development	52	12.18
Humanities	32	7.49
Michael D. Eisner College of Education	45	10.54
Mike Curb College of Arts, Media & Communication	63	14.75
Science & Math	29	6.79
Social & Behavioral Sciences	86	20.14
Tseng College	30	7.03

Note, $n = 427$.

Focus Groups

As part of the design process, a total of 23 focus groups were conducted in October and November 2021. Two types of focus groups were held: (1) focus groups for only students and (2) focus groups for faculty, staff and administrators. These focus groups allowed the research team to understand and *Ideate* the possibility of creating identity-based resource centers.

Students

An email was sent on October 22, 2021 to all CSUN enrolled students inviting them to participate in the study by first completing a survey. The last question of the study invited students to self-select their participation in one of 15 student focus groups (only 10 focus groups were held). A total of 74 students opted to participate in a focus group, out of which 38 students attended their focus group, a 51.35% participation rate (66% undergraduate students and 34% graduate students).

Faculty, Staff and Administrators

Faculty, staff and administrators were emailed on October 26, 2021 inviting them to participate in one of 13 focus groups to understand the need for identity-based resource centers on campus. Within the first two days of the email being sent by CSUN Human Resources, all focus group time slots were booked. A total of 140 faculty, staff and administrators opted to participate in a focus group; 111 faculty, staff and administrators attended, and 29 faculty, staff and administrators were unable to participate during their scheduled focus group (79.29% participation rate). Focus groups for faculty, staff and administrators were held in late October and early November 2021.

Student Organizations Meetings

During October and November 2021, individual meetings were held with various campus organizations who either wanted to be engaged in the process or were identified as having a connection to an identity-based resource center or a cultural house. Seven student organizations opted to participate in the study and the research team met with them during their scheduled student organization meeting. A total of 52 students participated in these meetings. The United Sorority & Fraternity Council had the largest participation with 14 student participants, representing various cultural fraternities and sororities. The list of student organizations who participated can be found in Figure 4. These meetings contributed to the *Ideate* phase of the Equity-Centered Design Thinking Process.

Figure 4. List of Student Organizations Meetings with Dates

Student Organizations	Number of Participants	Date
United Sorority & Fraternity Council	14	October 19, 2021
National Panhellenic Council	6	October 26, 2021
Asian American Studies Pathway Project	3	October 21, 2021
Movimiento Estudiantil Chicano de Aztlan (MEChA)	11	October 26, 2021
Colored Minds	5	October 26, 2021
Muslim Student Association	10	November 1, 2021
American Indian Student Association	3	November 1, 2021
Total Number of Meetings: 7	**Total Number of Participants: 52**	

Campus Department Conversations

In October and November 2021, a series of meetings were held with various campus departments to continue to *Define* and *Ideate* the importance of identity-based resource centers and their impact on student success. These additional sets of meetings included faculty and staff from each department. A total of 22 meetings were held across campus with various campus constituents, including existing resource centers (Pride Center, DREAM Center, Veterans Resource Center, Women's Research & Resource Center), Project Rebound, Civil Discourse and Social Change, BUILD Poder, and individual meetings with directors who would be impacted with the process, see Figure 5 below. As part of these campus conversations, a total of 146 faculty, staff and administrators participated. Some of the individuals who participated in previous meetings, also participated in these campus conversations. In the following section we include the unique number of participants in the study. A list with all meetings is below.

Figure 5. Campus Department Meetings with Number of Participants and Dates

Department Name	Number of Participants	Date
Advising Hub /Advising	1	November 23, 2021
Africana Studies	7	October 21, 2021
American Indian Studies	3	November 1, 2021
Asian American Studies	8	October 7, 2021
Black Student Success Council	19	October 19, 2021
Campus Facilities Design & Construction	1	November 15, 2021
Central American & Transborder Studies	9	October 22, 2021
Chicana/o Studies	14	October 8, 2021
Civil Discourse & Social Change	3	October 25, 2021
College of Humanities	19	November 15, 2021
Commission on Diversity & Inclusion	18	November 9, 2021
CSUN Basic Needs	1	October 25, 2021
CSUN BUILD Poder	3	November 9, 2021
CSUN HSI Pathways	2	November 9, 2021
DREAM Center	2	October 21, 2021
Jewish Studies	7	October 28, 2021
Pride Center	3	October 14, 2021
Project Rebound	2	October 19, 2021
The Rise Center Planning Committee (USU)	19	October 25, 2021
University Counseling Services	1	November 9, 2021
Veterans Resource Center	3	October 14, 2021
Women's Research & Resource Center	1	October 14, 2021
Total Number of Meetings: 22	**Total Number of Participants: 146**	

Off-Campus Identity-Based Resource Centers

Starting on September 28, 2021, emails were sent to colleagues across the various institutions in California who operate identity-based resource centers on their campuses. Several campus department directors, coordinators and an Associate Vice President responded to the solicitation to participate in these informal conversations with a focus to inquire about their respective centers, their aspirations to make them better and how they measure success. A total of 12 meetings were held with off-campus colleagues from various institutions, including CSU Dominguez Hills, San Bernardino, Fullerton and San Diego State, UC Irvine, Santa Cruz, Berkeley and Riverside. During these conversations, we asked colleagues to identify other centers we should consider in our research and they provided other individuals to contact, including Oregon State whose Native Resource Center (Kaku-Ixt Mana Ina Haws) agreed to participate. A list of cultural centers who participated can be found below in Figure 6.

Figure 6. List of Off-Campus Identity-Based Resource Centers Participants with Date and Time

- CSU San Bernardino - Assistant Director for all Resource Centers (10/8) at 9am
- CSU Dominguez Hills – Black Resource Center (10/8) at 11am
- CSU Fullerton – AVP Identity & Belonging (10/8) at 12:30pm
- San Diego State University – Native Resource Center (10/12) at 9am
- UC Irvine – Womxn's Center for Success (10/13) at 11:30am
- UC Riverside – LGBT Resource Center (10/19) at 2pm
- CSU Fullerton – Latinx Community Resource Center (10/21) at 9am
- San Diego State University – Center for Intercultural Relations (10/22) at 10am
- University of Southern California – Student Equity & Inclusion Programs (10/26)- 3 Participants
- UC Berkeley – Gender Equity Resource Center (10/26) at 2:30pm
- Oregon State University – Kaku-Ixt Mana Ina Haws (10/26) at 3:30pm
- UC Santa Cruz- African American Resource & Cultural Center (10/28) at 4pm

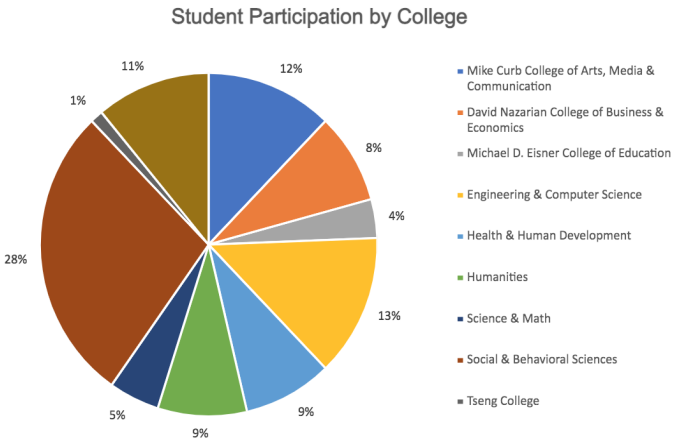
Total Number of Off-Campus Meetings: 12
Total Number of Off-Campus Colleague Participation: 14

Overall Campus Participation

This research project engaged many individuals who were involved with various campus initiatives, served on various committees and represented various parts of campus. Some individuals participated in multiple meetings and also attended a focus group. Ultimately, ***272 unique students, faculty, staff and administrators participated in meetings, conversations or focus groups***. Survey participants were anonymous, thus they are not included in the 272 unique participation count. A final breakdown is below:

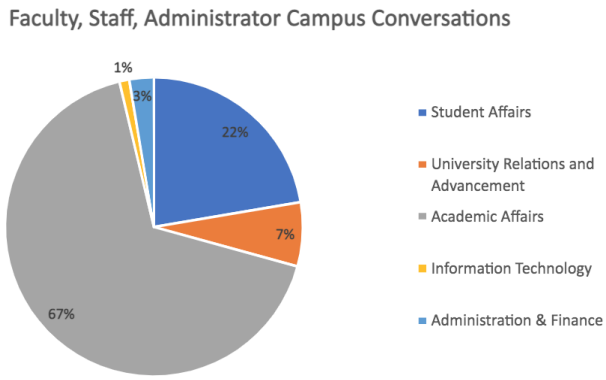
- **Survey**: 427 Student Participants
- **Student Participants** (Student Organization Meetings & Focus Groups): 82 Students - See Figure 7.
- **Staff, Faculty and Administrator Participation**: 192 Participants - See Figure 8.

Figure 7. Unique Student Participation by College.



Unique student engagement during conversations through student organizations or focus groups included every college, with the College of Social & Behavioral Sciences representing 28% of student participants.

Figure 8. Unique Staff, Faculty and Administrator Participation by Area of Service



192 unique faculty, staff and administrators participated in focus groups, with the majority of participants representing Academic Affairs (67%). The second largest participation came from Student Affairs staff.

The largest college participation was from the College of Humanities representing 48% of all Academic Affairs participants. The College of Social & Behavioral Sciences represented 15% of all Academic Affairs participants and the colleges of Science & Math, Engineering & Computer Science and Michael D. Eisner College of Education all had 3% participation.

FINDINGS

Findings Overview

IDENTITY-BASED RESOURCE CENTERS PROJECT

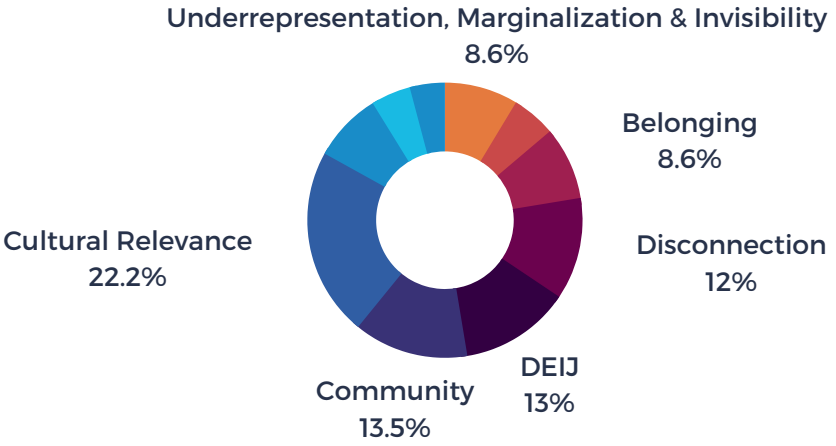
MAJOR THEMES

Thematic analysis of data collected in the identity-based centers project revealed six major themes:

1. Lack of understanding and common language of Equity, Justice, and Inclusion.
2. Absence of infrastructure to support diverse student population.
3. Marginalization and invisibility of BIPOC communities.
4. Limited credibility, direction & sustainability of cultural houses and resource centers.
5. Absence of assessment for resource centers.
6. Cultural taxation of Ethnic Studies departments and Faculty.

MIXED-METHOD RESEARCH DESIGN

The Identity-Based Centers Project research design entailed both a qualitative and quantitative data collection process that included focus groups, surveys, and interviews with several campus stakeholders and students, and off-campus resource centers and divisions. A thematic analysis was conducted on the qualitative data gathered from the focus groups, interviews, and open-ended items from the student survey. Additionally, several statistical analyses were conducted to assess student survey data from closed-ended questionnaire items.



Survey Highlights

51%

51% of students did not agree that their identity is celebrated at CSUN.

42%

42% of students do not see themselves represented in the courses at CSUN.

44%

44% of students do believe that their identity is considered in the policies and practices at CSUN.

57%

Over 55% of respondents have been at CSUN for less than 2 years, which limited their on campus experience.

Lack of Understanding and Common Language of Equity, Justice, and Inclusion

"We need shared culture and core values of equity, justice, and inclusion."
(Faculty/Staff Focus Group)

Given the rise in the national discourse surrounding the need for college campuses to model equity, justice and inclusive excellence in the structures and practices at all levels of the institution, it comes as no surprise that the CSUN community echoed these very same sentiments throughout the identity-based resource centers study. Upon analysis of the data gathered from our faculty/staff/administrators and student focus groups and surveys, a common theme developed was the lack of an articulated understanding of equity, justice and inclusion by CSUN and the campus community. This subject was coupled with concerns regarding a lack of common language defining equity, justice and inclusion. More specifically, within the context of this study, we found that the lack of understanding and common language defining equity, justice and inclusiveness was reflected in two primary categories 1) *Missing in Mission and Values*, and 2) *Non-Alignment with University Vision*.

The subtheme *Missing in Mission and Values*, denotes the absence of equity core values clearly documented and expounded within the University's Mission and Values statements. Participants' responses indicated a desire for the prioritization of fostering an equitable educational environment that is inclusive of the diverse student population and champions justice, both social and educational.

The current University Mission statement reads as follows:

> California State University, Northridge exists to enable students to realize their educational goals. The University's first priority is to promote the welfare and intellectual progress of students. To fulfill this mission, we design programs and activities to help students develop the academic competencies, professional skills, critical and creative abilities, and ethical values of learned persons who live in a democratic society, an interdependent world, and a technological age; we seek to foster a rigorous and contemporary understanding of the liberal arts, sciences, and professional disciplines, and we believe in the following values[11].

Additionally, while the University's values convey a commitment to excellence and respect for all people, according to participants, these expressed values fall short of the opportunity to strategically align the University values with equity core values so that they are embodied systematically in the institution.

> "Not just a student success function, or academic success. It's about the need for our campus to truly have this in the mission of equity and inclusion." (Faculty/Staff/Administrators Focus Group)

[11] https://www.csun.edu/president/mission

> "We need the cultural centers – not just because they are on identity but because of the focus, values and missions in it." (Student Focus Group)

> "Feels like institutionalized spaces end up -intentionally- most of the time unintentionally – breeding marginalization- they wouldn't want institutionalized space- the values of this space remain fluid with the values and mission of the students." (Student Focus Group)

The second subtheme, *Non-Alignment with University Vision*, refers to the non-utility of equity, justice, and inclusion frameworks in the University's Vision statement and the resulting implementation of the vision. Participants expressed concern surrounding the failure of the University to embed these central components into the Vision and future direction of the University.

The current CSUN Vision states:

> California State University, Northridge is inspired by the belief that our commitment to educational opportunity, inclusion and excellence will extend the promise of America to succeeding generations. Our graduates will be the vanguard of leaders—committed to sustaining a democracy in which diverse people share in the rights and responsibilities of citizenship, proficient in applying technology to wise purposes, and dedicated to securing a humane world community and sustaining the bounty of the Earth.
>
> As an institution of higher learning:
>
> We will create a community of shared values in which faculty, students, staff, administrators and alumni will experience personal satisfaction and pride in our collective achievements;
>
> We will be the first choice for university applicants who seek a rigorous, collaborative teaching/learning experience in a technologically rich environment;
>
> We will be the leader in enhancing the educational, cultural and economic resources of our region; and
>
> We will receive local and national recognition for our distinctive achievements in teaching, learning, scholarship and service.

While the current vision statement points to shared values, it is unclear to the campus community what those values are and if they align with the current promotion of equity, justice and inclusive excellence. The need for an equity rich campus culture was highly emphasized throughout the study. Respondents stated:

> "We need equity rich and anti-racism norms that are in policies and practices." (Faculty Focus Group)

> "Make CSUN an inclusive campus that is Muslim friendly." (Student Focus Group)

> "Don't drop identity-based centers on campus without the campus first going through a major cultural change to one that's equity rich, otherwise we'll end up with multiple siloed centers that could potentially be marginalized. If they are not valued, if their significance is not recognized, then it will affect their budget, staffing, etc." (Faculty/Staff/Administrator Focus Group)

A student respondent stated that the campus needs:

> "...an antiracist lens from CSUN that aims to dismantle these inequities." (Student Focus Group)

Faculty, staff and administrators also conveyed an aspiration to enhance the campus culture with equity rich and inclusive values,

> "We need staff and faculty on campus who are supportive of our students, truly. A campus culture that truly is inclusive and equitable for everyone." (Faculty/Staff/Administrator Focus Group)

> "Ensure that they know how to work together, how to be collective. Have leadership with a vision that we will do this together. Vision with a council of elders. We need a vision that includes the community." (Faculty/Staff/Administrator Focus Group)

> "Equity shouldn't be the sole responsibility of one person on campus. Each department could designate a DEI point person." (Faculty/Staff/Administrator Focus Group)

Students went on to state that they desire a campus culture that is inclusive of their diverse and intersectional identities including in the classroom and with the faculty and staff. Students also expressed the lack of inclusive excellence modeled in the mission, vision, and culture of the University, which is tied to feeling disconnected and unwelcomed.

> "We need Spanish speaking services since CSUN is a majority Spanish speaking student campus." (Student Focus Group)

> "I don't feel anything on campus that gives me a sense of belonging, so having organizations on campus that give that feeling is important because having a sense of belonging is important for any social setting to thrive because if you don't feel welcomed and like you belong you won't be yourself and become as involved." (Student Focus Group)

> "Finding ways to improve graduation rates, retention rates, and creating a sense of belonging on campus because studies show that that improves all that. Having someone who culturally and ethnically represents you is important because like he said, the professors bring their personal life and culture into the curriculum and that culture is what creates that sense of belonging." (Student Focus Group)

Modeling Inclusive Excellence begins with embedding equity core values, justice and inclusion in the mission and vision of the University.[12] This is an important time for CSUN to embrace its campus community's desire to advance equity and justice for all. The road mapping process presents a prime opportunity to align the University's mission and vision with values that reflect our true commitment to equity, justice and inclusive excellence.

Absence of Infrastructure to Support Diverse Student Population

It is imperative that CSUN is able to develop and maintain practices where all students are able to thrive. As an institution that serves over 70% students of color and recognized as a Minority Serving Institution (MSI) and a Hispanic Serving Institution (HSI), students of color must feel embedded into the fabric of the institution. It was evident by this research that students, faculty, staff and administrators identified areas where the campus lacks an infrastructure that supports our diverse student population.

When students were asked as part of the survey if they felt their identity welcomed at CSUN, the majority of students did agree that their identity was welcomed on campus. However, 25% of the respondents did not agree that their identities were welcomed on campus. Out of the 25% of respondents who felt that their identities were not welcomed on campus, 18% were Latinx/a/o, 14% Middle Eastern/Southeast Asian, and 25% were included in the "Other" category, which most identified as multi-racial students. White students accounted for 29% of the respondents who shared that their identity was not welcomed. Below are responses that support our findings, including four subthemes that highlight various ways in which CSUN's diverse student body is impacted by the campus environment.

The first subtheme is *Lack of Sense of Belonging*. Sense of belonging as noted by Strayhorn (2018)[13], is the extent to which students feel connected to their academic institutions and the people within those institutions; a sense of belonging is associated with many positive academic outcomes.

Several students noted their lack of sense of belonging at the institution:

> "It feels lonely. I feel like there is a lack of a community sense and would like to have a more community based environment. Maybe have more campus events." (3rd Year Latina, Student Survey)
>
> **"The underrepresentation of Black students on campus contributes to a lack of sense of belonging…as Black students we have to make our own space to connect and engage."** (Student Meeting)
>
> "Very little club outreach that I can find like-minded people. Without likeminded people it is very stressful to return without an inclusive community that shares my ideas." (Junior Latino student, Student Survey)

[12] https://www.aacu.org/making-excellence-inclusive
[13] Strayhorn, T. L. (2018). *College students' sense of belonging: A key to educational success for all students* (2nd ed.). New York: Routledge.

> "Need a dedicated center to foster my identity, build networks, and a sense of belonging." (Student Focus Group)

Transfer students shared their experience of feeling a lack of sense of belonging while transitioning to campus during the pandemic:

> **"I didn't like my transfer student experience and I only liked my experience at CSUN once I found others who had a similar experience."** (Queer Asian American Student, Student survey)

> "I felt a bit detached from the CSUN experience coming in as a transfer student. Even my advisor was surprised I sought a meeting with them when I first transferred." (Latina Transfer Student, Student Survey)

> "I think that it's mediocre. I think that my community college had a different type of environment in which I felt comfortable and included in but I think that a lot of it has to do with me not ever being at CSUN because I don't live near as well as all online classes makes me feel disconnected to people." (Latina transfer student, Student Survey).

Various non-traditional students shared feelings about being disconnected and identified ways in which they developed relationships on campus or how they wish relationships could be developed:

> **"As a non-traditional student, I have always felt out of place at CSUN. I started as a pre-accounting student, but eventually changed majors. It was not until I took classes in CHS that I felt better. Imposter syndrome still resonates in me."** (Latina graduate student, Student Survey)

> "My experience at CSUN has been mostly good, although it has been difficult to navigate the workload as a parent-scholar. It would be nice to have a support group for parent-scholars. I like that CSUN offers a lot of supportive services, but it feels overwhelming to try to sort through those in addition to regular workload. It would be nice to have that incorporated into the curricula." (white graduate student, Student Survey)

As noted by the student's narratives above, feeling a lack of sense of belonging wasn't isolated to one particular ethnic group, gender type or traditional student status. Lack of sense of belonging was experienced in the form of feeling lonely, not understanding all available resources, needing a dedicated space to build community, and taking courses that support a students' cultural identity. The diversity of the CSUN student body is unique and it is important to acknowledge the various experiences students are having on the campus.

The second subtheme is that of *Feeling Marginalized and Not Mattering* on campus. As noted by Schlossberg's (1989)[14] Theory of Marginality and Mattering, students may experience a sense of not fitting in on campus, which can lead to self-consciousness, irritability, and depression—all of which can affect academic outcomes and retention. The following statements provide additional support to understanding how students felt marginalized and not mattering by the institution:

> "I have had a very mixed experience at CSUN. Some of the best parts of my time here have revolved around my classmates in the CTVA and Asian American Studies program. It is the people at a personal level, like my classmates and some of my professor[s], that have made my education at CSUN meaningful. However at the university level, I do not feel valued as a trans nonbinary student of color. The administration often boasts about how "diverse" this campus is without actively supporting their marginalized students. The Ethnic Studies programs have no[t] received the support [they] deserve from the university. I have seen first hand the difference these classes and programs make in the lives and confidence of students of color. I have known students of color that have been arrested while protesting on campus for a better education. Bringing police in to intervene between student protestors and administrators or faculty doesn't make our campus safer or better." (Non-binary biracial student, Student Survey)

> "It is good. I had no trouble getting classes. But my main issue is that I felt like my academic advisors did not have my best interest in mind. The attitude that I would receive always made me feel not welcomed in her office." (Asian/Pacific Islander Student, Student Survey)

> **"Compared to my community college experience CSUN is not as helpful because I am a parent scholar, resources are limited and unavailable."** (Transfer student parent, Student Survey)

The lack of diverse food options was expressed as a means of feeling marginalized and not mattering:

> "Need more resources for students who identify as Muslims. I would really like Halal food options on campus where I am able to enjoy my meals at CSUN." (Middle East/Southeast Asian student, Student Survey)

> "Having food on campus centered around our culture. CSUN doesn't have kosher or dietary restrictions for Muslim students and if so it's in a specific place at a specific time which is hard for us as students to manage. Having food to eat that fits our dietary needs would be helpful and greatly appreciated." (Student Focus Group)

The third subtheme, *Non-embedded Centers and Cultural Houses in University Master Plan & Not-Funded by the Institution* was referenced in all of the ethnic studies department

[14] Schlossberg, N. K. (1989). Marginality and mattering: Key issues in building community. *New Directions for Student Services*, 48, 5–15.

conversations and student focus groups. As noted by equity scholar Dr. Shaun Harper during his talk at CSUN on October 27, 2021, funding demonstrates the priorities of the institution.

> **"Need to be worried that the message is not to "Co-op and supplant the houses"- Some resistance from the ethnic studies house. The houses are not in the Master Plan and when speaking with ethnic studies departments ensure that the project is not designed to supplant the houses- the center should be designed to coordinate and collaborate with…Support for the current houses and make sure that there is support for the current house, not supplant them."** (Ethnic Studies Department Meeting)
>
> "We don't want to give up the Glenn Omatsu House…it has history…it doesn't have any permanent staffing and recommend keeping the houses and not supplanting the current Glenn Omatsu House." (Ethnic Studies Department Meeting)
>
> "Don't tear down the already existing houses." (Ethnic Studies Department Meeting)
>
> "We already have the Chicano house. As Mexicanos, we make do with what we have. We have no staffing, no funding, but we've made a community. So where does the Chicano house fit in this?" (Ethnic Studies Department Meeting)
>
> "Houses are unfunded and not maintained by the University."
> (Faculty/Staff/Administrator Focus Group)
>
> "The cultural houses are under-resourced and understaffed." (Faculty/Staff/Administrator Focus Group)
>
> "Support and fund the centers we already have." (Faculty/Staff/Administrator Focus Group)
>
> "Provide adequate staff and support for existing centers." (Faculty/Staff/Administrator Focus Group)
>
> "Do not supplant the cultural houses." (Faculty/Staff/Administrator Focus Group)
>
> **"Security of houses and new centers. Not temporary shared spaces."**
> (Faculty/Staff/Administrator Focus Group)

The last subtheme is *Non-Affirming Curriculum, Spaces, and Messaging.* A comprehensive culturally affirming education has the ability to positively shape the psychological, social/emotional, and intellectual development of BIPOC students and students from other minoritized intersectional identities. Race conscious and culturally compatible pedagogies were

advanced as key areas for curriculum improvement. Below are experiences shared by students where they express negative encounters with faculty, in the classroom, and on campus as well as their concern about the CSUN mascot,

> "I have had mostly a good experience at CSUN. Inclusive for the most part aside from a couple of instances of misogynist jokes from male professors." (Gender queer white student, Student survey)

> "Change courses where the material is transphobic. Like Queer Studies courses that operate on Queer Theory, which states that gender and sexuality aren't real or innate, but entirely self-determined man made concepts. Example: "You weren't born that way, it's a choice." Remove courses like that, and create courses that actually validate and support our queer identities without denying the inherent biological components of sex, gender and sexuality." (Student Survey)

> "It has been mostly positive with one major exception, there is a racist instructor that is incredibly inappropriate to her students and Mentor teachers that work with CSUN. After multiple complaints and reports to ED&I they are still employed without getting adequately retrained and continue to make students uncomfortable. I would absolutely love some resolution on this. It is with a particular instructor that has multiple complaints. When this is discussed among my cohort in [Omitted] department it seems that this instructor is known for this method of teaching that is highly inappropriate even within other content areas and outside of CSUN." (white graduate student, Student Survey)

> "The faculties are willing to help and very welcoming. I just hope they are more patient because everyone has their own way of learning and English might not be their primary language." (Asian/Pacific Islander Student, Student Survey)

> **"My experience has been mixed but overall good. I think that overall, most professors are aware of people's different identities and cultures. There have been a few uncomfortable instances, though I feel that a lot of it could have been avoided with better support from CSUN. One thing that really helped my experience was the ability to use my name and pronouns on Canvas."** (Non-binary Student, Student Survey)

> "More sensitivity from the professors since some students don't know it all already and need more assistance." (Student Focus Group)

> "Mostly unremarkable. I've only been on campus twice. Professors are interesting. I find the use of "Matador" to refer to students offensive. I find the matador to be a symbol of colonialism and the erasure of indigenous cultures. I find myself shaking my head every time communications from the school refer to students as Matadors. Outside of the animal cruelty associated with Matadors, this literally means Killers- in spanish, my mother language. It reminds me of the gangsters in my old neighborhood Boyle Heights,

casually referring to each other as "Killer" and they were, and I don't want to be referred to as Killer. It's really disgusting and I plan to do my post-graduate school at a different university, that's how unconvertable I am with this moniker." (Latina student, Student Survey)

"My experience has been... mostly alright. Sadly I have dealt with things like sexism and transphobia from other students. I couldn't really handle the stress and ended up dropping the course which put me a year back for graduation. I wish I had had someone to talk to about it, or had known how to handle it. The teachers in my major don't hardly know how to handle women, let alone nonbinary people, so I really didn't feel I could go to them." (white Non-binary senior, Student Survey)

"I believe it's a good thing the university is considering their students' voice for once and hope this actually creates a better and broader view of how professors act towards their students." (Student Focus Group)

"My experience has been a mix of positive and negative. I feel like I am prepared to graduate and go into my chosen field. I also have had a few wonderful and supportive professors. However, I have been misgendered by faculty and students throughout my time at CSUN." (white non-binary graduate student, Student Survey)

"My overall experience at CSUN has been good. I do feel there is a disconnect between some staff and their students that are parent scholars (lack of understanding)." (Latina graduate student, Student Survey)

"Having faculty training on cultural competence would help because one of my white professors was talking about a racially sensitive issue and didn't discuss or give proper recognition to the impact it had rather which made me feel out of place as a student of color." (Student Focus Group)

As an institution who serves primarily students of color, first-generation and transfer students, it is important to acknowledge the diverse experiences students are having on campus. As noted by the data above, there is a visible lack of infrastructure to support students from diverse backgrounds, thus it becomes unrealistic for the institution to enhance the experiences of students. In closing, a student in one of the focus groups shared her experience with a faculty member who expressed "condescending attitudes toward minoritized cultural groups of students" and she "experienc[ed] Microaggressions from professors against students of diverse ethnic backgrounds". Having "Deficit thinking about minoritized students as cheaters" becomes an opportunity for growth for the campus, where students should not experience listening to questions like, "Who wrote this essay for you?" (Student Focus Group).

Marginalization and Invisibility

"Taking a Chicano Studies class was the only way I could have a non-white professor."
(Student, Focus Group)

The diversity of the CSUN community has been highlighted nationally and is an asset that distinguishes us from other large universities. Reflecting the diversity of our community in the infrastructure, policies and practices at CSUN presents a distinctive opportunity for the campus to model Inclusive Excellence and meet the academic, professional and social needs of our students, faculty and staff.[15] The growing desire to develop an inclusive culture was confirmed throughout the identity-based resource centers research project, in both focus groups and in the student survey.

Marginalization and Invisibility was a major theme found among all focus groups. This theme was expressed within several domains 1) *Underrepresentation of Black, Idigenous and People of Color (BIPOC) faculty*, 2) *Underrepresentation of Black, Native, and Pacific Islander students*, 3) *Lack of Visibility of Diverse Racial and Cultural Groups Across Campus*, and 4) *Marginalization of Cultural Houses*.

Underrepresentation of BIPOC Faculty

The representation of BIPOC faculty that reflects the diversity of the CSUN student population was a significant point of discussion within the focus groups and in the student surveys. Faculty diversity has been a subject of concern for decades in higher education, particularly since the 1960s with the student movement advocating for an inclusive curriculum and the establishment of Ethnic Studies, including at CSUN. Researchers have documented the important contributions that Black, Latinx/a/o and faculty of color make to college campuses and students' overall academic experiences and achievement. Compelling evidence suggests that Black and Latinx/a/o faculty presence on college campuses is an important predictor for Black and Latinx/a/o students' academic success, enrollment, retention, and graduation rates.[16] In addition, building students' intercultural competence is reported as essential in preparing students for a globally engaged world, and faculty of color play an important role in this process.[17]

Within the California State University, campuses and the surrounding communities have lobbied for diversified faculty recruitment and retention practices and policies. At CSUN, in 1968 a group of students put together a list of demands and "Stormed Valley State" demanding the University invest in hiring Black full-time faculty, among other demands which included

[15] https://www.aacu.org/making-excellence-inclusive

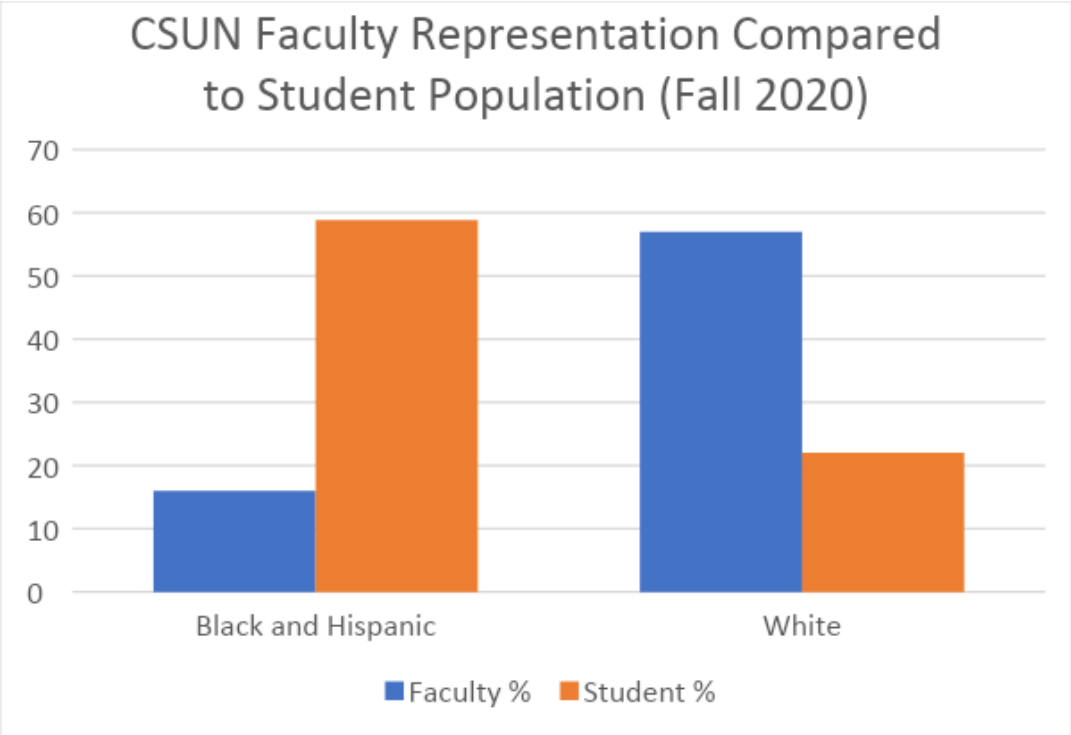
[16] Blackwell, James E. "Networking and mentoring: A study of cross-generational experiences of Black graduate and professional schools." *Southern Education Foundation* (1983).; DeFour, Darlene C., and Barton J. Hirsch. "The adaptation of Black graduate students: A social network approach." *American Journal of Community Psychology*, vol. 18, 1990, pp. 487-503.

[17] Madyun, Na'im, Sheneka M. Williams, Ebony O. McGee, and H. Richard Milner IV. "On the Importance of African-American Faculty in Higher Education: Implications and Recommendations." *Educational Foundations*, vol. 27, 2013, pp. 65-84.

increasing Black student enrollment, and enhancing curriculum with culturally congruent pedagogy.[18]

Currently, CSUN is a Minority Serving Institution with over 56% of the population identified as Latinx/a/o and Black/African American. Yet only 11% of faculty are Latinx/a/o and 5% are Black/African American. Comparatively, at CSUN white students make up about 22% of the student population while white faculty account for 57% of the full-time tenure/tenure-track faculty.[19]

Figure 9. CSUN Representation, Faculty and Student Population (Fall 2020)



Denotations regarding the limited representation of faculty of color at CSUN were consistent with the sentiments communicated in the President's 100-Day Tour. The divergence between the student body racial makeup and the faculty composition reportedly contributes to decreased sense of belonging, disconnection from the university and classroom, and the overall student experience. Respondents in the focus groups noted:

> **"Students are not seeing themselves in the classroom. It leads to imposter syndrome; students ask do I really belong here? Lack of representation in leadership and lack racial diversity in faculty representation."** (Faculty/Staff Focus Group)
>
> "Need racial diversity representation in faculty." (Faculty/Staff/Admin Focus Group)

[18] https://www.latimes.com/archives/la-xpm-1988-04-22-me-1929-story.html
[19] https://www.csun.edu/sites/default/files/profile_2021_0.pdf

"BIPOC students must see themselves in the classroom and we must address lack of racial diversity." (Faculty/Staff/Admin Focus Group)

"Increase BIPOC faculty and staff." (Faculty/Staff/Admin Focus Group)

"Need to have queer and trans faculty, across the board we need to have students represented by faculty in meaningful ways." (Faculty/Staff/Admin Focus Group)

"Promote retention of faculty and staff of color. Need diverse faculty and staff to represent student populations." (Faculty/Staff/Admin Focus Group)

"Diversifying the faculty would make a huge difference in enhancing the student experience." (Student Focus Group)

"Faculty representation is not reflected of students. Students want to see faculty who look like them." (Student Focus Group)

"Hiring people who are culturally diverse, and representative of our students would contribute to student success." (Faculty/Staff/Admin Focus Group)

"Expand Africana Studies and hire more Black tenure faculty across the campus. Institute policies with Black students in mind. Expand Black House operations." (Student Survey)

"I think the student populations on campus need to be advocated for and listened to more mindfully. A lot of students have really poor experiences with professors but are often dismissed as having personal issues rather than academic and institutional issues. A stronger vetting process for new faculty hires might be helpful in contributing to a higher quality of education. Listen to student reviews at the end of each semester- I promise that if a student takes the time out of their day to actually fill it out, it's because they have something valuable to say." (Student Survey)

"We need more racial representation of the faculty, faculty that represent the student body." (Student Focus Group)

"CSUN is the only university in the valley, it must be transformative, a focal point. The ethnic diversity of faculty must increase." (Student Focus Group)

Students also expressed that diverse faculty representation can have positive outcomes on their academic and overall success.

"Having a mentor of color from diverse backgrounds that show us minoritized individuals that we can become successful would be beneficial." (Student Focus Group)

"Finding ways to improve graduation rates, retention rates, and creating a sense of belonging on campus because studies show that that improves all that. Having someone

who culturally and ethnically represents you is important because the professors bring their personal life and culture into the curriculum and that culture is what creates that sense of belonging." (Student Focus Group)

"We need to have diverse faculty and link the curriculum with the reality of what goes on in the community to show you how you can use your degree in practical ways to benefit the community." (Student Focus Group)

Overall, representation was a common thread widely discussed among participants in the identity-based resource centers project (See Figure 12. Word Tree of Representation). The discussion of diverse representation was not limited to the faculty composition. Increasing the enrollment and retention of underrepresented minoritized student groups was also highly referenced in the study.

Underrepresentation of Black/African American, American Indian and Pacific Islander Students

"It is not Black student leadership's responsibility to retain Black Students!"
(Student Focus Group)

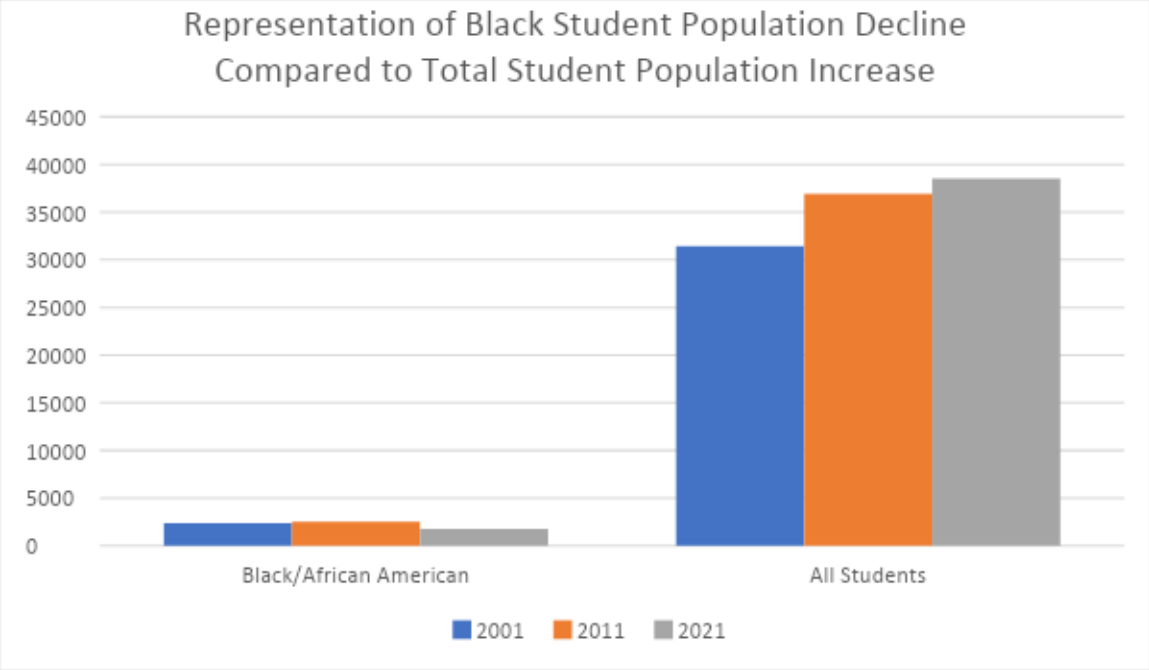
Between 2010 and 2018, Black college student enrollment in the U.S. increased from 31% to 37%. Among Black males, enrollment grew from 25% to 33%. Black female college student enrollment also grew from 35% to 41%.[20] Despite this growth, over the past ten years CSUN's Black/African American student population have experienced steep declines in enrollment, continuation, and graduation rates. Currently, the Black/African American student population at CSUN accounts for roughly 4.6% (N=1,764) of the total student population. This is a 31% decline from 6.9% in 2011, and a 25% decline from 7.5% in 2001. Although Black/African American students accounted for a higher percent in 2001, there were less enrolled students campus-wide in 2001 than in 2011. Meanwhile, CSUN's student population has grown by 4.4% from 2011 to 2021, and increased by 22.6% since 2001[21]. Figure 10 provides a visual representation of enrollment trends.

[20] "College Enrollment Rates." *The Condition of Education*, 2020, https://nces.ed.gov/programs/coe/pdf/coe_cpb.pdf
[21] https://www.csun.edu/counts/

representation

- and their backgrounds Someone said
- becomes . They need to see
- conversation that ties in with
- creates a sense of belonging
- CSUN is not like media
- Faculty
  - enjoy it as much .
  - Lack racial diversity in
  - like there's not diverse
- health counseling embedded with ethnic
- inclusive
  - Marquita Take Aways : Equity
  - representation Lack visibility and
- lack of
  - are statistics on
  - competitive learning A
  - me to succeed .
  - really belong here ?"
  - that . For addressing
- look like me . More racial
- making sure we have that
- of identities . Staffing Structure Need
- of resources to students Reflective
- of support and community Visibility /
- students of color who seek
- support and community Visibility / representation :
- that CSUN has strong union
- the departments – they can have
- Visual
  - Mural in la Casita -
  - sense of belonging representation (
  - Visibility /
    - .
      - Doesn't look bureaucratic
      - possible shuttle stops
      - the Black House
      - to the majors
    - and student organizations
    - who they trust
- white European . Need racial diversity
- you can feel and cultural
- (for BIPOC , queer , etc) then
- visual representation) Display art across
-) Display art across campus that
- , feel like there's no one
- - Address Mascot Support for Unhoused
- . I tell students not to
- Top Floor – Social engagement (lounging)
- / Marginalization
  - Concerned about bifurcation of
  - Create a space where
  - Must reflect Black Students –
  - The APIDA Center would
  - They need to see
- : representation that is reflective of
- and cultural awareness from professors
- visibility – the holding of
- even for teaching associates . I
- in different career fields .
- faculty . BIPOC students must
- leadership . When they go
- Lack racial diversity
- the resource centers (possibly
- is necessary
- not reflected of students
- the most important . Students
- Lack visibility and inclusive representation
- Mural in la Casita - visual
- Murals of indigenous people (Tataviam
- Need adequate staffing in centers ,
- of college . The number of
- our Cultures Adequate Staff
- staff (diversity) Diverse group
- the faculty , faculty that
- that is reflective of the
- reflect the students they
- to feel like they belong -

Figure 10. Comparison of Black Student Population Decline Compared to Total Student



California has the fifth largest Black population in the United States (2.16 million) and 37% of Black Californians live in Los Angeles county.[22] The CSU educates 9% of Black undergraduate students. While California community colleges educate more Black undergraduate students (64%) than all other institutions of higher education,[23] CSUN Black transfer student population is extremely low. CSUN first-time transfer (FTT) student population for 2021 is 236 full-time and part-time students, which is only 3.9% of the FTT student population for 2021. Of the over 138,000 Black students in community colleges in California, CSUN only transfers in less than 1% of the Black community college population each year. In fact, more Black females transfer to private for-profit institutions (44%) than the CSU (32%), and more Black males transfer to for-profit and independent non-profit institutions (51%) than the CSU (38%).[24]

Students and faculty of diverse backgrounds articulated alarm for the increasing "extinction" of Black students at CSUN. The promotion or race consciousness recruitment strategies to increase Black, Indigenous and other underrepresented student groups were widely advanced by participants in both focus groups and the online survey.

> **"We must focus on Black students first and eliminate the equity gap – we can take that information and focus that on other identity centers. Leaving behind our Black students – There needs to be a strategic roll out with Black student support services coming out first. Black students have been asking for this for a long time."** (Faculty/Staff Focus Group)

[22] https://collegecampaign.org/portfolio/state-higher-education-black-californians/
[23] NCES, Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (2020). http://nces.ed.gov/ipeds/use-the-data
[24] NCES, Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (2020). http://nces.ed.gov/ipeds/use-the-data

"CSUN needs to attract, recruit, enroll, and retain Black students." (Faculty/Staff Focus Group)

"Black students feel alone and isolated in their major and upper division classes." (Student Focus Group)

"Underrepresentation of Black students on campus contributes to a lack of sense of belonging." (Student Focus Group)

"Black students have had to create our own safe space to connect and engage." (Student Focus Group)

"Black faculty and staff need to be reflected in the classroom. CSUN lets Black students in but does not do things to retain." (Student Focus Group)

"CSUN doesn't really care about Black students." (Student Focus Group)

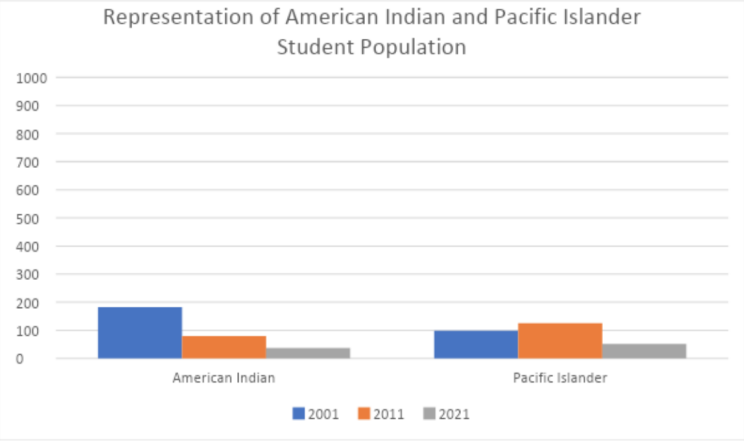
"More representation of Black people across the board including professors, resources, and events." (Student Survey)

"No tailoring and lack of investment in Black student success." (Student Focus Group)

"We are witnessing half of our Black cohort disappear in the first semester and first year at CSUN." (Student Focus Group)

Support for underrepresented student populations continued to be noted as an important opportunity to build and effectively serve BIPOC students. Both American Indian students and Pacific Islander students each account for less than 1% of the student body. American Indian students represent roughly .09% (N=37) of the student body and Pacific Islander students make up about .13% (N=52) of total students.

Figure 11. Representation of American Indian & Pacific Islander Student Population



In the late 1990s and early 2000s around 200 American Indian students attended CSUN. Since 2010, the American Indian student population has decreased to less than 100 and now is less than 40 students. As for Pacific Islander students, from 2004 to 2010 CSUN witnessed a steady increase in the student population. In 2010, the Pacific Islander student population reached its height at 171 students. However, by Fall 2011 CSUN began to see a steep decline and inconsistencies in the Pacific Islander student population. As of Fall 2021, only 52 Pacific Islander students attend CSUN[25].

Advocacy for intentional recruitment plans to increase underrepresented Black, Indigenous, and Pacific Islander students was championed by CSUN faculty, staff and students,

> "Need to develop targeted and strategic enrollment management infrastructure and initiatives geared toward recruiting underrepresented BIPOC students." (Student Focus Group)
>
> "CSUN needs to be more intentional about amplifying and enhancing diverse student success." (Student Focus Group)
>
> "Focus should be on retaining, recruiting as well as developing a sense of belonging for students." (Faculty/Staff Focus Group)
>
> "CSUN needs to serve students from recruitment, enrollment, academic success, graduation, and be intentional in all of these areas." (Faculty/Staff Focus Group)
>
> "Acknowledging the needs through providing support from outreach and recruitment, summer bridge programs, and encouraging inter-departmental programming that has the needs of our diverse cultures in mind." (Faculty/Staff Focus Groups)
>
> "We need the support of the university in recruiting more students and faculty of color. The University has a recruitment issue." (Faculty/Staff Focus Group)

Investing in increasing the representation and success of Black/African American, American Indian, and Pacific Islander students is another way for CSUN to model Inclusive Excellence.[26] Students are struggling with not seeing themselves reflected in the classroom by way of fellow classmates, faculty, and culturally relevant curriculum. Diversifying the representation of students, aids in the sense of belonging for underrepresented student groups and ultimately contributes to their academic and overall success[27].

Lack of Visibility of Diverse Racial and Cultural Groups Across Campus

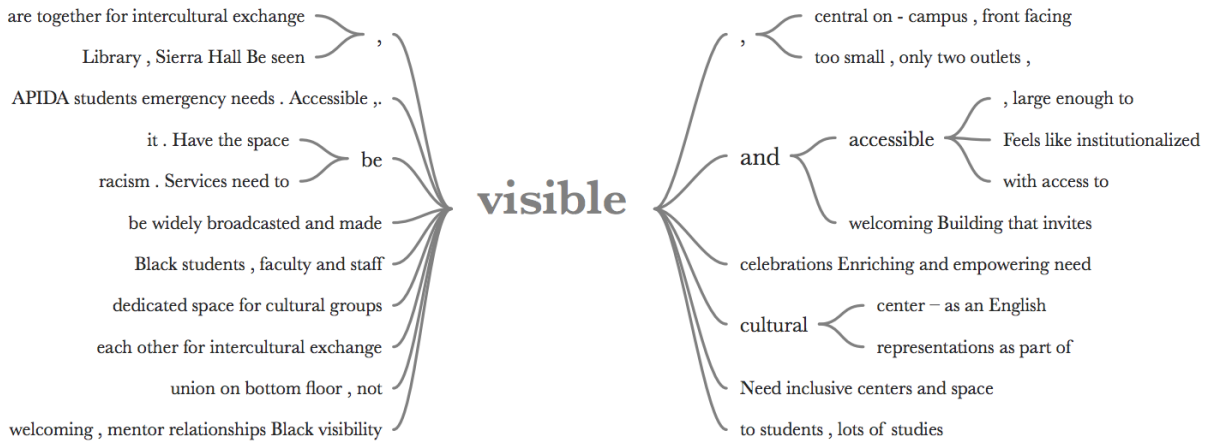
[25] https://www.csun.edu/counts/

[26] https://www.aacu.org/making-excellence-inclusive

[27] Blackwell, James E. "Networking and mentoring: A study of cross-generational experiences of Black graduate and professional schools." *Southern Education Foundation* (1983).; DeFour, Darlene C., and Barton J. Hirsch. "The adaptation of Black graduate students: A social network approach." *American Journal of Community Psychology*, vol. 18, 1990, pp. 487-503.

The void of BIPOC communities' visual presence on campus in terms of art, naming and prominence resounded across diverse groups of students, faculty, staff and administrators, as a critical missed opportunity to transmit the message of inclusion and belonging to our diverse student body and to our faculty and staff. Visibility of diverse cultures represented the desire of the campus community to see themselves reflected in the structures, buildings, and spaces throughout campus. Race conscious representation was readily advanced throughout the research study. Below, Figure 12, shows a word tree of the root word *visible* based on student, faculty, staff, administrator focus groups.

Figure 12. Word Tree of the word Visible: Developed from Focus Groups



Participant remarks included,

> "Lack visibility and inclusive representation." (Faculty/Staff Focus Group)
>
> "Centralized dedicated space for cultural groups. Need visible cultural representations as part of the campus." (Student Focus Group)
>
> "Must reflect Black Students – murals." (Student Focus Group)
>
> **"A lot of our students probably wouldn't come or remain at CSUN if it weren't for the centers. Where they feel seen, heard, and validated. We provide that sense of community that often they don't receive anywhere else on campus." Too many other offices on campus are transactional."** (Faculty/Staff/Admin Focus Group)
>
> "Visibility, we want to exist in various parts of campus." (Faculty/Staff/Admin Focus Group)
>
> "It is important to have land acknowledgements (if there is a guest) that are not part of CSUN meetings. It would be nice if land acknowledgements could be done so the guest can understand the protocol." (Student Focus Group)

"CSUN needs to have representation that is reflective of the Black community it services." (Faculty/Staff/Admin Focus Group)

"As a recruitment person, I'd say that we continuously need new student success stories, and photos/media showing our culturally diverse campus, so encouraging students to participate in those things." (Faculty/Staff/Admin Focus Group)

Race conscious visual representations in the form of art, murals, and building names were offered as ways to institutionalize CSUN spaces with high value for cultural diversity. Visibility was linked to an increased sense of belonging, feeling welcomed and being a valued member of the campus.

"We need visibility and representational imagery." (Faculty/Staff Focus Group)

"Must reflect Black Students – murals – statutes – current heroes that our students can relate with- buildings that are named after Black individuals." (Faculty/Staff Focus Group)

"We want to see art installations across the campus." (Student Focus Group)

"Buildings and rooms that grant visibility, awareness and space that the institution is using, especially visibility and acknowledgement of local tribes." (Student Focus Group)

Fostering Inclusive Excellence for the campus community in part means representing the diversity of the CSUN community visually throughout campus.[28] Reflecting the beauty, genius and innovation of diverse communities on the exterior and interior of buildings can enhance campus members' sense of belonging and pride in CSUN.

Marginalization of Cultural Houses

In terms of *Marginalization and Invisibility of Cultural Houses,* sentiments of these cultural spaces existing with limited funding, lack of adequate staff, and placed in peripheral locations on campus all contribute to the marginalization and invisibility of the cultural houses. Insufficient funding was reported as a barrier to providing appropriate targeted resources to students. Sufficient funding and staffing for the services and programs offered to students and the larger campus community was highly encouraged.

"Central and not in the back of campus." (Faculty/Staff Focus Group)

"Close proximity to each other for intercultural exchange." (Faculty/Staff Focus Group)

"Visible and welcoming." (Faculty/Staff Focus Group)

[28] The Research Centers in Minority Institutions (RCMI) Consortium: A Blueprint for Inclusive Excellence. https://www.mdpi.com/1165240

"Need the right staffing for these centers and on campus. And a big part of that is incentive, and needing an adequate salary. High turnover rate." (Faculty/Staff Focus Group)

"Need adequate staffing in centers, housing, and advising, care coordinators." (Faculty/Staff Focus Group)

"Houses are unfunded and not maintained by the University." (Faculty/Staff Focus Group)

"Cultural houses are under-resourced and understaffed." (Faculty/Staff Focus Group)

"Provide adequate staff and support for existing centers." (Faculty/Staff Focus Group)

"Support and fund the centers we already have." (Faculty/Staff/Admin Focus Group)

"Do not supplant the cultural houses." (Faculty/Staff/Admin Focus Group)

"Security of houses and new centers. Not temporary shared spaces." (Faculty Focus Group)

"Centers need to have adequate staffing, with positions with commensurate pay so they still stay. We need to put our money before our mouth." (Faculty/Staff/Admin Focus Group)

Accessibility of cultural houses/centers was a significant point of discussion throughout the focus groups. Faculty, staff, students and administrators urged the campus to avoid marginalizing these spaces by placing them in hidden, not easily accessible and obscure locations. Students noted that location is key for access to services. When houses and centers are not centralized it restricts students' access and minimizes the level of support the spaces can provide to students. Factoring travel time is important for cultural houses given the limited time students have in between classes.

"Make sure the space is not 'On the Margins'." (Faculty/Staff Focus Group)

"Visibility of the Center is key to connecting with new students." (Faculty/Staff Focus Group)

"We need more Black resource centers on campus, we have the Black House, but you have to leave the campus for that, something that is near Sierra Hall because a lot of Africana Studies classes are in that hall. Having a place where you can get out of class and don't have to go far to access that resource center." (Student Focus Group)

"Don't marginalize space and students by placing them on the margins of campus. Cultural centers need to be centralized and accessible." (Faculty Focus Group)

"I know we have the Black House, but I don't have time to go all the way there." (Student Focus Group)

"No visibility. Housed on the bottom floor, not visible, too small, only two outlets, one private office attached. We have outgrown space. No programming room, having to compete with campus for rooms results in decreased student participation." (Staff Conversations)

The opportunity to enhance our campus community with cultural representations, culturally informed pedagogy, culturally supportive services and centers that are visible and accessible, affords CSUN the prospect to embed structural equity in its organization and systems.[29]

Limited Credibility, Direction & Sustainability

"Avoid half measures in lack of staff, inadequate space and non-permanent funding." (Faculty/Staff Conversations)

Tied to the subtheme of marginalization and invisibility of cultural houses, the theme *Limited Credibility, Direction and Sustainability* signifies a lack of intentional and strategic directives for the cultural houses on campus. Given that the current cultural houses have not been embedded in the University's Master plan, concerns have risen regarding the future of these houses, their sustainability and the longevity of the services rendered, and the cultures established.

Like many cultural centers and houses on college campuses across the nation, CSUN cultural houses were birthed out of students' demand for a more just and equitable campus community. Unfortunately, as amplified in the scholarship on cultural centers, while the establishment of such centers met the immediate demands of students, the lack of strategic planning surrounding the start of these centers and houses have resulted in their inability to effectively achieve their initial mission.[30] Instead, many have become social gathering spaces that are student operated and only foster a sense of community and belonging. These centers/houses most often have not been able to contribute to the academic outcomes of students, and for those that do aid in student success, they lacked assessment models to capture their contributions.[31] Some centers have been supported by their parent Ethnic Studies departments for which they have had to share resources to support the centers.[32] Others have been exclusively student operated with minimal financial support from the institution and no professional staff. This is true for CSUN's cultural houses

[29] Patton, Lori D. *Culture Centers in Higher Education: Perspectives on Identity, Theory, and Practice*. Stylus Publishing, LLC. PO Box 605, Herndon, VA 20172-0605, 2010.
[30] Patton, Lori D. *Culture Centers in Higher Education: Perspectives on Identity, Theory, and Practice*. Stylus Publishing, LLC. PO Box 605, Herndon, VA 20172-0605, 2010.
[31] Hefner, David. "Black cultural centers: Standing on shaky ground?." *Diverse Issues in Higher Education* 18.26 (2002): 22.
[32] Yosso, Tara, and Corina B. Lopez. "Counterspaces in a hostile place." *Culture centers in higher education: Perspectives on identity, theory, and practice* (2010): 83-104.

historically and contemporary - See Figure 13 below for CSUN Centers and Houses Resource Alignment Matrix.

Figure 13. CSUN Centers & Houses Resource Alignment Matrix

Cultural House & Resource Centers	Permanent Institutional Funding (Programming, Staffing, etc.)	Student Fee Funding	Professional Staff/Director	Administrative Support	Outcome Assessment (GPA/Grad Rates, etc.)	Student Employment	Faculty Fellows	Permanent Space	Additional Support Staff		
									Advisor	Counselor	GRS
The Black House			X			X					
La Casita											
Chicano House											
Glen Omatsu House											
Pride Center		X	X			X		X			
Women's Research and Resource Center			X			X		X			
VRC		X	X			X		X			
DREAM Center			X			X		X			

Participants in the study communicated the impact of non-investment in the CSUN cultural houses which has resulted in a lack of credibility and instability.

> "Make sure that we support the direction that programs would help student support – work for students." (Student Focus Group)
>
> **"The layer of trust is not so good, we have a new President, and we're going to need some clear direction and consultation with the community from her in order to build trust."** (Faculty/Staff Focus Group)
>
> "Request clear direction from the administration, and to be invited for consultation on matters dealing with campus ethnic affairs/social justice." (Faculty/Staff Focus Group)

Non-CSUN resource centers warned of limited sustainability as fostering instability, high turnover of staff and decreased targeted student success initiatives. Other CSU campuses have reported severe understaffing, underfunding and lack of directives. Instead, some have been regulated to basements, temporary spaces, student staff only, and one-time funding. In addition, incongruence of professional staff job titles and salary with actual job descriptions yielded high turnover rates among professional staff.

> "Provide clear direction about what the center should be doing. Understand who provides direction and clarity of what needs to be in those spaces. No clarity before- the center director provides trust and then the center coordinator – no clear direction from administration and that is what a director can provide. They need to understand the mission and vision of the centers and transmit them to the rest of campus." (Staff Conversations)

> "Staffing- title of the individual is important and crucial- institutional knowledge is important but it's also important to have someone who might not be familiar with the institution but has experience and can provide a direction and risk for a bigger reward." (Staff Conversations)

The path forward should consider the importance of clear and intentional directions for the existing and new centers on campus.[33] This means working collaboratively with key stakeholders in the development of center missions and visions. These directives should be inclusive of aiding in students' overall success, which includes closing equity gaps.

Absence of Assessment

"How do we know that what we are doing is impacting students in a real way? What can we scale up?" (Staff Conversations)

Assessment is a crucial responsibility for institutions of higher education. Equally important is the need to evaluate the usefulness of resource centers and services by measuring students' academic success.[34] The literature on resource centers suggests a lack of investment in adequate staffing structures that have resulted in insufficient assessment models and practices.[35] Unsurprisingly, conversations with CSUN and off-campus resource centers reported similar struggles with staffing and assessment. Most off-campus centers engaged in this study were one-person operations without any institutional research support. These centers have in large part been unable to conduct direct assessments of the services and programming offered through their centers. Some centers have conducted indirect assessments of events through event-exit-surveys. However, assessments of the impact of these centers and services on students' GPA's, retention, and graduation rates have been absent.

> "Centers should work with the director of assessment to create some tools. Create tools for gauging effectiveness and retention. Most centers are not doing assessment at the level they need to be. Currently more like a customer satisfaction survey; would like to move towards a student learning outcomes assessment." (Off-campus Staff Conversations)

> "Trying to improve assessment to measure growth and retention rates of students who use our services." (Off- Campus Staff Conversations)

> "We haven't done an assessment. We've done minor assessments for programs, pre and post. We'd started to try assessments from surveying students that use it, but Covid hit, so we weren't able to follow through although we'd like to." (Off-Campus Staff Conversations)

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[33] Lozano, Adele. "Latina/o culture centers: Providing a sense of belonging and promoting student success." *Culture centers in higher education: Perspectives on identity, theory, and practice*(2010): 3-25.
[34] Patton, Lori D. *Culture Centers in Higher Education: Perspectives on Identity, Theory, and Practice*. Stylus Publishing, LLC. PO Box 605, Herndon, VA 20172-0605, 2010.
[35] Patton, Lori D. "Black culture centers: Still central to student learning." *About Campus* 11.2 (2006): 2-8.

An additional factor that has impacted cultural centers' assessment activities is the lack of data access and roadblocks with data collection. Data accessibility is vital for resource centers to thrive.[36] Having access to technology and systems to collect data on the students who enter the centers and use the services have been limited, and often the only source of data collection.[37] Upon collecting data of center users, impact evaluations have been limited. Building relationships with institutional research offices are important in order to assess the impact of these services. Unfortunately, many centers only report demographic profiles of student users. In order to determine if these centers have an impact on academic success and closing equity gaps, user data must be combined with student outcomes assessment, which requires data accessibility.

> "We need to know who's using these resources, so we aren't just creating more services or programs that better-served students take advantage of. Students who don't necessarily need them. There is a need for tracking and assessment." (Staff Conversations)

> "Tracking metrics and measuring how these programs serve students, so that we can quantify the impact of these services, so that they (in administration) can see the numbers, so these programs can get funding. The Dean's office will fund what makes an impact, need assessment." (Staff Conversations)

> "Transitioning back to operations has messed with assessment, but I do have assessment tools set up. Like anonymous surveys for feedback after events, but right now it's hard enough getting in-person attendance. Assessment plan needs to be revisited." (Staff Conversations)

> "We track students (no matter their affiliation) who sign in through Qualtrics, they just drop their emails. We also have a swipe system, using VAV navigate (but it's not preferred at the moment. We need to transition though, even though those swipes are shared across the whole university." (Staff Conversations)

Third, data accessibility is loaded with security and data protections to ensure that universities uphold federal mandates to protect student information. Institutional Research trained data analysts have been used to fulfill these requirements while meeting the assessment needs of resource centers. The cultural resource centers involved in this study did not have a research analyst or access to a research analyst, except for two centers. Given the lack of clear directions for cultural centers, assessment was often left out of the strategic planning of the centers. Thus, these centers have been understaffed. Some reported that these services are outsourced:

> "Part of the division of student affairs assessment plan learning outcomes assessment and we also conduct exit event surveys." (Staff Conversations)

> "Student affairs person does assessment for the entire division." (Staff Conversations)

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[36] Shek, Yen Ling. *Strategizing for the future: Evolving cultural resource centers in higher education*. University of California, Los Angeles, 2013.
[37] Ellington, Henry. *Handbook of educational technology*. Nichols Publishing, PO Box 6036, East Brunswick, NJ 08816, 1993.

Others have documented the weight of assessment on the centers.

> "In 3 years, we've made data gathering essential in all units. We have engaged, and students swipe in when entering our spaces. We collect data on about 37k students." (Staff Conversations)

> "The Vice President is very focused on data collection, and pushing the centers to do data assessment despite being understaffed." (Staff Conversations)

As for the current existing resource centers in the University Student Union (Pride Center, DREAM Center and Veterans Resource Center), they stated that their assessment and data collection is minimal and work with the USU assessment team. Although annual assessments are conducted, the data collection process and the next layer of program improvement based on data findings is limited due to minimal staffing and high demand. It was shared that the University Student Union has an Assessment Coordinator who supports the centers with assessment projects, however as noted by the experiences of the off-campus resource centers, and experienced by the current CSUN resource centers, assessments have been minimal and it is an area of improvement for the centers.

The lack of adequate staffing has meant that assessments have been shelved. In centers with research analysts, they have been able to more comprehensively assess the benefits and impacts of the programming and services supplied through the centers. These reports can capture the direct impact on students' academic success, GPA's, retention, and graduation rates. These assessments have also equipped centers with the ability to redesign programs, create new initiatives based on students' needs and feedback, and expand successful programs.[38]

Cultural Taxation of Ethnic Studies Faculty and Departments

Ethnic Studies Departments model culturally congruent and supportive educational spaces by providing grounded pedagogy, faculty diversity and by creating a welcoming home-like feel. While under staffed, CSUN Ethnic Studies departments and faculty provide a wide-array of support services that supplement their academic degree programs. From writing centers, to mentorship programs, Ethnic Studies often supply the University with the majority of its culturally-compatible curriculum and extra-curricular programming while simultaneously providing one-on-one support for students of color. However, the sheer volume of general education courses, supplemental programming, university service, and mentorship leads to cultural taxation especially for the already underrepresented BIPOC faculty, which are the majority of faculty in CSUN Ethic Studies departments. Table 2, details the number of faculty and lecturers currently employed in CSUN Ethnic Studies departments.

[38] Schuh, John H., and M. Lee Upcraft. *Assessment Practice in Student Affairs: An Application Manual. The Jossey-Bass Higher and Adult Education Series*. Jossey Bass Publishers, 350 Sansome St., San Francisco, CA 94104, 2001.

Table 2. Composition of Ethnic Studies Faculty by Department

Department	# of Full Time Tenure/Tenure Track Faculty	# of Lectures
Africana Studies	9	12
American Indian Studies	2	Unknown
Asian American Studies	9	12
Central American & Transborder Studies	2	12
Chicano/a Studies	21	33

Source: CSUN COUNTS Faculty Characters Fall 2021

Throughout this study, students amplified the support rendered by CSUN Ethnic Studies Department in terms of academic, social and identity development. When asked about current resources and services that support students academic success, respondents stated that CSUN Ethnic Studies Department were their primary source of support in terms of building a sense of belonging, providing culturally rigorous and relevant curriculum and programs, providing mentors and professional role models for students and equipping students with an identity-affirming safe space.

> "Ethnic studies is the only place where I have a sense of belonging and feel welcomed. Outside of ethnic studies, you are alone." (Student Focus Group)

> "Students like double-majoring in Ethnic Studies because they say primary majors are too Eurocentric, ethnic studies majors help with cultural identity." (Faculty/Staff/Admin Focus Group)

> "Ethnic Studies create space for students to feel welcomed and the faculty helps build a sense of belonging for students." (Faculty/Staff/Admin Focus Group)

Students also expressed how Ethnic Studies departments consistently provide support to students, and limited support outside of Ethnic Studies exist.

> "As a graduate student I came in 2009 as a transfer student. Discrepancies in support of an aide from department to department. White-centric in non-ethnic studies department." (Student Focus Group)

> "Being Black in STEM is somewhat of an isolating experience if you only look within those departments; most of the support for Black students comes from Africana Studies or social sciences." (Student Focus Group)

> “Only support is from Chicano studies, and Chicano students, and MeChA.” (Student Focus Group)

Ethnic Studies was also cited as providing educational knowledge on global and diverse communities.

> “I went to a few Africana Studies meetings and found them to be very educational and useful but it is hard for them to find stuff like that on campus because the campus does not have a group of people who are responsible for increasing the awareness of this information to the students.” (Student Focus Group)

> “I got community learning in Africana Studies versus competitive learning.” (Student Focus Group)

In addition, Ethnic Studies departments were applauded for providing ethnic identity affirmation.

> “Gave me confidence, I matured and became engaged, because of my major in Chicano Studies Department, advisors and sorority.” (Student Focus Group)

> “Taking a Chicano studies class was the only way I could have a non-white professor.” (Student Focus Group)

The need to increase support for Ethnic Studies Departments was also highlighted by students, faculty, staff and administrators.

> “Expand Africana Studies and hire more Black tenure faculty across the campus. Institute policies with Black students in mind. Expand Black House operations.” (Student Survey)

> “ In Africana studies village approach from Black faculty and staff.” (Student Focus Group)

> “Speaking from personal experience in undergrad, having identity-based support systems and resources under the Asian American Studies (AAS) Dept. helped me build my confidence as a scholar, feel welcomed and included, and discover my passions. In my other classes I didn't often see Asian or much less Filipinx faces, and I very rarely saw Asian or Filipinx experiences mentioned or considered in the curriculum. But with AAS, not only was my identity mentioned in the curriculum but it was the heart of it. My experiences were no longer statistical outliers that were brushed aside, but rather brought to the spotlight as the main focus of studies. These identity-based resources helped me understand that I mattered, and that my experiences mattered.” (Student Survey)

The cultural taxation of Ethnic Studies faculty and departments was evident by the findings from this research study. Cultural taxation is considered an occupational hazard for BIPOC faculty that cripples their research, their teaching and service, delays and disrupts promotions and frequently

results in burnout.[39] Cultural taxation of BIPOC faculty is most pronounced in service areas as demonstrated by the data above. Addressing the over-commitment of service by BIPOC faculty is essential and must be met with support for Ethnic Studies departments and faculty. Underrepresentation tends to be a major contributor to the cultural taxation experienced by BIPOC faculty, especially in Ethnic Studies. Attention should be given to this dynamic in order to foster a healthy and enriching work environment for Ethnic Studies faculty.

Findings Conclusion

Results from data analyzed in this study reveals several opportunities to enhance the teaching, learning environment and enrich the overall campus culture. The following areas were identified as ways CSUN can address systemic inequities on campus and model Inclusive Excellence:

1. Build of an equity infrastructure,
2. Advance race conscious and culturally relevant curriculum and pedagogies,
3. Promote anti-racism, implicit bias and culturally competent training with a cultural humility lens,
4. Embed racial equity focus in student success goals and closing equity gaps,
5. Need for strategic recruitment and hiring plans for BIPOC faculty and university leadership,
6. Need for strategic recruitment, enrollment, retention and graduation plan for Black, Indigenous, and Pacific Islander students,
7. Need for centralized and fully invested cultural resource centers and houses,
8. Need to address cultural taxation of Ethnic Studies departments and faculty,
9. Need for resource centers and programs that service the unique needs of our diverse student population,
10. Need for assessment and data collection processes and staff,
11. Need for supplemental resources in housing, financial aid, and transportation, and
12. Foster welcoming and inclusive campus culture and climate.

[39] Cleveland, Roger, et al. "A theoretical focus on cultural taxation: who pays for it in higher education." *Advances in Social Sciences Research Journal* 5.10 (2018). ; Guillaume, Rene O., and Elizabeth C. Apodaca. "Early career faculty of color and promotion and tenure: The intersection of advancement in the academy and cultural taxation." *Race Ethnicity and Education* (2020): 1-18.

INFRASTRUCTURE RECOMMENDATIONS

This report provides three sections of recommendations, (1) Campus-wide Infrastructure Recommendations, (2) Identity-Based Resource Centers Recommendations and (3) Further Steps of Action. This first section highlights the importance of creating a campus-wide infrastructure rooted in equity, justice and inclusion. We discuss the importance of creating a CSUN culture that (1) *Models Inclusive Excellence*, where we (2) *Build an Equity Infrastructur*e and (3) *Advance an Equity Rich Campus Culture*. The next recommendation sections are presented in a way that first allows the campus to reflect on the overall infrastructure needed to foster a culture rooted in equity - an essential component to the successful implementation of identity-based resource centers. As noted by a participant in a staff/faculty/administrator focus group, **"Don't drop identity based centers on campus without the campus first going through a major cultural change to one that's equity-rich, otherwise we'll end up with multiple siloed centers that could potentially be marginalized."**

Modeling Inclusive Excellence

The call for a university system rooted in *Inclusive Excellence* entails systematically aligning the universities mission, values, and strategic priorities into the heart of the campus infrastructure and culture. Critical to this approach is buy-in from the University's primary constituents, the students, and all stakeholders, faculty, staff and administrators. Based on the findings from the identity-based resource centers research project, the California State University, Northridge community is ready for the University to take the next steps in order to advance a model of Inclusive Excellence. This section details the next steps recommended for CSUN to employ Inclusive Excellence in its structures, systems, policies, practices and overall culture.

Defining Inclusive Excellence

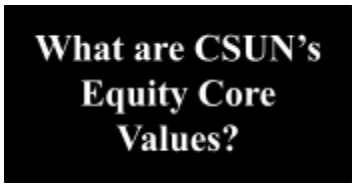
What is *Inclusive Excellence* to CSUN?

To start, in order for any university system to implement *Inclusive Excellence* in its structural foundation and gain buy-in from its stakeholders, it must first articulate a clear and accessible definition of Inclusive Excellence.[40] A diverse body of literature exists on inclusiveness in university strategic planning. Definitions of Inclusive Excellence must encompass attributes attached to a larger goal of inclusive equitable learning and service. The meaning-making phrase is important in order to get all stakeholders on the same page; to ensure everyone knows what the institution means when it is stated that the university is upholding the principles of Inclusive Excellence. Currently at CSUN, there is not an agreed upon shared definition of Inclusive Excellence, Equity or Justice. This has resulted in lack of buy-in, confusion, misdirected attempts at inclusion, and different understandings of Inclusive Excellence. The identity-based resource centers research project has afforded CSUN the opportunity to reflect and consider how the University wants to represent itself as a model of Inclusive Excellence.

[40] Center for Urban Education. "Five Principles for Creating Equity by Design." https://www.aacu.org/sites/default/files/CUE_equity_design_principles.pdf

University Mission and Values Alignment

Modeling *Inclusive Excellence* begins with embedding equity core values, justice and inclusion in the mission and vision of the University.[41] This is an important time for CSUN to embrace its campus community dedication to advancing equity and justice for all. The road mapping process presents a prime opportunity to align the University's mission and vision with values that reflect our true commitment to equity, justice and Inclusive Excellence. Once a definition for Inclusive Excellence is established, that meaning must then be translated into the mission and values of the University. This alignment is crucial for buy-in and accountability. How will we hold ourselves accountable for the work we are doing if we are unclear on the direction we are taking? The University's mission is front facing and one of the first points of contact for potential students and employees. Thus, what we communicate in our mission, articulates our values and how the University is governed and experienced. A purposeful alignment of the principles of equity, justice, and inclusion will propel CSUN forward and allow a streamlining of goals and priorities that center these principles in the advance of high quality intellectual and personal development of its diverse community members.



Advancing Race Conscious Equity Core Values

Attention to educational experiences and academic outcomes of CSUN's diverse student body is foundational to establishing Inclusive Excellence. Integrating equity core values that are race conscious into the organizational systems and the utilization of these values to enrich the university and the university experience is an important step in actualizing an equity-rich campus culture.[42] Incorporating equity core values in the institution's structure is two-tailed. It necessitates that a university both develop and embed equity core values into the operational systems, and also it requires that these values are actively practiced in the classroom and outside of the classroom. These values must be espoused by administrators, faculty, and all student services offices from admissions and enrollment, through advising and counseling, to financial aid and student financial services.[43] The student experience must be an inclusive equity-rich experience on all fronts, not simply in identity-based resource centers. Equally, faculty and staff must also be met with equity core values throughout their tenure and retention processes. The institution must value equity, inclusion and justice as a practice that elevates the entire campus experience and not centered and focused in Ethnic Studies or identity-based resource centers.
Moreover, developing and advancing comprehensive equity core values will equip CSUN with a systemic action plan that fosters inclusive excellence.

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[41] Association of American Colleges and Universities. "Making Excellence Inclusive." https://www.aacu.org/making-excellence-inclusive
[42] Center for Urban Education. "Five Principles for Creating Equity by Design." https://www.aacu.org/sites/default/files/CUE_equity_design_principles.pdf
[43] Witham, Keith A., and Estela Mara Bensimon. "Creating a culture of inquiry around equity and student success." *Creating campus cultures*. Routledge, 2012. 56-77.

Inclusive Campus Engagement Practices

Campus engagement practices must also be grounded in the principle of Inclusive Excellence and fortified by the values of equity and justice.[44] As a Minority Serving Institution, CSUN has the opportunity to organize its recruitment, retention and service efforts around intentional approaches to activate the campus diversity interconnected to an Inclusive Excellence mission.

Why does diverse representation matter?

Attentiveness to increasing the representation and success of diverse students, especially underrepresented minoritized students, is another way for CSUN to model Inclusive Excellence. In this study, students reported that they are struggling with not seeing themselves in the classroom by way of fellow classmates, faculty, and curriculum. Diversifying the representation of students aids in the sense of belonging for underrepresented student groups and ultimately contributes to their academic and overall success[45]. Being deliberate in how the university fosters inclusive excellence through recruitment of students should be pursued as an institutional goal and cultural resource centers can aid in these efforts. It is important to note that simply increasing the representation of student groups is inadequate. Reflecting the cultures, histories, and values of those diverse student groups in the curriculum, in the faculty composition, and programming and support services are equally vital.[46]

Fostering Inclusive Excellence for the campus community in part means representing the diversity of the CSUN community visually throughout campus. Reflecting the beauty, genius and innovation of diverse communities on the exterior and interior of buildings can enhance campus members' sense of belonging and pride in CSUN.[47] Land acknowledgements, building names, and murals are increasingly popular ways universities are honoring, respecting and dignifying the communities they serve. CSUN should jumpstart these efforts.

Building an Equity Infrastructure

Building an equity infrastructure necessitates that the operating systems and staff at the university embody equity core values and actively employ equity in the mission of the university. Equity must be centralized and prominent in the policies, behaviors and attitudes of the university leadership, transmitted in the classroom, and featured by staff and university services. The prioritization of equity is fundamental to building and sustaining an inclusive equity infrastructure.[48] A commitment to changing the way students and employees interface with the University means being intentional about shifting from transactional encounters to holistic

[44] Burke, Mary Ann, et al. *Leveraging Resources for Student Success: How School Leaders Build Equity*. Corwin Press Inc., 2455 Teller Road, Thousand Oaks, CA 91320 (paperback: ISBN-0-7619-4546-6, $24.95; hardcover: ISBN-0-7619-4545-8, $55.95), 2003.

[45] Blackwell, James E. "Networking and mentoring: A study of cross-generational experiences of Black graduate and professional schools." *Southern Education Foundation* (1983).; DeFour, Darlene C., and Barton J. Hirsch. "The adaptation of Black graduate students: A social network approach." *American Journal of Community Psychology*, vol. 18, 1990, pp. 487-503.

[46] Pendakur, Vijay. "Designing for racial equity in student affairs: Embedding equity frames into your student success programs." *Change: The Magazine of Higher Learning* 52.2 (2020): 84-88.

[47] Hamilton, Michelle, Karen Meaney, and Melissa Martinez. "See, reflect, and act: Using equity audits to enhance student success." *Kinesiology Review* 1.aop (2020): 1-7.

[48] Association of American Colleges and Universities. "Making Excellence Inclusive." https://www.aacu.org/making-excellence-inclusive

engagement and transformational experiences. Unwedding the University from the status quo through deliberate infrastructure building is how to make equity visible throughout the University.

Vital to students learning, development, global engagement and academic success is sustained diverse learning environments where all students can excel and reach their academic and personal goals. A fortified equity infrastructure will demonstrate CSUN's commitment to being intentional in centering students' access, inclusion, and diversity in order to equitably meet the unique needs of various student populations. The section below details opportunities to advance structural equity in the University operating systems and personnel composition and addresses areas for enhancement as championed by the campus community in the identity-based resource centers research project.

Review Policies and Procedures and Implement Equitable and Inclusive Framework

Do our policies model equity & inclusion?

Examining the official and unofficial policies that govern the university operations is a necessary step for any university to transform into an equity rich and inclusive campus.[49] Inequitable policies that disenfranchise students' educational experiences and faculty and staff employment must be identified and assessed as they challenge a university's ability to inclusively serve diverse populations.[50] Policies on grade appeals, financial aid and scholarships, along with transfer credit policies should embody the universities core values. Student enrollment and disenrollment policies should also communicate an ethic of care and value for our students. Additionally, employment recruitment and retention policies should reflect the university's values of equity, justice and inclusive excellence.

Granted, universities may have hundreds of written and oral policies; however, part of the buy-in process entails charging each department or unit to conduct equity-driven assessments of the policies and practices within their units. Successful models of this approach generally start with an equity framework, which may include an evaluation rubric, to guide the assessment process.[51] This process also affords the university the opportunity to identify effective policies that should be upscaled to reach a broader audience. External consultants with expertise in building equity infrastructures should also be leveraged to aid in the framework and review process.

Diversifying the evaluation team is also important. Diverse voices are needed in the decision making process and we must be intentional about representation. As noted by the findings, this means that we don't overly tax the few minoritized faculty and staff. In some cases, this means having diverse representation from other units, especially in units or departments with limited or no diversity. These departments must also be responsible to create an equity-rich campus culture and not be dependent on those who traditionally have been taxed to do this level of work.

[49] Association of American Colleges & Universities. "Five Principles for Creating Equity by Design." https://www.aacu.org/node/12604
[50] Prystowsky, Richard J., and Anne M. Heutsche. "Facing ourselves, engaging our students: Equity-minded practices at work." *Peer Review* 19.2 (2017): 25-27.
[51] Bussey, Karen, Kim Dancy, and Mamie Voight. "Better Data, Better Outcomes: Promoting Evidence, Equity, and Student Success through the Framework for State Postsecondary Data Solutions." *Institute for Higher Education Policy* (2019).

Unfortunately, in some instances due to underrepresentation, cultural taxation may not be fully avoided. This speaks to the next step in building an equity infrastructure, diversifying the faculty and staff composition.

Increase Racial Diversity of Faculty, Staff and Administrators

How can we model *Inclusive Excellence* & advance racial equity in our employment practices?

Diverse faculty representation, especially BIPOC faculty whose population makeup is out of proportion to the student demographics, is an asset in building an inclusive equity infrastructure.[52] For instance, research documents the benefits of Black faculty on Black student academic success including GPA, graduation rates, and sense of belonging.[53] However, many Black students at CSUN reported that they rarely have opportunities to take classes with or work with Black faculty. Similarly, Latinx/a/o students communicated feelings of being disconnected in the classroom as faculty leveraged their own cultural capital which is out of line with the students' cultural experiences.

Remedying the underrepresentation of BIPOC tenure and tenure-track faculty through cluster and equity hires have been used by many campuses, including within the CSU. These types of intentional recruitment tactics assists the institution in building their infrastructure with faculty that serve diverse students and provide diverse intellectual perspectives to the campus community.[54] As an example, San Diego State University has implemented diversity initiatives with multiple cluster hires dedicated to hiring tenure-track faculty with expertise in successfully serving underrepresented students, particularly Black students; which was part of their larger goal for closing equity gaps. Other universities such as CSU Channel Island as part of their commitment to advocating for racial justice also implemented cluster hires for tenure-track faculty with a proven record of anti-racism scholarship and serving African American populations.

On August 31, 2020, CSUN put forth a Campus Action Plan for Improving Diversity, Equity and Inclusion for Black Students, Faculty and Staff, as delivered by former president Dr. Dianne Harrison. Within this plan a commitment to diversifying the faculty and staff composition was advanced. To this point, the the ten-point plan noted:

> Provide funding and an action plan to recruit, retain and promote Black faculty, staff and administrators.
>
> Secure additional funding to enhance mental health support, including, for example, counselors, therapists, advocates and social workers who can assist in helping students

[52] Stout, Rebecca, et al. "The relationship between faculty diversity and graduation rates in higher education." *Intercultural Education* 29.3 (2018): 399-417.
[53] Wilder, JeffriAnne, La'Tara Osborne-Lampkin, and E. Newton Jackson. "Rearticulating Black Faculty Diversity Efforts in the Age of 'Postracialism' and Obama." *Western Journal of Black Studies* 39.3 (2015).
[54] Llamas, Jasmín D., Khoa Nguyen, and Alisia GTT Tran. "The case for greater faculty diversity: Examining the educational impacts of student-faculty racial/ethnic match." *Race Ethnicity and Education* 24.3 (2021): 375-391.

navigate systems, while focusing on enhancing their own mental health, well-being and meeting their basic needs.

While these commitments were articulated over a year ago, the campus community has not been engaged in understanding the status of these action plans. Many individuals question CSUN's true commitment to our Black faculty, students and staff, and inquire if this was a reflection of the times given the momentum of the Black Lives Matter movement and the demand for colleges and universities to demonstrate their commitment to Black scholars; but wonder if these are yet another "set of empty promises."

CSUN has a responsibility to uphold its commitments in order to model inclusive excellence. An equity infrastructure cannot be sustained without diverse faculty, staff and administrators who are committed to advancing a high quality educational environment for diverse communities. The call for culturally competent staff and administrators in all areas of our institution, including advising, university counseling, undergraduate studies, outreach and recruitment, and financial aid were all advanced by faculty, staff and students in the identity-based resource centers research project. Students want to see themselves reflected in all levels of the University, from the classroom to the President's Cabinet. Students articulated a desire to have representatives from their communities and who share their experiences at the table when decisions are being made. Answering the call for diversifying the composition of university leadership, faculty and staff is wedded to the larger goal of modeling inclusive excellence which requires the university to be attentive to the service and learning environment provided to diverse students.[55]

Strategic Hiring of Culturally Competent Faculty that Support Black and Latinx/a/o Students, and Other Underserved Student Populations

Strategic hiring of faculty that support the academic success, identity affirmation and social and professional development of BIPOC students is well documented as a principle of inclusive excellence and equity.[56] Particular focus has centered on faculty to support Black and Latinx/a/o students academic achievements and closing equity gaps.[57] Learner-centered faculty hiring policies that prioritize the needs of underserved student populations are designed to enhance the academic community with culturally competent educators and researchers who can provide inclusive learning spaces from diverse perspectives with the goal of fostering BIPOC students academic success.[58]

As discussed in *Marginalization and Invisibility* the underrepresentation of BIPOC faculty decreases students' sense of belonging, connection to the university and students' ability to relate to the curriculum. Study participants communicated:

[55] Zaback, Katie, et al. "Serving the Equity Imperative: Intentional Action toward Greater Student Success." *Complete College America* (2016).
[56] Reed, Rodney J. "Faculty Diversity: An Educational and Moral Imperative in Search of Institutional Commitment." *Journal of Educational Equity and Leadership* 6.4 (1986): 274-94.
[57] Abdul-Raheem, Jalelah. "Faculty diversity and tenure in higher education." *Journal of Cultural Diversity* 23.2 (2016).
[58] Fries-Britt, Sharon L., et al. "Underrepresentation in the academy and the institutional climate for faculty diversity." *Journal of the Professoriate* 5.1 (2011).

> "BIPOC students must see themselves in the classroom and we must address the lack of racial diversity. We need culturally relevant and anti-racist training." (Faculty/Staff Focus Group)
>
> "We need to diversify the faculty- we need role models there are role models in the faculty- luckily I have the two advisors in – Don't see to role models in the other majors including CTVA- not even a Latino- I don't see any of my GEs that are represented as my faculty- as diverse as LA or the student population. Jesus Alvarez in the Financial Aid- cool and is not a professor- there is a connection." (Student Focus Group)
>
> "We need to have cultural relevance in the classroom and curriculum." (Faculty/Staff Focus Group)

We foster inclusive excellence in the academic learning experiences of students, by providing diverse and inclusive curriculum, pedagogies, and by increasing the racial diversity of faculty, staff and university leadership.[59] Faculty of color are also significantly impacted by the racial diversification of faculty and university administrators. Increases in the racial composition of the campus personnel results in faculty of color having greater access to mentors, a greater sense of inclusion and belonging, and cultural taxation can be reduced.[60] Faculty and leadership diversification also can have a major impact on the climate of the campus and help move universities equity initiatives and commitments forward.[61] **We recommend the development of a strategic hiring plan to provide culturally competent faculty that support Black and Latinx/a/o students, and other underserved student populations.**

Support Existing Ethnic Studies Departments & Faculty of Color

It is not surprising that at CSUN, students actively shared the importance of the CSUN Ethnic Studies departments in creating their connection to the campus, developing a sense of belonging, and cultivating mentorship relationships with faculty. These experiences create a home-away from home for many students participating in Ethnic Studies courses. Research focusing on factors that contribute to students of color success, has continuously shown that Ethnic Studies departments, including faculty and staff of color, have historically developed positive cultural connections to students, enhanced students' enthnic identity and fostered environments where students thrive and challenge and support each other.[62]

It is evident that our findings support existing research and that faculty of color, especially in Ethnic Studies departments are overworked. Cultural taxation as noted in the section *Cultural Taxation of Ethnic Studies Faculty and Departments* demonstrates the experiences of our faculty

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[59] Museus, Samuel D., Varaxy Yi, and Natasha Saelua. "The impact of culturally engaging campus environments on sense of belonging." *The Review of Higher Education* 40.2 (2017): 187-215.
[60] Quezada, Reyes L., and Angela Louque. "The absence of diversity in the academy: Faculty of color in educational administration programs." *Education* 125.2 (2004).
[61] Fries-Britt, Sharon L., et al. "Underrepresentation in the academy and the institutional climate for faculty diversity." *Journal of the Professoriate* 5.1 (2011).
[62] Anne-Marie Nunez, "Counterspaces and Connections in College Transitions: First Generation Lation Students' Perspectives on Chicano Studies," *Journal of College Student Development* 52, No 6 (2011): 639-55; Tara Yosso and Corina B. Lopez, "Counterspaces in a Hostile Place," in Culture Centers in Higher Education: Perspectives on Identity, Theory, and Practice, ed. L. D. Patton (Sterling, VA: Stylus, 2010), 83-104.

and staff of color and the taxation that these faculty members undergo in order to see our students thrive. As a student noted,

> "As a student, Chicano studies, women's studies, and Jewish studies classes helped me feel connected to campus, even though they weren't in my major. But the ethnic studies faculty were supportive of me, helped me write, encouraged me, and all my other classes were so transactional." (Student Focus Group)

We recommend that the campus reevaluates how Ethnic Studies departments are funded, assess the number of tenure and tenure track faculty in each department and hire additional faculty to meet the demand of students. As noted earlier, cluster hiring practices have shown to work at other institutions, thus, it is imperative that CSUN assesses and implements a strategy to diversify the faculty across the campus, not just in Ethnic Studies Departments. As a faculty member shared,

> "University transformation can occur through Cluster hiring. There is a cluster of faculty in Family & Consumer Sciences in Health Sciences and Psychology looking at health disparities – they are extremely successful – A model that can work if we continue to have cluster hiring on campus. They are doing amazing work together, which allowed us to have 4 Latinx faculty. We can do better."

CSUN must assess and develop a structure to diversify the faculty, support current faculty of color and fund Ethnic Studies departments to allow them to do the work they consistently do already, but struggle with limited resources.

Campus Accountability Procedures

Accountability is a frequently overlooked area when doing equity work.[63] Too often, equity is siloed and left to exist in few offices and Ethnic Studies Departments. BIPOC faculty and staff are also overburdened and experience cultural taxation as a result of carrying out the bulk of the culturally compatible services to underrepresented and minoritized students. They are also fatigued by the work of challenging the university to equitably serve its diverse populations. In order for equity to work, all stakeholders including university leadership must buy-in to the equity core values of the university and must model those values in its practices, policies, and attitudes.[64]

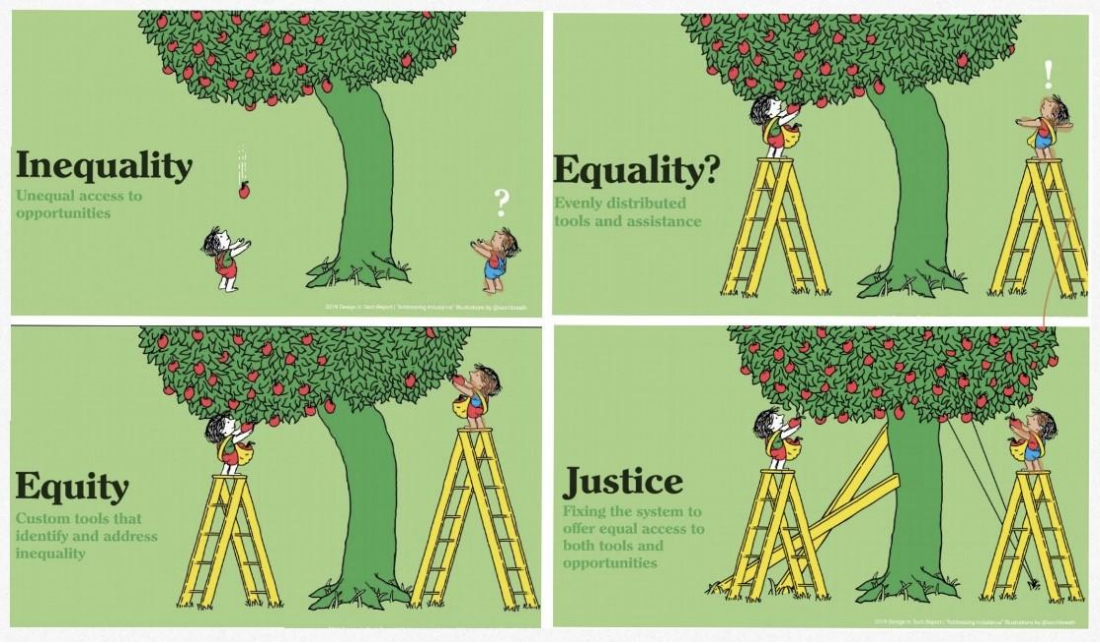
How do we hold ourselves accountable?

It is nearly impossible to hold stakeholders accountable if accountability procedures are not clearly articulated to the campus community. A void of references to equity and inclusion in the Retentio, Tenure and Promotion (RTP) process, how we define teaching excellence, job advertisements, and service/leadership evaluations communicates a lack of

[63] Chun, Edna, and Alvin Evans. "Linking diversity and accountability through accreditation Standards." *Hispanic Outlook* (2010).
[64] McNair, Tia Brown, and John Veras. "Committing to equity and inclusive excellence: Intentionality and accountability." *Peer Review* 19.2 (2017): 3.

investment and commitment to these principles.[65] Holding the university accountable to equity, justice, and inclusive excellence must be reflected in its rewards (promotions, recognitions and awards) and penalties (RTP denials, demotions, etc). Embedding equity core values and inclusion requirements in the hiring, retention, and promotion procedures is one way to promote accountability and maintain an equity infrastructure.

Campus accountability is not limited to personnel, it must also include budget and resource accountability. Aligning the university budget priorities and resource allocations equitably and with the intention of inclusively serving CSUN's diverse populations is how to demonstrate the university's commitment to equity. Funding competitions for equity initiatives are limited and contradicts what it means to operate equitably- it creates a competition to fund which project is better than the other. Equity means making sure that everyone has what is needed to succeed, and making sure we have enough resources to meet diverse needs. When paired with justice and inclusion the systemic problems are addressed so that everyone has access and are empowered. Equity work cannot exist on one-time competitive funding alone. We have to budget for and fund the resources and services needed for our diverse students, faculty and staff to thrive, not to compete for funding, but to fund strategies that result in success. Below is an image that demonstrates how justice principles align with the work we recommend, which focuses on the structure and not at the individual level.



Note: Image adopted from 2019 Design in Tech Report| Addressing Imbalance

[65] Sobel, Donna M., Sheryl V. Taylor, and Ruth E. Anderson. "Shared accountability: Encouraging diversity-responsive teaching in inclusive contexts." *Teaching Exceptional Children* 35.6 (2003): 46-54.

Data Transparency and Equity-Minded Goal Setting

Communicating a commitment to equity requires data transparency from the Office of Institutional Research. Institutional Research (IR) is consequential to an equity infrastructure as the accessibility of data and the comprehension of data reports are determined by how IR transmits data to the campus. Lack of data transparency serves as a roadblock to equity and inclusivity, and can result in faulty goals for achievement, misdirection of resources, and ill-informed curriculum and programming modifications.[66] Coupled with data transparency is data disaggregation with a racial equity-focus, the process by which data is separated into components for further analysis. For instance, institutional research references of URM and Non-URM are limited as this model aggregates multiple racial groups into two categories[67]. Yet data regarding student success outcomes by race may be more revealing and useful when working to close equity gaps. Evenstill, further disaggregation by race, Pell eligibility, First-Generation status and gender can help paint a more comprehensive picture of student academic outcomes. Institutional Research can be leveraged to advance disaggregated data with a racial-equity-focus on recruitment, enrollment, retention, course outcomes, and graduation rates; along with disaggregated data on faculty composition retention and promotion. Institutional Research can also facilitate equity-minded understanding and application of data analytics. The development of equity initiatives must also be tied to data-driven assessment. Campuswide assessment efforts can be enhanced by applying an equity framework in how we approach assessment, collect data, analyze and report results. The utility of equity within data-driven assessments are most clear as we work to close the loop, thus data transparency works to guide this process.[68] Providing routine equity training for research analysts and leadership within IR is essential for engagement in innovation with equity-informed data analytics. Thus, grounding CSUN's data practices in an equity framework will equip the university with the data-informed knowledge to equitably serve our diverse student population.[69]

Why is disaggregated data so important?

What does equitable and inclusive goals look like?

Measurements of student outcomes from an equity lens means being intentional about setting benchmarks and goals where all students have the opportunity to rise.[70] Setting institutional achievement goals below the performance of some student groups, but above others, communicates that we are not committed to equitably serving our most disproportionately impacted students. Currently CSUN has set a Graduate Initiative (GI2025) graduation goal for 6-year-graduation rates for first-time freshmen at 66%. This is below the current 2015 cohort graduation rate for Asian American (66.4%) and white (68.2%) students. When disaggregated by race, Pell status, and first-generation status, the goal is further below for our most successful

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[66] Bussey, Karen, Kim Dancy, and Mamie Voight. "Better Data, Better Outcomes: Promoting Evidence, Equity, and Student Success through the Framework for State Postsecondary Data Solutions." *Institute for Higher Education Policy* (2019).
[67] Mc, Nair, Tia Brown, Estela Mara Bensimon and Lindsey Malcom-Piqueux "From Equity Talk to Equity Walk: Expanding Practitioner Knowledge for Racial Justice in Higher Education". (2020).
[68] Hurtado, Sylvia. "Diverse Learning Environments: Assessing and Creating Conditions for Student Success Final Report to The Ford Foundation." (2013).
[69] Witham, Keith A., and Estela Mara Bensimon. "Creating a culture of inquiry around equity and student success." *Creating campus cultures*. Routledge, 2012. 56-77.
[70] Alao, Solomon, et al. "Data-driven action plans for student success and inclusive excellence." *Peer Review* 19.2 (2017): 27-28.

student, Asian not Pell and not 1st-Gen (71%, 2014 Cohort) and white Pell eligible and 1st-Gen (68.3%, 2014 Cohort). For our most disproportionately impacted students, Black Pell eligible 1st-Gen students, the 2014 Cohort graduation rate is 34.6%, which denotes a 36% equity gap. A 66% 6-year-graduation goal will not close equity gaps and will still leave Black and Latinx/a/o students behind. Disrupting inequity and racism in education entails no longer under-challenging Black and Latinx/a/o students. Building an equity infrastructure mandates equity-minded goal setting so that all of our students rise and thrive. A potential goal of 75% 6-year-graduation rate applied to our diverse student groups is how we can approach Inclusive Excellence in our goal setting (CSUN Office of Student Success).

Embed Cultural Houses and Resource Centers in the University Master Plan

What about the cultural houses?

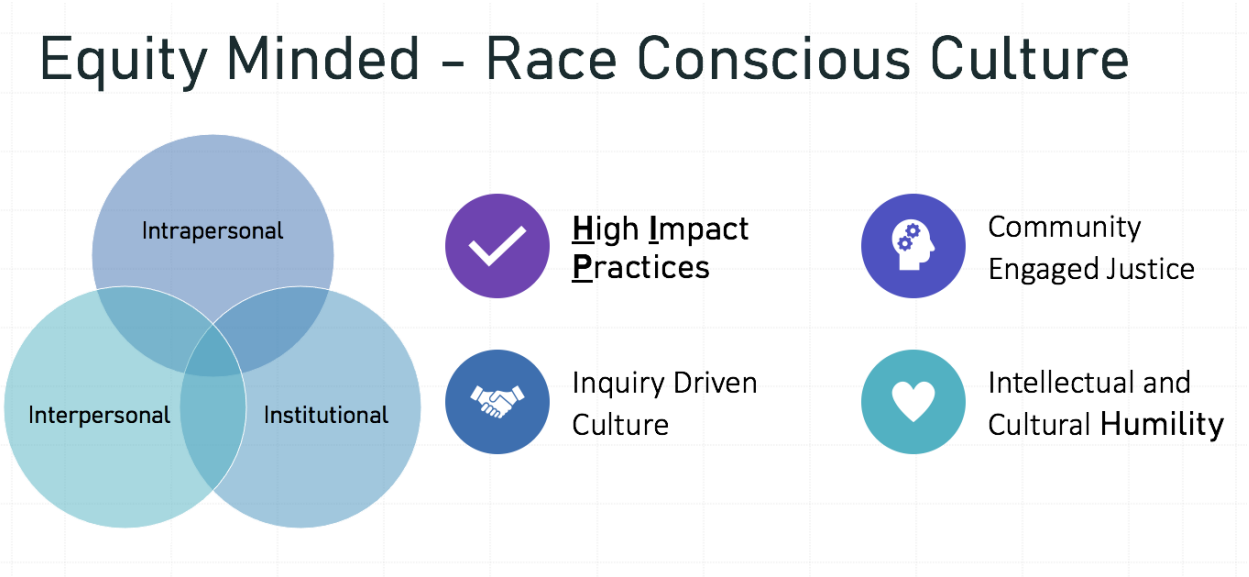
While the current CSUN cultural houses were launched as a result of the demands of the CSUN student body in the 1990s for safe cultural spaces for minoritized students, the houses have not been fully implanted into the infrastructure of the University. The campus community expressed a high commitment to the cultural houses and their permanency at the University. Supplanting the cultural houses was strongly discouraged and instead, advocacy for the intentional support through funding and staffing was advanced. This report amplifies those recommendations and is detailed in *The Absence of Infrastructure to Support Diverse Students*. **Overall, we recommend embedding the cultural houses and resource centers into the University Master Plan.**

Advancing an Equity Rich Campus Culture

The previous section highlighted steps in creating an equity infrastructure on campus, this section expounds on how to advance the work noted above by developing structures that support and promote an equity-rich campus culture that foster *Inclusive Excellence* in all parts of campus. As Williams[71] notes, if we truly are interested in making campus culture and environments equitable, we must as a campus be able to plan sustainable, long-lasting strategies to meet the demand of the twenty-first century since inclusion and equity are a moral, economic and social imperatives.

Since the creation of the CSUN Office of Student Success, Dr. Bocanegra has developed a working model of equity-minded- Race Conscious Culture which is parallel to our recommendations in these sections.

[71] Williams, D. A. (2013). *Strategic diversity leadership: Activating change and transformation in higher education.* Stylus Publishing.



(1) **Intellectual and Cultural Humility** focuses on the fact that there really isn't a checklist for culture, one cannot fully become "competent". It means having a learning mindset that distinguishes this practice.
(2) **Community Engagement** is a big part of CSUN's culture. By engaging in authentic communication, the Office of Student Success advances social **Justice** initiatives.
(3) **High Impact Practices** are at the core of a lot of CSUN initiatives: mentoring, academic support, academic first-year experiences that are inclusive of freshmen and transfer students. We must leverage these experiences to continue to evolve inclusive practices for student success.
(4) **Inquiry** from a Racial Equity lens asks questions like: Who are we not serving? Why? This is how CSUN can continue to truly Serve students effectively. It also allows the institution to create systems that have historically suppressed students.[72]

Following this level of critical consciousness as a campus, as was addressed in the previous section, will allow us to continue to advance an equity-rich campus culture. This section will discuss our recommendation to (1) Align university priorities with equity core values, (2) Shift from deficit-minded culture to asset-based culture and (3) Engage family and community members into the structure of the campus.

Align University Priorities with Equity Core Values

As President Beck notes in her 100-Day Report, and validated by this research, there is an

> …urgent need to align this [equity] work across the institution, make it more visible, and amplify our collective commitment to inclusive excellence. Many shared the need for an equity road map for the future — one that aligns this work with our core values and operationalizes our shared definitions — and ensures that equity is embedded into every operation and at every level.[73]

[72] CSUN Office of Student Success
[73] https://www.csun.edu/100-day-listening-tour-report

As an institution, we have a unique opportunity to start our road mapping planning process with a commitment to engaging all stakeholders in the visioning process- a community engaged in justice. Similar to the Equity-Centered Design Thinking framework used in this study, the users (our students, faculty, staff and administrators) should all be included in identifying the priorities for this institution in a way that is transparent with priorities that are rooted in equity principles and focused on our most marginalized students. Our priorities rooted in equity-core values must be developed with and 'Equity-Mindedness'[74] lens, calling attention to patterns of inequity in student outcomes. As an institution, we have the responsibility for the success of CSUN students, including being "race-conscious and aware of the social and historical context of exclusionary practices" on our campus.

Shift from Deficit-Thinking Culture to Asset-Based Culture

The disruption of deficit narratives can be accomplished by integrating anti-deficit (asset-based) frameworks that advances policy, research and practice to support students[75]. "Deficit thinking takes the position that minority students and families are at fault for poor academic performance because: (a) students enter school without the normative cultural knowledge and skills; and (b) parents neither value nor support their child's education. These racialized assumptions about communities of Color most often lead schools to default to the banking method of education critiqued by Paulo Freire (1973)."[76] Therefore, deficit-thinking becomes the negative, stereotypical, and prejudicial beliefs individuals hold about diverse groups[77]; it has implications that prevent faculty, staff and administrators from recognizing and acknowledging students' strengths and their contribution to our campus.

It is imperative that we utilize the assets and plethora of wealth the students bring with them to the institution as we frame our philosophy of student success through an asset-based approach. As Yosso (2005) states, we must value the aspirational, familial, linguistic, navigational, resistant and social capital students embrace and bring with them to CSUN. Based on our findings, we understand that there is a benefit in having students maintain a connection to their culture, it increases a sense of belonging, a connection to the institution and fosters an ethic of care on campus. Regardless of which CSUN college the student is part of, each classroom interaction and department conversation must allow for students to feel heard, seen and valued, that is part of creating a campus culture that believes in the success of our students.

Culturally responsive pedagogy is an asset-based approach to instruction, which acknowledges and utilizes student differences as strengths in the learning process. Research has identified that culturally responsive faculty are student-centered, focus on eliminating barriers for students to

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[74] https://cue.usc.edu/equity/equity-mindedness/

[75] Pérez, D., II, Garcia-Louis, C., Arámbula Ballysingh, T., & Martínez Jr., E. (2018). Advancing an anti-deficit achievement framework for Latinx/a/o college students. In A.E. Batista, S.M. Collado & D.P. Pérez II (Eds.), *Latinx/a/os in higher education: Exploring identity, pathways & Success.* (117-136). Washington, DC: NASPA- Student Affairs Administrators in Higher Education

[76] Yosso, T. J. (2005). Whose culture has capital? A critical race theory discussion of community cultural wealth. *Race Ethnicity and Education, 8,* 69-91. doi:10.1080/1361332052000341006

[77] Ford, D.Y., Moore, J.L., Whiting, G.W. (2006). Eliminating deficit orientations: Creating classrooms and curricula for gifted students from diverse cultural backgrounds. In M. G. Constantine & D. W. Sue (Eds.), *Addressing racism: Facilitating cultural competence in mental health and educational settings* (pp. 173-193). Hoboken, NJ: Wiley

succeed and provide equitable learning opportunities for culturally diverse students to maximize their capacity and potential. We can develop this type of culture by cultivating practices of care across campus; training must be part of this new framework which will be discussed in a later section. Lastly, faculty, staff and administrators alike must practice Cultural Humility and understand the diversity and intersectionality of our students.

Engage Family & Community Members into Campus Structure

"Ensure there is community involved and family interaction, babies through older adults. You need family interactions, authentic involvement in the community, families must be part of it, Cultural Centers can empower families – this campus belongs to the people yet our people don't feel welcomed here." (Faculty/Staff/Administrator Focus Group)

As noted earlier, one of the assets many BIPOC individuals possess when attending higher education institutions is their connection to their family. Although many first-generation students do not receive college advice from parents, they see the family structure as an asset in wanting to excel academically on campus. Various studies[78] have found that students of minoritized communities (racial and ethnic groups) are raised in collectivist cultures, embracing family and having familial ties is of utmost importance. This can be seen at CSUN; students, faculty and staff shared loudly the importance of embracing the family structure, honoring their native language and creating a community where students can share their own academic environment without feeling judged or concerned about a campus visitation policy hindering the ability for family members to visit campus with our students.

Equally as important are Parent Scholar participants who highlighted the need for making CSUN a family friendly campus, one that welcomes children at programs, that fosters an opportunity for students to learn, while also raising a family. CSUN's undergraduate student average age is 22.9 and the average Graduate Student Age is 30.6[79]. Over 50% of our student survey participants were older than 24 years old, with the majority, sharing that they were older than 30 years of age, making our student demographic skewed to an older non-traditional student body. As such, it is **recommended that CSUN embrace the family by increasing family programming, opportunities for family engagement, embrace native languages, revise policies and practices that impact the engagement of students and their children and develop a Parent Scholars Area which will be discussed later in this report.**

[78] Rhee, E., Uleman, J. S., & Lee, H. K. (1996). Variations in collectivism and individualism by ingroup and culture: Confirmatory factor analyses. Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 71, 1037-1054.; Gaines, S. O., Marelich, W. D., Bledsoe, K. L., Steers, W. N., Henderson, M. C., Granrose, C. S., Barajas, L., Hicks, D., Lyde, M., Takahashi, Y., Yum, N., Rios, D. L., Garcia, B. F., Farris, K. R., & Page, M. S. (1997). Links between race/ethnicity and cultural values as mediated by racial/ethnic identity and moderated by gender. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 72*, 1460-1476.

[79] https://www.csun.edu/sites/default/files/profile_2021_0.pdf

CENTERS RECOMMENDATIONS: ANSWERING THE CALL TO ACTION

Our research findings identified the need to develop identity-based resource centers that are centrally located, equitably resourced, sustainable and embedded into the culture of the institution. This section provides a detailed roadmap with our recommendation to develop a series of identity-based resource centers that are centrally located on campus. The first priority is to develop a cluster of ethnic identity-based resource centers. The second priority is the creation of The Thrive Center; a center dedicated to supporting non-traditional students. These identity-based resource centers are intended to support students in developing a sense of belonging on campus, embrace their identity, celebrate their culture, build community, connect with campus resources and develop academic self-efficacy.

Priority 1

Equitable Ethnic Identity-Based Resource Centers Development & Sustainability

Establishment of Mission and Vision Rooted in Equity, Social Justice, Identity Affirmation and Student Success

Campus diversity is continuously growing among student populations; yet higher education has not seen the same investment in providing Black, Indigenous, and Latinx/a/o students with a culturally inclusive educational environment. Between 2010 and 2018, Black college student enrollment increased from 31% to 37% and Latinx/a/o college student enrollment increased from 22% to 36%[80]. Although colleges and universities are benefiting from these growing diverse student groups, they have lagged in providing resources, curriculum, and professors that reflect their experiences and worldviews that represent them culturally.

Identity-based cultural centers have served as a bridge to inequalities faced by Black, Latinx/a/o, Asian, Pacific Islander, and American Indian students on college campuses across the nation. This has led to an increased need for cultural centers and research suggests that the centers help recruit, retain and graduate the student groups they serve[81]. Cultural centers are also noted for increasing students' sense of belonging to their campus community, improving campus climate, and providing academic, professional and social support[82].

Birthed out of the Black Student Movement of the 1960s, Black Resource Centers were formed to address the lack of Black students' cultures being recognized, respected and integrated into the fabric of higher education. The gains of this movement gave rise to identity-based resource centers on college campuses nationally, however not without contention[83]. Today, many

[80] Hussar, B., Zhang, J., Hein, S., Wang, K., Roberts, A., Cui, J., Smith, M., Bullock Mann, F., Barmer, A., and Dilig, R. (2020). The Condition of Education 2020 (NCES 2020-144). U.S. Department of Education. Washington, DC: National Center for Education Statistics. Retrieved [date] from https://nces.ed.gov/pubsearch/pubsinfo. asp?pubid=2020144.

[81] Hefner, D. (2002). Black cultural centers: Standing on shaky ground? *Diverse Issues in Higher Education*, *18*(26), 22.

[82] Patton, L. D. (2010). *Culture Centers in Higher Education: Perspectives on Identity, Theory, and Practice*. Stylus Publishing, LLC. PO Box 605, Herndon, VA 20172-0605.

[83] Patton, L. D. (2006). The voice of reason: A qualitative examination of Black student perceptions of Black culture centers. *Journal of College Student Development*, *47*(6), 628-646.

campuses are forced to restructure their universities' to be more equitable and inclusive and the question of the role of identity-based centers takes center stage.

Examining the significance of cultural centers on student success, researchers have found that cultural centers aid in identity affirmation, cultural pride, academic achievement, and enhances the educational environment for the entire campus and surrounding community. In terms of identity affirmation, scholars argue that racial socialization is a key aspect of identity development that can result in cultural pride along with the development of coping mechanisms that aid individuals in identifying, negotiating and addressing racist experiences.[84]

Racial identity development scholarship suggests that Afrocentric values are positively related to favorable Black racial identity attitudes. For Black students in particular, positive affirmation of their Africanness in educational settings increases their self-esteem and academic performance.[85] Spencer, Noll, Stolzfus, and Harpalani (2001)[86] reported that African American students demonstrated higher self-esteem and academic achievement goals in connection with more advanced racial identity attitudes. Akbar, Chambers, and Thompson (2001)[87] reported that Afrocentric values and self-esteem were positively correlated in Black female adolescents, and many researchers have identified self-esteem as a protective or resilience factor against the development of problematic behaviors and negative mental health outcomes in Black adolescents.

Addressing the need for minoritized students to have a greater sense of belonging, a safe haven, and space that counters the racialized experiences students encounter on campus, identity-based resource centers operate campus counter spaces to build community[88]. Examining the cultural needs of Asian American college students, scholars suggest that these centers provide a haven for celebration, resistance and activism, and academic achievement[89]. Such cultural centers are a symbol of visibility, affirmation, and activism to address the unique challenges faced by BIPOC.

In terms of academic achievement, identity-based cultural centers have been argued to best meet the needs of underrepresented and underserved student groups. For African American students, Black resource centers have been found to positively contribute to Black student retention and academic success[90]. Asian American students' involvement in cultural centers have been

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[84] Stevenson, H. C., Reed, J., & Bodison, P. (1996). Kinship social support and adolescent racial socialization beliefs: Extending the self to family. *Journal of Black Psychology*, *22*(4), 498-508.

[85] Comer, J. P. (1985). Empowering Black children's educational environments. *Black children: Social, educational, and parental environments*, 123-138.

Cunningham, R. T., & Boykin, A. W. (2004). Enhancing cognitive performance in African American children: Infusing afro-cultural perspectives and research. *Black Psychology: Fourth Edition. Hampton, VA: Cobb and Henry Publishers*.

Harris, Y. R., & Graham, J. A. (2014). *The African American child: development and challenges*. Springer Publishing Company.

[86] Spencer, M., Noll, E., Stoltzfus, J., & Harpalani, V. (2001). Identity and school adjustment: Revisiting the "Acting White" assumption. *Educational Psychologist*, 36(1), 21-30.

[87] Akbar, M., Chambers, J.W. Jr., & Thompson, V. L. S. (2001). Racial identity, Africentric values, and self-esteem in Jamaican children. *Journal of Black Psychology*, 27(3), 341-58.

[88] Yosso, T., & Lopez, C. B. (2010). Counterspaces in a hostile place. *Culture centers in higher education: Perspectives on identity, theory, and practice*, 83-105.

[89] Liu, W. M., Cuyjet, M. J., & Lee, S. (2010). Asian American student involvement in Asian American culture centers. *Culture centers in higher education: Perspectives on identity, theory, and practice*, 26-45.

[90] Princes, C. D. (1994). The Precarious Question of Black Cultural Centers Versus Multicultural Centers.

reported as resulting in high academic achievement and success. While multi-cultural centers offer an opportunity for intercultural exchange, intentional dedicated investments must be made to provide ethnic identity-based centers that meet the needs of each individual population.

Affirming and Empowering Educational Spaces-Cultural Centers

Affirming spaces that empower the experiences of students, support their own cultural identity, and celebrate their uniqueness, creates a campus culture of care. As noted in our findings, ethnic identity-based resource centers that are centrally located, equitably funded and institutionally supported can serve to enhance the experience of students on campus. These spaces must be embedded into the fabric of the institution, supported by the campus community and serve to enhance the student experience, with an ultimate focus on student success. Identity-based resource centers, provide "social and psychological support for students of color…[and] serve as an important educational corrective;"[91] **It is our recommendation as Priority 1, that CSUN creates a cluster of centrally located ethnic identity-based resource centers as an intervention and strategy for improving the campus climate, increasing a sense of belonging and developing equity centers in the institutional environment.** As noted by a student in a survey response,

> Identity-based resource centers will promote student wellbeing, decrease stress and anxiety associated with navigating resources, student empowerment (feeling of having more control over my education), increase sense of belonging, and decrease of potential discrimination caused by faculty, staff, or other members of the CSUN community (broader knowledge of the Title IX federal law, specifically relating to expecting and parenting students).

We recommend that the following Ethnic Identity-Resource Centers are created:

1. Black & African Diaspora Resource Center
2. Latinx/a/o Resource Center
3. Native Resource Center
4. Asian, Pacific Islander & Desi American (APIDA) Resource Center
5. Southwest Asia & North Africa (SWANA) Resource Center

Additional Recommendations in Priority I:

6. Project Rebound Center (Center for formerly incarcerated students and support for students who have been negatively impacted by the criminal justice system)
7. A Prayer, Reflection & Meditation Space

The names listed above are a placeholder to identify the pockets of the community they can serve. As noted by several off-campus colleagues, the name of the resource center should be determined by the campus community who will benefit from the resources. While services for Latinx/a/o and Black/African American students were catalysts for developing social and academic services on college campuses to improve their retention and graduation, campuses

[91] Patton, L. D. (Ed.). (2010). *Culture centers in higher education: Perspectives on identity, theory, and practice*. Sterling, VA: Stylus.

have begun to implement services for other identity groups and marginalized communities.[92] These identity-based spaces can cultivate a sense of belonging. As referenced in a faculty/staff/administrator focus group, **"Create a space that allows for identities to be fluid…Strategically we move in a certain direction to develop a space of belonging…after 37 years, I don't feel like I belong".**

Black & African Diaspora Resource Center

In Fall 2021, CSUN was home to 1,766 (4.6%) African American/Black students. As noted in "What are the Equity Gaps" section earlier in this report, for the Fall 2019 cohort, African American/Black first-time freshmen students' retention rates were the lowest of all racial groups at 75%. By Fall 2021, an additional 13% were no longer enrolled, therefore 38% of African American/Black students were no longer enrolled at CSUN. When comparing racial equity gaps, Black Pell-eligible, first-generation students had the largest equity gap of any other racial group at 36%. These numbers are staggering, however there is an opportunity to continue to positively impact the retention and graduation of African American/Black students. For example, for the 2016 cohort, there are 46 Black/African American students that can graduate by Spring/Summer 2022 within 6-years. For the incoming cohort of 2017 there are 109 Black/African American students to support in order to graduate by Spring/Summer 2023 (CSUN Counts Student Success Dashboard). As an example, the creation of the *Black & African Diaspora Resource Center* can intentionally and strategically work with these students through targeted advising to support the retention and graduation of African American/Black students and close equity gaps.

As part of the student survey, 55% of Black students did not agree that their identity was welcomed at CSUN. Additional information collected through focus groups, student organizational meetings and department meetings, support our recommendation to develop a Black & African Diaspora Resource Center that can help build community, connect to campus resources, and support the student experience:

> "Focus on the Black Community – make sure we are "Thinking about the Black Community" – Focus should be on retaining, recruiting as well as developing a sense of belonging for students and also for faculty & Staff." (Ethnic Studies Department Meeting)
>
> "As an older queer Black women I need a place to be able to be around my folk and them being comfortable being themself, I believe that we need the spaces to be ourselves." (Student Focus Group)
>
> Create the Institute on Equity and Black Culture and Experience - Part of the Ten Point Plan". (Staff/Faculty/Admin Focus Group)
>
> "Build a dedicated resource center for Black students to address and close equity gaps." (Faculty/Staff/Admin Focus Group)

[92] Council for the Advancement of Standards in Higher Education. (2019). CAS professional standards for higher education (10th Ed.).

Various resources and services that could be operated out of a *Black & African Diaspora Resource Center* were identified by our students, faculty and staff during the focus groups:

> "The Black Student Resource Center space needs to come with the real estate of the Black House – provide the support for the black house in order to meet all the needs – Black House could become a satellite"- (Staff Meeting)

> "Multi-tiered- CSUN' Community, San Fernando Valley Community & Industry. (External – industry & connection to off-campus resources) -Engage Black alumni – mentorship that can come back – Supporting & creating pipeline". (Ethnic Studies Department)

> "There should be multiple sections like one to be a library, a healing circle room, counseling, a spot for guest speakers like Black entrepreneurs or Black successful people, scholarship opportunities for Black students." (Student Focus Group)

> "Black mental health groups, resources for those with depression and anxiety, resources that teach about autism and ADHD for groups that feel left out and offering resources that make them feel more included." (Student Focus Group)

> "I was happy to have a Black counselor because that was important to me. I liked that because I didn't have to explain my Blackness and get someone to understand what it's like being Black, they already understand so I was able to focus on my actual needs without having someone to understand my cultural experiences that affect my mental health. Being an Africana Studies major gave me a sense of belonging in the department but I want to be around older Black students who know what it's about to pay a mortgage, run a family, run your own business, and still maintain your grades" (Student Focus Group).

> "Seeing Black academic advisors that specifically work with black students who are on the verge of academic probation or on the verge of dropping out would be helpful." (Student Organization Meeting)

> "Targeted enrollment of Black students and enhanced outreach and recruitment" (Staff/Faculty/Admin Focus Group)

A Black & African Diaspora Resource Center that is centrally located:

> "We need more Black resource centers on campus, we have the Black House but you have to leave the campus for that, something that is near Sierra Hall because a lot of Africana Studies classes are in that hall. Having a place where you can get out of class and don't have to go far to access that resource center" (Student Focus Group)

"Sierra Hall or the Oviatt Library or even closer to Bayramian Hall because when you walk out of class it's right there for you since most Black students are in that area already taking classes" (Student Focus Group)

"Black/African American resource and support center; central to campus in the USU. I know we have the Black House but I don't have time to go all the way there." (Student Focus Group)

"The Black House is there but not centralized and is in the back of campus." (Student Organization Meeting)

"Having a safe space for Black students to be on campus, considering there's a lot of commuters who may not be in the dorms. Most students get together in the dorms, but we don't recognize those who don't live on campus. Having a safe space for students that is centralized on campus, so you don't have to go off campus or live in student housing." (Student Organization Meeting)

"Centralized space that is safe for Black students." (Student Organization Meeting)

"Space in the USU that caters to Black students. Not everything being so general." (Student Organization Meeting)

"USU, near Sierra Hall, near Africana studies." (Student Organization Meeting)

"One student said in place in the USU." (Student Organization Meeting)

"Somewhere near Sierra Hall since that's where 'little crenshaw' meets together." (Student Organization Meeting)

Over the Summer of 2021, the CSUN Analytics Team (Equity Action Outcomes) presented their data analysis on the impact CSUN has on Black students. Their research findings, to no surprise, are in alignment with this report. They recommended the creation of a *Black Resource Center* that is centrally located and multifaceted. During our conversation with the group, they shared the following, "When you think about the Black Resource Center, think about the statement *Where Black Lives do Matter* – The center will truly impact recruitment- advising- academic support – graduation and retention- *This is where Black Lives Matter.*"

After informal interviews with two Black Cultural Centers, it is evident that these spaces create community for students. These spaces not only provide a physical atmosphere where students can build community, they serve as a "home away from home", consistent with previous literature on Black Cultural Centers.[93] A Black Cultural Center, can provide students with a brave space on campus, promote student success through positive ethnic identity development, cultural validation, academic confidence nurturing, and leadership development, all of which are

[93] Patton, L. D. (2006). The voice of reason: A qualitative examination of Black student perceptions of Black culture centers. Journal of College Student Development, 47(6), 628-646. doi: 10.1353/csd.2006.0068

positively associated with academic self-concept and performance[94], contributing to student success. In the next section, we will include a recommendation on the infrastructure needed to successfully implement the Black & African Diaspora Center in collaboration with the Black House. This model will serve as a foundational structure for the other ethnic identity-based resource centers and the respective houses they will collaborate with.

Other Campus Models

UC San Diego Black Resource Center

San Diego State University Black Resource Center

UC Los Angeles Black Bruin Resource Center

Latinx/a/o Resource Center

California State University, Northridge is designated as a Hispanic-Serving Institution, with Latinx/a/o representing 55.2% of our student population. For the 2014 cohort, Latinx/a/o, first-generation, Pell eligible students had a graduation rate of (50.9%), a 13.3% equity gap compared to their white, Pell eligible and first-generation peers. Disaggregating this further, similar to African American/Black male students, Latino males had an equity gap of 22.3% compared to the same demographic (white, Pell eligible and first-generation students). Latino males regardless of Pell eligibility or first-generation status still hold the second largest equity gap compared to their peers with the same demographic characteristics. Not only is this equity gap evident at CSUN, "we must make a collective, statewide commitment to eliminating the growing equity gap that threatens California's Latina/o population."[95]

As noted throughout this report, there are many factors that contribute to Latinx/a/o student success, including cultural congruence, faculty/staff representation, lack of sense of belonging among others. Thus, cultivating a sense of belonging on campus is a critical component to retention and graduation of Latinx/a/o students.[96] As part of the student survey, when asked if their culture was represented in campus programming, 16% of Latinx/a/o students disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement and an additional 33% were undecided. The creation of a Latinx/a/o Resource Center could support the successful retention and graduation of students.

The importance of creating a Latinx/a/o Resource Center is seen below:

> "Something definitely for the Hispanic and latin students where everyone can come together and offer support to each other knowing how similar our parents might be. It can be hard to get support from them because they do not understand" (Student Survey)

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[94] Patton, L. D. (Ed.). (2012). *Culture centers in higher education: Perspectives on identity, theory, and practice*. Sterling, VA: Stylus.

[95] Pérez Huber, L., Vélez, V.N., & Solórzano, D.G. (2014, October) The growing educational equity gap for California's Latina/o students. *Latino Policy & Issues Brief*. Number 29. Retrieved from https://www.chicano.ucla.edu/files/PB_29.pdf

[96] Hurtado, S., & Carter, D. F. (1997). Effects of college transition and perceptions of the campus racial climate on Latino college students' sense of belonging. *Sociology of Education, 70*(4), 324–345. https://doi.org/10.2307/2673270

> "More Latino x centers and people who work there to be more supportive." (Student Survey)

Possible programs and services that could be offered by a Latinx/a/o Resource Center as shared by CSUN faculty, staff and students:

> "If the culturally relevant resources had student led venting and celebratory spaces, I think that would help encourage me during my toughest days." (Student survey)

> "Culturally I am a Latina woman, and while csun does have Chicano studies courses, it seems to focus more on Mexico. I appreciate the classes but would like to hear more about the other smaller countries in Central America." (Student Survey)

> "If we have a center that is focused on ethnic identity development. Students will feel supported, students will feel welcomed and growing and loving themselves." (Department Meeting)

> "Counseling. I feel that many ethnic and racial minorities need counselors who understand/know the struggles of being a member of certain racial and ethnic groups. A Hispanic/Latinx counselor may be able to relate in some cultural aspects, but will not be able to grasp the full effects that microaggressions have on black/AA students mental and physical health. So representation is key." (Student Survey)

> "Murals in Chicano Studies folks really enjoy – in Mexican history, murals have history-communities use murals to beautify to be political – murals in space throughout campus – not just the centers." (Department Meeting)

> "I would be interested in Black or Latine specific wellness resource centers." (Student Survey)

> "As faculty we're spread really really thin, so we could really use a resource center. As long as ethnic studies faculty are consulted for programming, it should be a collaborative project." (Department Meeting)

> "I would like to see an Academic Coaching model that is built into identity based resource centers, and robust programming and services provided within the identity based resource centers (such as available in-house therapists, support groups, etc.)." (Faculty/Staff/Administrator Focus Group)

It was also shared that the Latinx/a/o Resource Center should engage families and community members,

> "Cultural Center can empower families – this campus belongs to the people yet our people don't feel welcomed here. Make it real and not just temporary, not once a year

> program. Not just a cultural center that's physically on campus, the center has to be cool and provide meaningful interactions, collaboration and we are supporting each other in our shared struggles and they feel comfortable and want to be a part." (Department Meeting)
>
> "Events to appreciate the history of the San Fernando Valley, small town Mexico culture, appreciate uniquely Mexican artists. Basically, I feel this school needs culture, and knowledge of the past culture relevance brings awareness, community, and respect of other identities of culture." (Student Survey)

The intersectionality of the Latinx/a/o culture and students identities should be embraced:

> "Information for like support groups within those areas, like a queer latina/o/x area, or somewhere to point in the right direction." (Student Survey)
>
> "Instead of making most resources chicano/a related maybe just keep it general to Latino/a or if diversity is wanted then include Central Americans and islanders too." (Student Survey)
>
> "Also have programs that focus on South America." (Student Survey)

Off-campus Latinx/a/o Resource Centers shared the importance of embracing the diaspora of the Latinx/a/o community and not focus services for one particular group, which is also reflected in our campus' findings. The Latinx/a/o Resource Center has the commitment to developing students' holistically by embracing all parts of a student identity, their learning experiences and cultivating community outreach and social justice advocacy[97].

Other Campus Models

San Diego State University Latinx Resource Center

CSU Los Angeles Chicana/o Latina/o Student Resource Center

CSU Fullerton Latinx Community Resource Center

Native Resource Center

Native students are one of the most underrepresented student groups in higher education institutions in the United States. At CSUN, Native students represent .1% of the student body, which accounts for 37 students. It is estimated that the number of Native students on campus might be higher due to some identifying as biracial/multiracial students. As an institution that sits on the native land of the Fernandeño Tataviam Band of Mission Indians, CSUN has made a

[97] Lozano, A. (2010). Latina/o culture centers: Providing a sense of belonging and promoting student success. In L.D. Patton (Ed). *Culture centers in higher education: Perspectives on identity, theory and practice*. (pp.3-25). Stylus Publishing, LLC.

commitment to acknowledge the land on which we reside by publicly sharing the following statement:

> CSUN recognizes and acknowledges the Sesevitam, the first people of this ancestral and unceded territory of Sesevenga that is now occupied by our institution; and it honors their elders, past and present, and the Sesevitam descendants who are citizens of the Fernandeño Tataviam Band of Mission Indians. We recognize that the Sesevitam are still here and it is committed to lifting up their stories, culture, and community.

According to the US Census[98].7% of the Los Angeles County population identify as American Indian (Native) and Alaska Native, accounting for over 160,000 people. 77.5% of Native individuals over the age of 25 have at least a high school degree. There is an opportunity to continue engaging local tribes, including the Fernandeño Tataviam Band of Mission Indians to develop more than just providing acknowledgement. As noted by a student, "We should acknowledge where we are by more than just land acknowledgment, we must have art, and name the library building after Tataviam"(Student Focus Group). The institution has created partnerships over the last couple of years to build our relationships with the Fernandeño Tataviam Band of Mission Indians; a cultural center dedicated to advancing the native community can enhance our current relationship with local tribes.

As an example, a student in a focus group shared

> "A resource center that reaches out to the community and bridges the gap between the university and the community is needed. There are community colleges and high schools around us that we can use to bring students together and on campus. Support and managing programs that assist out of town native students who want to be involved with the community but don't know who is in that community. At San Diego State University, these are things that their resource center does for their students. For the homeless resource center, I believe that we have some resources for that, but we need to put it all together rather than having many similar programs of that sort in different locations."

Students must see themselves represented on campus and acknowledge that they do belong on campus,

> "No true sign of native people on the campus – signage is important. How do we embrace the cultural diversity of students? There should be more acknowledgement of native people across campus." (Staff meeting)

A student expressed cultural taxation, which can be experienced when underrepresentation occurs,

> "My experience overall has been good but at times it is frustrating, discouraging and at other times encouraging. I value how the staff and faculty want to support but he sees

[98] https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/losangelescitycalifornia

> how it can be overwhelming for them because they might not have the training to deal with so much. Much of the stuff that is needed or expected by students are things that other campuses hire people to do, especially outreach programs for native students." (Student Focus Group)

Various students shared their desire to see more Native student support,

> "I would like to see some sort of native or indigenous resource center for students for outreach programs. Paying someone to work this position and cater specifically to the needs of those students." (Student Focus Group)

> "Diverse professors and staff that aren't only involved in the ethnic studies departments. MORE ART. ACCESS TO BUILDINGS LIKE THE SORAYA, MORE WINDOWS, collaborative space; resources for cultural events on & off campus, especially for out of town students. mentorships; something collaborative with tribal nations such as the Tataviam, Tongva, Chumash. OUTREACH WITH THE COMMUNITY AND EXTENDED, outreach with community colleges and high schools, "work stuff for campus" so students could enjoy and study hard on campus." (Student Survey)

> "An American Indian involvement/resource center." (Student Survey)

> "recruitment/outreach of Native students, land acknowledgments, renaming meeting rooms &/or other spaces after the Tataviam/Tongva villages and using our language around campus." (Student Survey)

CSUN has an opportunity to build and strengthen connections with our local native tribes to continue providing support and an opportunity for an education. As noted by the students, a Native Resource Center can assist with the recruitment and retention of students, by creating rapport with the community. At San Diego State University, the campus implemented a SDSU Tribal Liaison and it's resource center outreaches to the local tribes. At Oregon State University, their Native Center also works directly with the community tribal leaders to support a pipeline to the institution. There is an opportunity to leverage the American Indian Studies department, our local native tribes and our students to cultivate a college-going culture and an institution that truly fosters and acknowledges the sacrifices of our native and indigenous community.

Other Campus Models

San Diego State University Native Resource Center

UC Davis Native American Student Success Center

Oregon State University Kaku-Ixt Mana Ina Haws Center

Asian, Pacific Islander & Desi American (APIDA) Center

Currently 3,590 Asian American and Pacific Islander students attend CSUN, accounting for roughly 9% of the student population (CSUN Counts, Characteristics of All Students). Due to the decreased enrollment of APIDA students, CSUN is no longer an Asian American and Native American Pacific Islander Institution (AANAPISI). In discussing the importance of an APIDA Center with faculty, staff and students, it was evident the importance of ensuring that CSUN recruit APIDA students and reclaim CSUN's designation as AANAPISI; an APIDA Center can assist with this outcome, we will come back to this point later.

The 6-year graduation rate for CSUN Asian American students is 66.33% (2014 Cohort) which is slightly above the 66% GI2025 6-year graduation goal for first-time freshmen. In 2010, around 171 students attending CSUN identified as Pacific Islander students, however Pacific Islander student enrollment has significantly declined. Now Pacific Islander students represent less than 1% of the student body (n=52). The first-time freshman 6-year graduation rate for Pacific Islander students is 50% (2014 cohort, n=10), which is a decline from the 2012 cohort 6-year graduation rate of 87.5% (n=8) and 2013 graduation rate of 66.67% (n=12). Several factors may be contributing to the decline in enrollment and graduation rates for Pacific Islander students. For Asian, Pacific Islander and Desi American students, lack of sense of belonging and experiences of discrimination are often noted as barriers to academic retention and success.

Museus (2008)[99] found that African American and Asian American students who participated in ethnic student organizations exhibited increased cultural identity and expression through cultural education and advocacy. Lui, Cuyjet and Lee found that resource center spaces dedicated to the resistance and activism of marginalized communities and supporting the academic achievement of students, specifically Asian American students, provide affirmation, celebration and visibility of disenfranchised communities.[100]

Supporting Asian, Pacific Islander and Desi American students with resources that aid them in challenging inequities, discrimination and injustice is tied to educational equity and can empower students, faculty and staff to advance equity and inclusion on campus and in the larger society. Although CSUN is not an AANAPISI institution, we recommend that we actively support the recruitment and retention of students, thus practicing an equity-minded framework and fostering Inclusive Excellence. As Buenavista[101] notes, "the success of AANAPISIs is predicated on an active resistance against color evasiveness that characterize equality efforts in higher education." Buenavista also notes that successful AANAPISI institutions develop an intentional pipeline of Pacific Islander professionals, focus on identity-based programs across all disciplines and elevate ethnic studies departments, as well as other minority-serving programs to maximize student success. Thus, our recommendation to create an APIDA Resource Center is in alignment with how CSUN can develop a culture of care supporting APIDA students.

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[99] Museus, S. D. (2008). The role of ethnic student organizations in fostering African American and Asian American students' cultural adjustment and membership at predominantly White institutions. *Journal of College Student Development, 49*(6), 568-586. doi: 10.1353.csd.0.0039

[100] Liu, W. M., Cuyjet, M. J., & Lee, S. (2010). Asian American student involvement in Asian American culture centers. Culture centers in higher education: Perspectives on identity, theory, and practice, 26-45.

[101] Buenavista, T. L. (2021). AANAPISIs as Sites for Community-Responsive Approaches to Education. *About Campus* - March - April.

APIDA centers build on the academic curriculum, programming and services designed to enrich the educational experiences and opportunities for Asian, Pacific Islander and Desi American students. APIDA student resources provide advocacy programming along with educational, social and cultural supports that champion equity and justice for Asian, Pacific Islander and Desi American communities. Additionally, APIDA centers have been used to cultivate community among faculty and staff and served as a hub for faculty and student engagement, mentorship and research activities.

Participants in the research study advanced the needs and benefits of an APIDA center as central to Asian, Pacific Islander and Desi American students' sense of belonging and academic success.

> "For APIDA students, APIDA cultural organizations – didn't have the support and they are no longer functional. With an APIDA center- who actually serve the population won't have to stress to look how to recruit. They don't have to carve a space in the library, in the USU to hang out, have their meetings, to meet people. An APIDA to have a centralized hub, don't have the resources to build a committee- need to create an APIDA committee – don't have the commitment it's too much. Peer tutoring, advise, class advise, mentoring." (Student Focus Group)

> "This center could be a place to connect with the other groups – collaborative work and a desire to work together and collaboratively. Want independence but be close to each other to have the opportunity to collaborate when needed." (Faculty/Staff Focus Groups)

> "Need to focus on APIDA transfer students. At UCLA the Pillipino transfer student and allies to find community – what does it mean to be a transfer student to be a student. Samahan UCLA recruits around LA to support the path to student and apply." (Student Focus Group)

Awareness and advocacy for resistance against discrimination and anti-Asian hate was also articulated as essential service that an APIDA center could provide.

> "An APIDA Center should be for faculty/staff/students- all faculty are aware of student issues. API affinity group. Strengthen faculty and staff." (Faculty/Staff Focus Group)

> "The APIDA Center could do the following: Focus on Urgency – Anti-Asian Hate that brought visibility when nobody was paying attention. The Center can focus on Asian American faculty and student retention and success." (Faculty/Staff/Admin Focus Group)

Communicating care for the needs of students and appreciation for the service of faculty was also expressed.

> "The APIDA Center would provide visibility to the invisible labor that faculty and staff do that is focused on students and student success, our message is that CSUN cares about you." (Faculty/Staff/Admin Focus Group)

> "People who are needing support services, we need to figure out how we can support APIDA students' emergency needs." (Student Focus Group)

APIDA centers not only foster an increased sense of belonging for Asian, Pacific Islander and Desi American students, these centers also address issues and challenges of racism and anti-Asian hate faced by students, their families and local communities. APIDA centers are often leveraged on college campuses to provide a safe and inclusive space for students as they collectively work on dismantling systems of racism and bias. CSUN students, faculty and staff in this study expressed high advocacy for the investment in a cultural resource center dedicated to servicing Asian, Pacific Islander and Desi American students, faculty and staff.

Other Campus Models

Sacramento State University APIDA Center

San Diego State University APIDA Center

CSU Los Angeles LAAsian Pacific Islander Resource Center

Southwest Asian North African (SWANA) Resource Center

Currently, the CSUN Counts Dashboard does not display data on ethnicity groups who identify as Southwest Asian and North African (SWANA). In fact, ethnic identity categories for these groups of students were absent until this year's cycle for the Cal State Apply application. Instead, students who select white, can then specify if they are Middle Eastern or North African. In Spring 2020 Southwest Asian and North African students lobbied to the California State Student Association (CSSA) to advocate to the CSU to include SWANA identity categories on the Cal State Apply application, as many feel invisible and forced to select white as their ethnic identity. Effective for the Fall 2022 cohort, the California State University will include ethnic categories for SWANA identifying students.

It is estimated, based on CSUN's Institutional Research analysis, that there are currently 3,792 SWANA identified students on campus of which 2,430 are Armenian students. Racial equity conscious data collection efforts can be used to gain a greater understanding of the students we serve, their unique experience and needs, and the resources that can best support their academic achievement.

SWANA Region Countries per CSU Apply.

Afghan	**Cypriot**	**Kurdish**	**Palestinian**
Algerian	**Djiboutian**	**Kuwaiti**	**Pontic Greek**
Amazigh	**Egyptian**	**Lebanese**	**Qatari**
Armenian	**Emerati**	**Libyan**	**Saudi Arabian**
			Southwest Asian
Assyrian/Chaldean	**Georgian**	**Mauritanian**	**North African**
Azerbaijani	**Iranian**	**Moroccan**	**Sudanese**
Bahraini	**Iraqi**	**Omani**	**Syrian**
		Other North	
Bahraini	**Israeli**	**African**	**Tunisian**
		Other Southwest	
Circassian	**Jordanian**	**Asian**	**Turkish**
			Uzbek
			Yemeni

Exclusion and invisibility, along with experiences of stereotyping are documented as leading factors contributing to a lack of sense of belonging and isolation for Middle Eastern, Southwest Asian and North African students.[102] SWANA and Middle Eastern students have greater difficulty acclimating to university life when they are not included and treated with dignity and respect.[103] Fostering an inclusive learning, social and professional atmosphere contributes to a positive academic self-concept among SWANA and Middle Eastern student and faculty engagement plays a key role in students self-actualization of their academic and personal goals.[104]

Similar sentiments of invisibility for Southwest Asian, North African and Middle Eastern students were echoed in the identity-based resource centers Project.

> "Would like to see more resources geared toward SWANA identifying students." (Student Focus Group)
>
> "I would like to see a SWANA resource center (South-Southwest Asian and North African identities), as we are often excluded from broad identity groups." (Student Survey)
>
> "Complimentary SWANA center also welcoming of Middle Eastern students." (Student Focus Group)
>
> "A SWANA resource center and place to connect with others." (Student Survey)

[102] Duran, Antonio, et al. "A Critical Quantitative Analysis of Students' Sense of Belonging: Perspectives on Race, Generation Status, and Collegiate Environments." *Journal of College Student Development* 61.2 (2020): 133-153.

[103] Glass, Chris R. "International students' sense of belonging-locality, relationships, and power." *Peer Review* 20.1 (2018): 27-30.

[104] Curtin, Nicola, Abigail J. Stewart, and Joan M. Ostrove. "Fostering academic self-concept: Advisor support and sense of belonging among international and domestic graduate students." *American educational research journal* 50.1 (2013): 108-137.

Providings space for cultural celebrations, affirmation and identity formation were also advocated by study participants.

> "We need a SWANA (South-Southwest Asian and North African), also Iranian-American center. A place for cultural celebrations to create community with each other." (Student Survey Respondent)
>
> "SWANA Center, need culturally specific resource centers." (Student Focus Group)
>
> "We have many muslim students of different countries: India, Pakistan, Afghanistan, Iran, Palestine, etc. if there's resources that is complimentary towards these groups that'd be great." (Student Survey)
>
> "It should be inclusive of all different subdivisions within each identity category." (Student Survey)
>
> "Anti-colonialism resources, ethnic history and food celebration, a resource to deal with traumatic histories." (Student Focus Group)

Cultivating a campus climate that is inclusive, socially just and promotes cultural understanding is essential in order to ensure that Southwest Asia North African and Middle Eastern students have a greater sense of belonging and an increased chance of meeting their academic goals. SWANA centers, and Middle Eastern, North African, South Asian Resource Center have served academic institutions by providing safe spaces for SWANA and Middle Eastern students, faculty and staff, by providing culturally informative and just education and programming to the campus community, and by facilitating advocacy support for challenges faced by the campus and local SWANA and Middle Eastern community members. Given the estimated SWANA population at 10% of the total student body, we recommend CSUN develop a dedicated resource center to support and serve SWANA and Middle Eastern students.

Other Campus Models

UC Berkeley The SSWANA Initiative

UC Santa Barbara Middle Eastern, North African, South Asian Resource Center

Additional Services in Priority I

As part of our analysis, we determined the need for a dedicated resource space to service formerly incarcerated students and students who have been systems impacted. Details justifying a Project Rebound Resource Center space are provided below. Additionally, findings from our study support the increase of prayer, meditation and reflection spaces for campus members of various faiths. An examination of expanding meditation spaces at CSUN is detailed below.

Project Rebound Resource Center

CSUN has been a member of the CSU Project Rebound Consortium since Fall of 2020. The CSU Project Rebound Consortium is a program that supports the higher education and successful reintegration of formerly incarcerated individuals wishing to enroll and succeed at the California State University. By connecting students with critical resources, Project Rebound constructs an alternative to the revolving door policy of mass incarceration and increases community strength and safety. At the CSU level, in Spring 2019 Project Rebound participants had a persistence rate higher than the CSU level at 93.7% compared to the CSU rate of 84.3%.[105] At CSUN, The Project Rebound program is currently working with 31 formerly incarcerated students, several of which are parents. It's important to note that 28% of those students are Black/ African American.

As a member of the Consortium, CSUN receives minimal funding to operate the program's support services. The Project Rebound office currently resides in a room in the Chicano House. Like many centers devoted to marginalized communities, they start in unoccupied office spaces, which is the case for the CSUN Project Rebound Program. As part of our analysis and findings, we ***recommend*** the creation of a Project Rebound Resource Center devoted to supporting students impacted by incarceration. As mentioned by a staff member " Students that are part of Project Rebound have a great need and are a vulnerable student population with lots of need".

The focus groups and surveys demonstrated the impact of Project Rebound and acknowledged the positive experiences it's creating on campus.

> "Since finding project rebound and now interning for them I feel more validated and seen then I did as an undergrad. There are still parts of me though that I'm not sure what it would take to feel included." (Student Focus Group)
>
> "Project Rebound did not exist when I did my undergrad but they were very helpful once I got involved with them last year and now I am doing my internship with them." (Student Focus Group)
>
> "Through my own venture I was able to seek out reentry services because when I needed this support most (2013- 2016) it was not available to me. We need more of these resources since we are a high Latinx serving institution and statistically proven that Latinx have high incarceration rates in this area." (Student Survey)
>
> "No Project Rebound at first, then the University can make more services available for formerly incarcerated students." (Student Focus Group)

Several comments were made on the importance of supporting Project Rebound and the need to institutionalize support and space allocation for the program.

[105] https://www.calstate.edu/impact-of-the-csu/student-success/project-rebound

"CSUN needs to be more intentional about amplifying and enhancing diverse student success. Resilient Scholars fought for Project Rebound not the institution." (Student Focus Group)

"Need a stand-alone dedicated space for Project Rebound because of the sensitive conversation we have, case managers and housing support." (Department Meeting)

"Project Rebound needs dedicated space/center and staffing." (Student Focus Group)

"Reentry services to support first gen, systems impacted college students." (Student Survey)

"More legal awareness and advocacy around employment/ volunteer opportunities for systems involved individuals." (Student Survey)

In a society where social and racial injustice must repeatedly be challenged, it becomes even more necessary for colleges and universities to provide justice-based learning, and support and advocacy for systems impacted and formerly incarcerated students. Resilient Scholars and Project Rebound programs provide intentional support services to students in their programs to aid them in their indoctrination into the university and their successful matriculation throughout their degree programs. Research demonstrates that dedicated support services for systems impacted students directly contributes to their academic success and decreases recidivism rates.[106] Meeting the needs of students who are systems impacted means understanding their unique vulnerabilities, challenges and strengths. It also entails providing curated support services in a space with dedicated staff and resources to effectively contribute to their academic, social and professional success.

Prayer, Meditation & Reflection Space (Not Resource Center)

During our focus groups and student surveys, it became evident of a need to expand our current campus reflection and meditation spaces. At the moment, CSUN does not collect demographic information on religion or spiritual belief and we are not able to quantify the impact this space could have. We are recommending the creation of a Prayer, Meditation & Reflection space that is adjacent to the cluster of ethnic identity-based resource centers. This space will not be staffed, yet it will be monitored by the ethnic identity-based center cluster. The University Student Union currently provides a reflection, meditation and prayer room, however during our research, we identified the need for a larger space that is multi-faceted, non-denominational with a washroom, which can support students in various parts of the campus.

Students shared the following:

"There is a good presence of Muslim students on campus so by having this space would create a sense of community that they might not have had before. In my age group many people struggle with prayer and finding a community they can turn to which having this

[106] Hall, Lori L. "Correctional education and recidivism: Toward a tool for reduction." *Journal of Correctional Education (1974-)*66.2 (2015): 4-29.

resource would help them come closer and prevent them feeling left out and provide a shield of safety." (Student Focus Group)

"We can solve more problems by creating a small cultural center for Muslims on campus where they can go pray, for the Chaplin to do private counseling, where Muslim and non-Muslim students to learn cultures who practice Islam. Having a space would help the MSA to be able to have a public space to meet on campus that anyone can join and learn about the cultures and diversity in the community. I believe this space will help students get educated in their religion, help people gain a better understanding of them, and make CSUN look like a very inclusive campus." (Student Focus Group)

"A place that allows them to be with others who identify as Mexican-Americans, and other Latinx students. A place that provides spiritual resources for students, such as maybe a prayer chapel. A quiet place to pray. Or to join others in a Rosary. Or celebrate a Mass. or bring in a guest speaker on topics relevant to a students academic perseverance." (Student Survey)

"The Muslim population is growing at CSUN and I feel as though CSUN should definitely implement more things to accommodate us. Perhaps a larger prayer room, more washing stations, accommodations for our Chaplain to counsel us, etc." (Student Survey)

"spiritual counseling, resources where students can reach out to prominent muslim scholars in the community, etc." (Student Survey)

"I really found the current prayer space very valuable though it is not enough for the Muslim community." (Student Survey)

Based on statements collected during the research, and noted above, ***we recommend*** the creation of a prayer, meditation and reflection space that **does not** replace the current USU's prayer space, instead it complements the services already offered. The USU's Prayer, Reflection & Meditation space will be adjacent to the Rise Center which will serve a diverse student body. Providing a prayer, reflection, meditation space on both parts of campus where we are cultivating an environment of inclusion, will continue to reaffirm students that they do matter at CSUN and that cultural values, like reflection, praying and meditation can happen in multiple parts of campus.

In the next sections, we discuss our recommendation for Priority II and provide detailed instructions on how we can create an infrastructure for our proposed identity-based resource centers. We will provide an example on how the identity-based resource centers can work collaboratively with the current Cultural Houses without competing to support the same population. We will also provide details on our recommendation of phasing-in services; we understand that this proposal will take time to implement and there are items we can start implementing while leveraging the current cultural houses.

Priority 2
Equitable Resource Centers Development & Sustainability

THRIVE Center

"If CSUN is to be valuable, it must accommodate a wide range of learners including transfers, parents, and differently abled students." (Student Focus Group)

Increasingly, CSUN as an institution of higher education is serving a diverse student population. Student diversity ranges from race and ethnicity to first generation and parent scholars. Even more so, the rate of transfer students admitted into CSUN has significantly increased. The growing diversity of CSUN's student population speaks to the opportunity to expand our academic offerings and support resources to appropriately service our ever-changing student body.

Upon examination of the data collected in the identity-based resource centers research project, we found the need to establish a Thrive Center dedicated to serving four unique groups: 1) Parent Scholars, 2) Transfer Students, 3) First-Generation Students, and 4) Adult and Re-Entry Students. Each of these unique student groups were identified as requiring additional dedicated support services to foster a greater sense of belonging, decrease equity gaps, and increase retention and graduation rates. The justification for each support model is detailed below.

In meeting with the campus Associate Vice President for Facilities Development & Operations; Facilities, Planning, Design, and Construction, Bayramian Hall was suggested as a possible consideration to house the Thrive Center with committed resources to supporting a significant portion of CSUN's student body. Many of the resources needed by these students are already housed within Bayramian Hall and could be expanded, including evening and weekend office hours to service non-traditional students when they are most frequently on campus.

Parent-Scholars Resources and Support

"Given the large share of parents who are students of color, promoting college success among student parents is critical to improving racial/ethnic equity gaps in higher education access and outcomes." -Institute for Women's Policy and Research[107]

In the United States, around 22% of undergraduate college students are parents, that is more than 1 in every 5-undergraduate students, according to data from the 2015-2016 National Center for Education Statistics study. During the 2019-2020 academic year, roughly 4.3% of all college students were raising children as reported by the United States Government Accountability

[107] https://iwpr.org/iwpr-issues/student-parent-success-initiative/parents-in-college-by-the-numbers/

Office.[108] The majority of parent scholars were single parents at about 55% and most were raising children aged five and younger.

In California, 13% of student financial aid applicants were parents in 2018. About 202,000 of the 1.5 million financial aid applicants in California were parents[109]. In 2018, UC Davis College of Education reported that 12% of financial aid applicants intended to enroll within the California State University system, with 76% identifying as female and 26% pursuing bachelor's degrees. The average age was 34 and income was $38,218[110]. College degree completion is significantly reduced for parent scholars and 52% leave college without ever earning a college degree. In comparison, 32% of students without children left college in 2009 (GAO, 2019).

Research on parent scholars report that financial support resources are less common among parent scholars compared to non-parent students (GAO, 2019; Nelson, Froehner and Gault 2013). The added responsibility of childcare can make it even more challenging to stay in school and complete a college degree. Minoritized groups are significantly more likely to have dependent children (37% of African Americans, 29% of American Indian, 30% of Pacific Islander, 25% of Latinx/a/o); and student parents are more likely to accumulate higher debt and have an increased risk of not earning a degree. Black parent scholars incur the highest amount of debt and are more likely to not earn a college degree (Nelson, Froehner & Gault 2013).

Creating a Parent-Inclusive Campus (Recommendations)

Increasing institutional research on parent scholars is an important step in equitably serving students with parental responsibilities. Not much research has been collected on the volume of parent scholars attending CSUN, currently or over the last five years at the institutional level. Establishing strategic data collection and assessment plans to understand the unique needs of CSUN parent scholars is needed.

Including childcare expenses in the estimated cost of attendance is another way universities can be inclusive of the needs of parent scholars. CSUN's 2022-2023 cost of attendance does not publicize the inclusion of childcare expenses. While personal/miscellaneous is noted as an expense, it does not clearly communicate that childcare expenses are considered a part of the cost of attendance. The advertisement of this allowance can encourage student parents to request additional financial aid support which may aid in their ability to obtain their degree.

Additional parent-friendly resources and support around campus can also foster a greater sense of belonging and provide much needed aid to parent scholars. The installation of changing tables in restrooms across campus provides accessible basic needs support for parents with infant children. Desk and chairs to accommodate pregnant student scholars is necessary. Also, increasing lactation spaces across campus invites nursing parents to continue their education and employment at CSUN without interruption due to unavailability of lactation spaces and time.

[108] GAO Highlights. More Information Could Help Student Parents Access Additional Federal Student Aid. https://www.gao.gov/assets/gao-19-522.pdf
[109] EdSource, *California community colleges should do more to identify, support student parents, researchers say*. https://edsource.org/2021/california-community-colleges-should-do-more-to-identify-support-student-parents-say-researchers/650536/amp
[110] UC Davis School of Education. https://education.ucdavis.edu/student-parents

Additionally, creating family friendly study spaces and classrooms around campus can present a welcoming environment for parent scholars who struggle to find safe spaces to study on campus when they have their children; this is especially true when public K-12 schools are closed, but CSUN is operational. Fourth, increasing affordable parent-friendly housing for student parents also aids in meeting students' basic needs, which are all major contributors to low degree completion rates.

Improving available childcare services and service hours on campus is another way to support parent scholars. Parent scholars report the increased need for drop-in childcare services so that they can go to class, study, or complete group assignments. After hours services were also frequently reported among parent scholars as a necessary resource. Many students are attending classes after 5pm and on weekends, however, the current CSUN Children's Center hours are Monday-Friday from 7:30am-5:30pm. These hours, while needed, leave a significant portion of class time unavailable. Also, the limited capacity makes it very difficult to secure childcare services on campus.

Establishing a Parent-Scholar Support System (Recommendations)

The creation of a Parent Scholar Support System at CSUN affords the campus an opportunity to equitably serve our students with parental care responsibilities while simultaneously building a culture of inclusive excellence. Research documents the utility of parent scholar targeted resources in increasing retention rates, closing equity gaps, and increasing graduation rates among student parents.[111] A Parent Scholar Support System could serve as a central hub of resources and services for parent scholars, foster a sense of belonging, and aid in increasing retention and graduation rates.

These values were espoused in the remarks gathered in the identity-based resource centers research project in both focus groups and survey responses. In fact, support for parent scholars was referenced over 130 times through the identity-based resource centers research project focus groups and surveys.

> "I believe having resources for parent scholars that bring children on campus for them to be a part of family-friendly events on campus is important. I never had my children on campus for my B.A. and masters. So, having resources under one umbrella that allows you to come in as you are, is key. I believe that children deserve to be involved where their parents are; so, CSUN should be more thoughtful of that." (Student Focus Group)
>
> **"We need to prioritize a parent friendly environment and support services with on-site daycare."** (Faculty/Staff Focus Group)
>
> "Need family and parent center, get families more explicitly involved." (Faculty/Staff Focus Group)

[111] Institute for Women's Policy and Research, *Parents in College by the Numbers*, https://iwpr.org/iwpr-issues/student-parent-success-initiative/parents-in-college-by-the-numbers/

“A daycare would be nice because I visit campus that is open until 9 or 10 PM which is good because most parents take afternoon classes after they get out of work which would be helpful because regular day cares don’t operate at those hours and don’t create mindful hours for parent-students. Having staff educated on the fact that there is a large population of students who have children at home and other responsibilities as parents is needed also.” (Student Focus Group)

“Child support where the student can drop off the child and support – need to support students- on-campus support. and usually childcare are for younger children (5 and under) what about older kids?” (Student Focus Group)

“We need to focus on helping student parents. We don’t have an office of parent engagement.” (Faculty/Staff Focus Group)

“Heavy personal responsibility, parents, caregiving, and work; we need to provide inclusive, supportive and safe haven for students.” (Faculty/Staff Focus Group)

“Student mothers and student parents need support. Need a parent center. Student parents need a place to drop off their kids at night. So, we have to ask ourselves, “what would the cost be to extend the CSUN children’s place into longer operating hours?” (Faculty/Staff Focus Group)

“A quiet studying space for student parents, near a space where they can put down their kids temporarily in a nearby childcare facility.” (Faculty/Staff Focus Group)

“We need to look at creating a different set of rules for parents and families that live in family housing. They’re adults, we shouldn’t make them abide by the same rules as our younger, single undergrads.” (Student Focus Group)

“Having evening hours for daycare on campus so parent scholars can get more involved on campus. More support in housing. They always get partnered with an 18 year old especially if you’re 30 because that relationship isn’t there all the way if they would be paired with someone in a similar background with them.” (Student Focus Group)

“We need a children's center with childcare with drop-in hours with study space.” (Faculty/Staff Focus Group)

“Having a Filipino background made it hard for me as a parent and first-generation college student to engage and I have had to really search for the information that pointed me in the direction of what I needed.” (Student Focus Group)

“Once I was a Master student, I intentionally went to all the resources for parent scholars, but they’re not under one umbrella and you have to search in many different places for resources in the same niche.” (Student Focus Group)

Our recommendation is to effectively service CSUN parent scholars by building a parent-friendly campus culture that is reflected in the policies and attitudes of the campus community. We also recommend a centralized Parent Scholar Support System within the Thrive Center to house direct support services and resources for student scholars, which may also support faculty and staff with caregiving responsibilities. There is a proposal that was submitted by the Institute for Community Health & Wellbeing for the 2022-2023 Campus Quality Fee Funding cycle to support a Parent Scholar pilot program. This pilot program can assist in the creation of a Parent Scholar Resource Area as part of the Thrive Center. We also recommend updating campus facilities to be more inclusive of the CSUN parent community with desks to seat pregnant women, changing tables in restrooms, lactation rooms, and child-friendly study and workspaces. Finally, we recommend expanding CSUN's current childcare services and hours to accommodate caregiving needs after hours and on weekends.

Campus Models

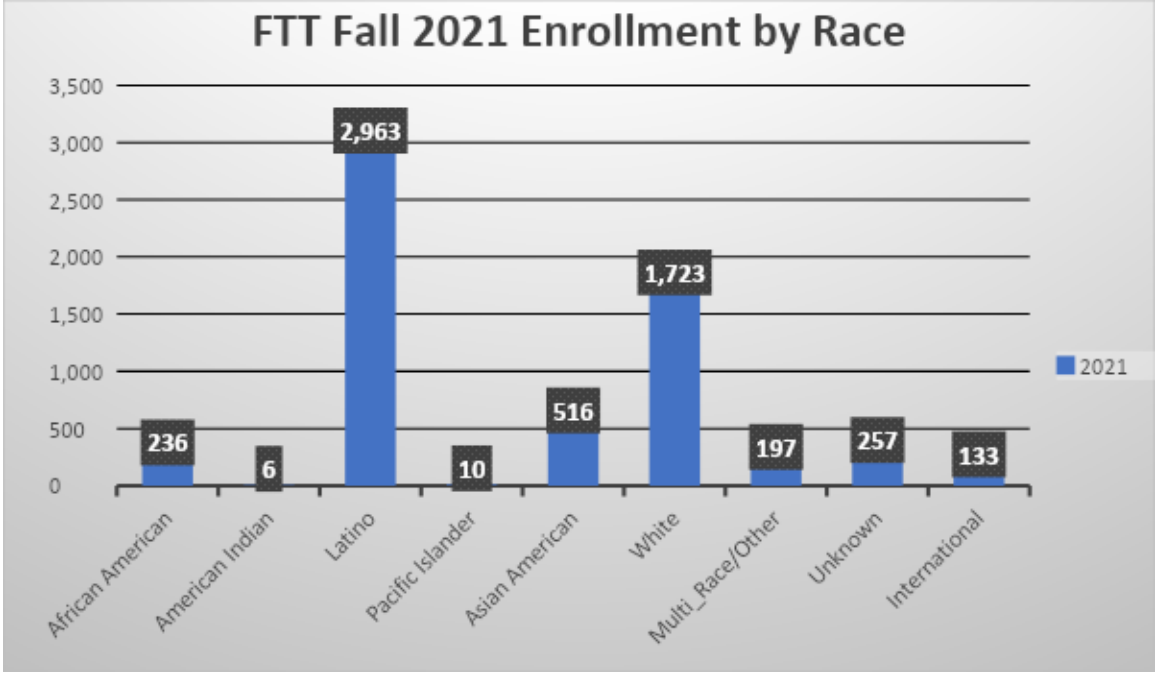
Michigan State University Student Parent Resource Center

PSU Services for Students w/ Children

UCLA's Student's with Dependents Program

Transfer Student Resource Hub

The CSUN transfer student population has witnessed a stable incline. In Fall 2021, 56% of new students were transfer students, a growth of 3% from the previous year. In fact, since 2018, the population of first time-transfer student enrollment outnumbered the volume of first-time freshman enrollment. In Fall 2021, 6,041 first-time transfer students enrolled at CSUN, compared to 4,716 First-time Freshman. Latinx/a/o students account for the largest share of the first-time transfer students in Fall 2021, followed by white students. Of identified students, American Indian (n=6), Pacific Islander (n=10), Multi_Race (n=197), and African American/Black (n=236) were underrepresented in the cohort (Data provided by CSUN IR).



The first-time transfer continuation rate for the Fall 2019 cohort was 91.4% (n= 5,478). However, African American/Black (89.8%), American Indian (62.5%) and Pacific Islander (85.7%) students had the lowest continuation rates for this cohort. These students are CSUN's most underrepresented student populations by ethnicity (Data provided by CSUN IR).

CSUN's First Time-Transfer two-year graduation rate for the Fall 2018 cohort was roughly 45%, which reflects a continual growth from the previous four cohorts. This growth is reflected, when disaggregating the data by race over the last five year. Inconsistencies exist among American Indian, Pacific Islander and African American/Black students' two-year graduation rates. This is also true when examining four-year transfer graduation rates among these three student groups.

Given the increase in transfer student populations at CSUN, it is imperative that the campus explore high impact practices for supporting this growing student population. Throughout the transfer and pre-transfer process students encounter a host of challenges that delay their route to a four-year institution. In California, in 2012-13 only 40% of students enrolled in California community colleges transferred to a four-year college within 6 years.[112] Only 2.5% transferred within two years, and less than 25% transferred in four years according to a report by the Campaign for College Opportunity, a California based nonprofit organization.[113] Coupled with these barriers are the struggles with policies that restrict transfer credits, which also delays students' graduation timeline as they enter four-year colleges. These systematic barriers are even more pronounced for African American/Black, Indigenous, and Pacific Islander students. We are cognizant and we should continue to monitor the impact COVID-19 has had on enrollment

[112]https://edsource.org/2021/california-community-college-transfer-students-face-roadblocks-to-a-bachelors-degree/656883/amp
[113] https://collegecampaign.org/portfolio/2021-chutes-or-ladders/

trends, including a 15% enrollment decline in the Community Colleges across the nation and 10.2% in California in Fall 2021.[114]

Once these students transfer, they often are under-resourced, lack support and are overwhelmed with the solo navigation of the University system. Lack of sense of belonging is often reported among transfer students even though the majority spend four years completing their degree after transferring. At CSUN, 77% of transfer students graduate within four years, this is added to the two to four years spent in the community college system.

The challenges faced by CSUN's transfer student population was frequently discussed throughout the focus groups and in the student survey. The CSUN community expressed desire to see intentional services dedicated to supporting CSUN transfer students and potential students.

> "Transfer students need special attention." (Faculty/Staff/Admin Focus Group)
>
> "While it's a requirement for freshmen, it's not for transferring students to take advantage of the summer program before coming into their fall semester. The USU or AS should be more inclusive for transfer students because you cannot be a part of certain things on campus who exclude transfer students who only have two years on campus." (Student Focus Group)
>
> "Transfer students lack support as well as evening students." (Student Focus Group)
>
> "UCLA recruits around LA to support the path to student and apply." (Student Focus Group)
>
> "Support for transfer students' enrollment, process and journey support." (Faculty/Staff Focus Group)
>
> "Transfer support services and connection, and engagement. Need transfer cohort adventures." (Faculty/Staff Focus Group)

Aiding in transfer students' sense of belonging was another commonly referenced opportunity for CSUN to enhance the student experience.

> "Investing in transfer student culture would be helpful because most students from minority communities make up a big population of transfer students. Investing into transfer students and making their transition smooth and providing resources for after graduation and grad school to continue helping students maintain a sense of belonging is needed. With such little time, they don't have time to get involved so having a program that speaks to this would be useful for students, in particular students of color." (Student Focus Group)

[114] Shalby, C. (2021). *California Community College Students Choosing Jobs over Class Likely Fuel Enrollment Drop*. Los Angeles Times.

> "Transfer students need extra help with cultivating a sense of belonging." (Faculty/Staff Focus Group)
>
> "Transfer students have different responsibilities and mindsets than the young 18-year-olds who come as freshmen. Some have families, some are caregivers. They need different support and help in feeling a sense of belonging." (Faculty/Staff Focus Group)
>
> "Transfer students feel lost. They don't know anything about our processes for adding courses etc., and each department has their own way of "onboarding" them. As a result, they don't feel like they belong or are a true CSUN student." (Faculty/Staff Focus Group)

Community building, especially for BIPOC transfer students was also highly encouraged. Specialized support for BIPOC students in general was a major theme found in this study,

> "The transfer student organization (alliance)- provides a space for transfer students. Need to focus on APIDA transfer students. At UCLA the Filipino transfer student and allies to find community – what does it mean to be a transfer student to be a student." (Student Focus Group)
>
> "We need a center for transfers, one for Asian American students including southeast Asian students." (Student Focus Group)
>
> "I would like to see CSUN fund Asian American Pathways and start a transfer student support center." (Student Survey)

Developing a Transfer Student Resource Hub

We recommend developing a specialized resource area to onboard transfer students, which may include transfer adventures and summer programs. A dedicated hub within the Thrive Center designed to aid transfer students in the credit transfer process, pathway to graduation, and community/network building is documented as effective ways to improve transfer student graduate rates. Also, enhancing streamlined processes for the route to transfer to CSUN can also aid in increasing enrollment of underrepresented students and can reduce the time to degree completion in both 2-year colleges and CSUN. Identifying the varied and specific support services and resources necessary for transfer students to thrive will move CSUN closer to closing equity gaps and increasing graduation rates.

Campus Models

CSU Long Beach, Beach Transfer Transition Center

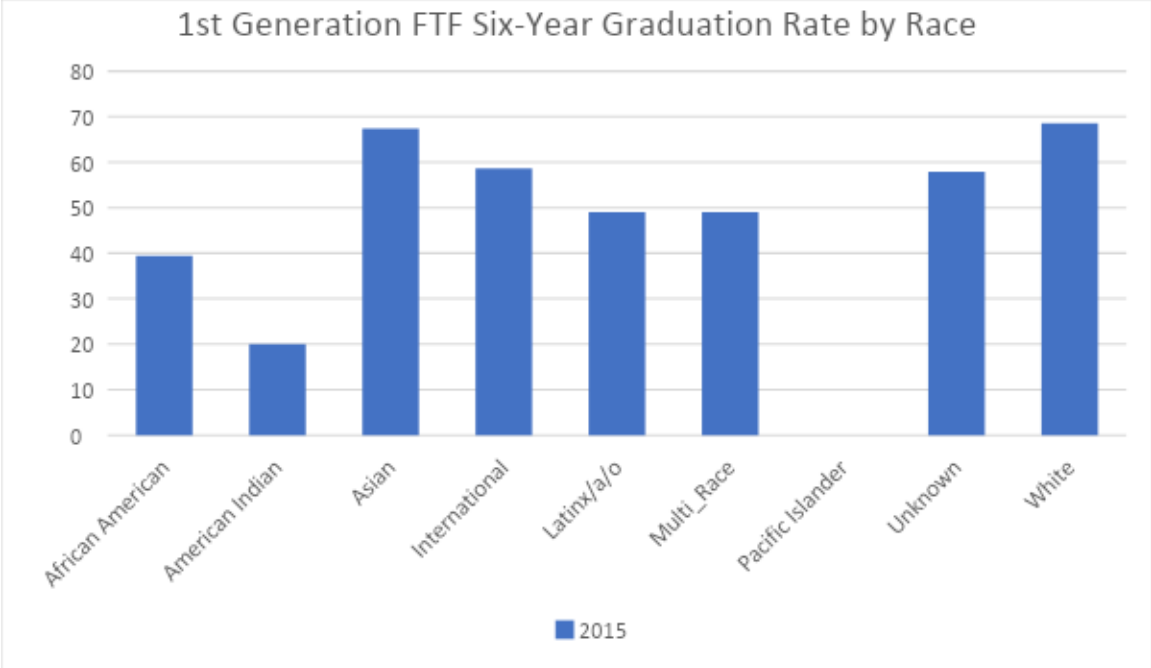
CSU Fullerton Transfer Center

CSU Fresno Transfer Success Center

First-Generation Student Epicenter

The great majority of CSUN students are first-generation college students. As of Fall 2021, around 71% of undergraduate students at CSUN were first-generation students. This means that while their parents did not earn a four-year college degree, our students are pursuing and obtaining college degrees. Over 85% of Latinx/a/o undergraduate students are first-generation (N=19,514). Among African American/Black undergraduate students, over 60% are first generation students (N=1,620). Also, over 55% of American Indian undergraduate students are first-generation (N=28) (Data source-CSUN COUNTS).

In terms of academic success, first-generation first-time freshman at CSUN 6-year graduation rate is lower at 51.7%, compared to continuing generation first-time freshman who graduated at 62% in six years for the Fall 2014 cohort (Data source-IR report). Among the African American first-generation FTF Fall 2015 cohort, the six-year graduation rate is only 39% (N=291); 53% are no longer enrolled and did not graduate. For American Indian students the six-year graduation rate is only 20% (N=4); 40% are no longer enrolled and did not graduate (CSUN COUNTS Student Success Dashboard). For the same year, the cohort size for Pacific Islander students was 2, and 100% are no longer enrolled and did not graduate.



The need for universities to engage first-generation college students to help them succeed on campus is evolving as more and more first-generation students attend CSUN. Closing the degree attainment gap between first-generation and non-first-generation students is critical for CSUN as most CSUN students are first generation college students. Even more noteworthy is closing the equity gap among African American/Black first-generation and American Indian first-generation students.

CSUN first-generation students express being challenged by the accessibility and availability of resources to support and guide their student experience.

> "I feel like there's not a lot of resources. I don't know how to find particular resources and get into research. As a first-generation college student, I didn't know I could join a research lab so my experience in knowing that was through a graduate student. Something that targets minority students would be helpful and something that targets them early on in their college career." (Student Focus Group)

> "My experience at CSUN has evolved over the years. When I first started back in 2008, I was excited but lost most of the time. As a first-generation college student, I was unaware of all aspects of higher education. Now, I am more aware of what it means to be a student in higher education and a community member at CSUN." (Student Focus Group)

Feeling disconnected to the campus and campus networks was shared among CSUN students in both focus groups and in the student survey.

> "I wish there were more opportunities to connect graduate students who are first generation college students to connect with undergraduates and share their experiences because many of us don't have families who understand or can help us with that." (Student Focus Group)

> "It would be great to get to connect with mentors that have experience in the career or in academia in general whose first-generation and made it. A first-generation faculty member who reflects the student experiences on campus and be that person to help pave their path is ideal." (Student Focus Group)

> "Many students are first generation and are lost in the process." (Student Focus Group)

> "As a first gen I feel lost and without guidance. I also feel like CSUN did not handle the pandemic well. It was a missed opportunity and as a student I felt completely alone." (Student Survey)

Students also expressed the desire to have culturally compatible resources for BIPOC first-generation students.

> "We need Hispanic first-generation mentors and mentors that look like me." (Student Focus Group)

> "First-generation, parent students, students of color, and all those different demographics make the experience different for everyone, so I recommend we acknowledge that particular type of experience that students go through." (Student Focus Group)

> "For first-generation students we have to acknowledge the biracial and multiracial students. Being Blaxican makes me feel that we need to acknowledge all special groups

and make sure we're targeting our first-generation students where everyone is invested, and it is less intimidating." (Student Focus Group)

"As a first-generation parenting-female college student of color, I have run into a lack of support various times throughout my years at CSUN. Some resources established now would have helped past frustrations of mine from 2008-2012, like the mentorship program, WIC, and parent support group by UCS. Sometimes, I (or others who have shared with me) still encounter some of the similar frustrations I did during my undergraduate years. For example, in 2019 I had class into classrooms equipped with chairs unsuitable for expecting students. I was unable to use the services offered by the Children's Center for my then 2-year-old son because 1) waitlist, 2) graduate classes were in the evening, and 3) spots available immediately were for out-of-pocket consumers $900+ for Mon-Fri 7:30 am - 5:30 pm and I was not able to pay that kind of money." (Student Focus Group)

Flooding first-generation students with much needed resources and support was highly recommended by study participants.

"I would like resources on finance and first-generation workshops provided in one place." (Student Focus Group)

"I feel like there was not a lot of support as a first-generation college student. Or at least, the resources to help students like me were not really brought up or promoted." (Student Focus Group)

"Supporting first-generation students would be great because most don't feel comfortable talking to their family or professors who don't understand what it's like being in their shoes would help and having a group designed to cater to the needs of first-generation students would be great." (Student Focus Group)

Many factors contribute to the academic and overall success of first-generation, and BIPOC first generation students. From financial insecurities to campus culture incompatibility, first-generation students experience an enormous number of obstacles that disrupt and end their pursuit of a four-year degree; this is alarmingly high for Black and American Indian students at CSUN.

Establishing a First-Generation Student Resource Epicenter

A first-generation student-centered space on campus can equip the university with targeted supported services directed to some of our vulnerable student populations. A devoted resource epicenter can help us better understand the unique dynamics of our first-generation students, what they are struggling with and ways in which they are thriving.[115] Disaggregated data analytics and student surveys can bolster how well we know and thus serve our students. Within the center students can build a sense of belonging, build networks, and gain guidance on navigating the university.

[115]Center for First-Generation Student Success. https://firstgen.naspa.org

We recommend building a First-Generation Student Epicenter within the larger THRIVE Center to support students' academic, social, and professional development. CSUN can become a First-Gen Forward Institution (Awarded by the Center for First-Generation Student Success) by developing spearheading initiatives designed to foster rich educational experiences at the high-school, pre-college entry, and college levels for first-generation students. CSUN already has several existing programs that could partner with the epicenter to provide high quality services to our students. We can do this through intentional support services such as leadership development, mentorship, engagement opportunities, financial aid resources, and support for the overall well-being of our students. Universities including USC have instituted a First-Generation Plus Success Center (FG+SC) and UCLA developed a First to Go program which can serve as local models to get started.

Campus Models

USC First Generation Plus Success Center (FG+SC)

UC Los Angeles First to Go

University of Nevada, Reno First-Generation Student Center

Adult and Re-entry Student Home

Supporting generational diversity on college campuses is another way universities can equitably serve its diverse student body. Adult and returning college students are on the rise in US colleges and Universities as the workforce changes and more adults seek to obtain advanced degrees. Documented by the National Center for Education Statistics, in the United States 1 in every 10 college students was over 40. Insights into Diversity reported that this is expected to grow to 3.3 million by 2027. Many are beginning to question how they define traditional and non-traditional students given these changes. Despite the rise in adult college students over 24 years old, most of the resources and services at American colleges and universities are designed to meet the needs of students 18-22. From course platform options to technology and accessibility, many of the standard college resources are tailored to 18–22-year-old students. According to the 2014 NASPA Research and Policy Institute Vice President of Student Affairs Census about 58% of universities, who participated in the survey have support services for "non-traditional" students.

In Fall 2021, 56% of students at CSUN were 22 years old or younger. Yet, another 44% reported being 23 and older (CSUN Counts Dashboard). Among undergraduate students, 37% identified as 23 or older. Roughly 77% of CSUN graduate students were 24 and older in Fall 2021 [We were unable to locate data on continuation and graduation rates by age]. The adult student population is a significant proportion of the total student body. Building a sense of belonging, fostering community and reducing feelings of isolation, along with academic support services can aid us in delivering specialized service to adult students.

Given the lack of resources and support services for adult and returning students, many study participants reported barriers to their success. Students also communicated the desire for CSUN to develop targeted support services for adult and re-entry students.

> "My identity as a white cis woman is relatively supported at the institution. But I am a mother scholar and working-class student, and those identities are less supported and included as is my identity as a middle-aged adult returning to school. Policies, practices, programs, and resources for working class, single parents would be nice. Our numbers are not only growing, but you should be seeking us out as students as the k-12 pool continues to decline." (Student Survey)

> "We need adult engagement in academics, specifically at reducing the stigma as an older student in college - perhaps an Integrating Hub with activities with other students, so those adults feel part of the CSUN community as the ones who already do." (Student Survey)

> **"**Let's say if we had data on the number of seniors that attend college- a senior adult resource center (information geared towards elderly care needs)." (Student Survey)

> **"**The importance of acknowledging the fact that we need to make these spaces inclusive just as much as specific for those who they are catering to. Supporting the various pockets of the community like the mother, adult re-entry students, and finding faculty and staff who can understand and relate to the students that they're in charge of serving." (Student Focus Group)

> "We need an add-on and re-entry student center." (Student Focus Group)

> **"No resources for adults- it's difficult to get through when you're an older adult. Maximize the utility of the experience – have the ability to connect to come forward and get things done."** (Student Focus Group)

> "We need a **t**ransfer student -Adult & Re-entry Services and a Parent Center Totally interconnected – important – hub for adults to integrate with the rest of the campus." (Student Focus Group)

The narratives shared by participants speak to a non-inclusive campus culture and policies. Students often feel isolated and dismissed in the classroom and are considered out of touch. Leveraging the real-world experiences of adult and returning students may help promote the interpersonal and intrapersonal growth of the entire student body and larger campus community. Further data is needed to assess the student success outcomes of adult and re-entry students.

Establishing an Adult and Re-entry Student Resource Home

Given the rise in adult students over the age of 24 enrolling in colleges and universities, particularly in undergraduate programs, many Universities have created adult and non-traditional

student resource centers to support the academic, social-emotional, and professional needs of their adult students. Now that CSUN 23 and older student population account for over 40% of the student body, it's important to get to know these students and create programs and resources that enrich their academic experience and success. Currently, CSUN Counts has limited data represented by age. Assessing disaggregated data on age and cross tabulated by multiple other demographic factors will aid CSUN in understanding who our adult students are, what their unique needs are, and how to effectively serve them.

In developing an Adult and Re-entry student service home-base, CSUN can begin to advocate for adult learners to reach their academic and career goals. Supporting adult students' successful transition into college is imperative in order to ensure their success. Professional staff trained to aid in acclimating adult students in the university life and designing university life to fit the adult student can assist CSUN in customizing educational experiences for its diverse student population. This space could provide a community for students of diverse backgrounds including parents, veterans, married, and formerly incarcerated students. Students' intersectional identities and various life experiences can be met with facilitated support services and resources.

Current models include UC Santa Barbara Non-Traditional Student Resource Center, the University of Wyoming's Non-Traditional Student Center, and UCLA's Non-Traditional Student Network. These centers and programs help students build community and connection to the campus, while supplying them with resources to support their academic and personal success. Services include, counseling and mentorship, childcare support, basic needs support, recreational space, and academic tutoring.

Our recommendation is to place a support network within the Thrive Center for Adult and Reentry students. Locating an Adult and Re-Entry Resource Home within the Thrive Center can allow students to access resources based on their intersectional identities and can foster community connection with a larger community.

Campus Models

CSU Dominguez Hills Older Adult Center

UC Santa Barbara Non-Traditional Student Resource Center

University of Wyoming Non-Traditional Student Center

UC Los Angeles Non-Traditional Student Center

PRIORITY 1 & 2
STRUCTURING THE CENTERS

Equitable Staffing Structure

Staff Model & Structure

Having staff that are adequately prepared, trained and supported is a priority in developing and implementing successful identity-based resource centers. As noted by Council for the Advancement of Standards in Higher Education (CAS)[116], as it relates to Multicultural Student Programs and Services, these types of centers must have leadership that model ethical behavior and demonstrate "alignment with institutional mission, goals and ethical practices". Leaders overseeing these identity-based spaces must create a vision, communicate goals, model and expect commitment, collaborate with colleagues and departments across the institution and advance the work of diversity, equity, access and inclusion goals among many other responsibilities. As such, each of the identity-based resource centers must have teams that are adequately prepared to support the diverse needs of students and have the capacity to collaborate across campus and with the community.

In an upcoming section, we discuss the importance of analyzing the campus reporting structure of equity, justice and inclusive services, including the reporting of these identity-based resource centers. As noted previously, current CSUN identity-based resource centers are housed in various departments on campus and across divisions. We recommend that these identity-based resource centers report to a leader who serves a member of the administration in order to have institutional buy-in and institutional capital; a leader who serves as a strategic diversity leader on campus.[117] For now, we describe a possible equitable staffing structure for Priority I: Ethnic Identity-Based Resource Centers.

Priority I Structure

Based on student needs, enrollment patterns, equity gaps, etc., each center will be staffed uniquely and equitably to support the student population they serve. At minimum, we are recommending that **each** identity-based resource center is supported by the following staff:

- Director (MPP Level I)
- Program Coordinator (SSP III)
- Administrative Support Assistant I
- Faculty Counselor employed by University Counseling Services and conducting services inside identity-based resource center
- Academic Advisor (SSP II)
- Student Assistant Employees

Student employment is considered a *High Impact Practice*, thus it is critical to employ students in these centers. As Kuh (2009) notes, "Campus employment is a target of opportunity… Working on campus could become a developmentally powerful experience for more students if…professionals who supervise a student in their employ intentionally created some of the same

[116] Bureau, D., Guardia, J., Henry-Darwish, N., & Woolay, D. (2019). Council for the Advancement of Standards in Higher Education. *CAS professional standards for higher education* (10th Ed.). Washington, DC

[117] Williams, D.A. (2013). *Strategic diversity leadership: Activating change and transformation in higher education*. Stylus Publishing.

conditions that characterize the high-impact activities."[118] As noted by the findings and earlier recommendations, it is important to house a counselor and an academic advisor that are culturally congruent to the centers.

The identity-based resource center counselors will be supervised by University Counseling Services but operate out of each cultural center. We recommend the phasing-in of counseling services by starting with two days a week, measure and assess impact, to ultimately transition full-time services provided in-house daily. Some models to follow for in-house counseling services are UCLA, UC San Diego, UC Berkeley and the University of Southern California.

Note: This gradual increment of staffing will require University Counseling Services to restructure and hire a MPP staff who will assist with the additional supervision of clinical work being conducted outside of the University Counseling Center and assist with the supervision of counselors. The additional workload will create capacity issues for the already impacted University Counseling Services administrative support staff and will require an additional Administrative Support Coordinator to assist with the coordination of appointments for all the centers. Additional planning and strategic partnerships will be developed with University Counseling.

Academic Advisors are instrumental to the success of students. As noted by our findings, there is evidence to suggest that some students are negatively impacted by their interactions with their advisors. Embedding academic advising into the structure of the centers supports the academic experience of students. As noted by the opportunity mentioned in the Black & African Diaspora Resource Center recommendation, the academic advisors can assist students by intentionally supporting their academic progress, advising students to completion and assisting with retention efforts when they start their academic journey on campus. Partnerships will be developed with Undergraduate Studies, The Hub, The Colleges and the Office of Student Success to ensure that in-house advising does not create another advising umbrella, instead it will create a strategic partnership to leverage the impact it can have on our at-promise students. All advisors across the campus must undergo cultural humility training to understand how to best work with the CSUN diverse student body. This level of consistency and training will equip the campus community to provide direct support to students, even outside of the identity-based resource centers.

Lastly, we recommend that each center develop a unique partnership with each ethnic studies department to create a Faculty Fellows program that supports the classroom and out-of the classroom experience -this framework is detailed in the following section.

Faculty Fellows

Faculty partnerships in identity-based resource centers have been well documented as an effective pathway to increase student and faculty engagement beyond the classroom. Faculty have often served as directors, coordinators, researchers, and fellows with college student resource centers. Faculty Fellows, afford student resource centers with the opportunity to

[118] Kuh, G. D. (2009). What student affairs professionals need to know about student engagement. *Journal of College Student Development, 50*(6). 683-706.

collaborate with campus faculty on special research projects, national and local research studies, and grants. More specifically, faculty fellows provide research engagement opportunities for students where they focus on contemporary or historical issues impacting the demographic population that the resource centers serve.

How can we foster faculty & student engagement?

At CSUN, students are consistently articulating a need for increased research engagement opportunities. In fact, studies demonstrate that students who participate in research are more likely to graduate, pursue advanced degrees, and secure employment.[119] For underrepresented student populations, they struggle to find opportunities to engage in research labs or work on research grants. Scholars Tillotson and McDougal report that when African American/Black undergraduate students have research engagement opportunities, their academic experiences are enriched, and they are well-prepared for graduate education.[120] Fostering students' research skills aids in students' preparedness for graduation and advanced studies.

As noted in the literature on resource centers, particularly cultural resource centers, one way to increase the sustainability of such centers is to partner with Ethnic Studies departments and Ethnic Studies faculty to offer culturally congruent programming, courses, and special lectures. Offering special courses through the resource centers is another way to partner with faculty and to generate revenue for the centers which increases their likelihood of remaining operational. The creation of certificate programs and specialized training is yet another way to service the campus and local community while building income streams for the centers. Faculty can play an essential role in these types of programmatic offerings for resource centers.

Throughout the identity-based resource centers project, participants communicated a strong desire for faculty involvement in the resource centers and to have faculty and student research engagement opportunities housed inside the centers. Therefore, we recommend implanting Faculty Fellows in the resource centers in order to meet students and faculty desire for collaborative research engagement opportunities.

Priority II Structure

The Thrive Center has the opportunity to support a vast majority of our campus population by the services they will provide to parent scholars, transfer, first-generation and adult and re-entry students. We recommend that the Thrive Center fosters a collaborative team relationship to support the intersectionality of students. We recommend the following staffing structure:

- Thrive Center Director (MPP I)
- Thrive Center Assistant Director (SSPVI)
- 3 Program Coordinators (SSP III)
- 3 Faculty Counselors
- 2 Transition Specialists (SSP II)

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[119] Kuh, G. (2008) *High-impact educational practices: What they are, who has access to them, and why they matter*. Association of American Colleges and Universities.

[120] Tillotson, M., & McDougal, S. (2013). Applied Africana Studies. *Journal of Black Studies*, *44*, 101-113.

As noted in Priority I, the structure will be reassessed as the transition occurs. Since the Thrive Center will encompass various areas of support, we anticipate a shift in the services provided with the change in demographics in the students we serve.

We are recommending the services of two Transition Specialists that will assist students soliciting enrollment and transition support. It was evident by the data gathered, that our transfer students, parent scholars, adult and re-entry students and our first-generation students shared their dissatisfaction with understanding the plethora of resources CSUN has to offer. The Transition Specialists can assist students identify resources, answer questions and provide the support they need to effectively transition to the campus environment.

Assessment and Data Analysts

Direct and indirect assessments of services and programs offered through the current and potential resource centers is highly recommended in order to effectively evaluate the benefits and impact of resources and services provided on students' overall academic success. Impact assessments on GPAs, students' sense of belonging, retention, graduation rates, and post-graduation outcomes is necessary to capture the range of advantages offered to students who access the centers and services.[121] These assessments will also aid CSUN in evaluating the role of resource centers in closing equity gaps.

In addition, increasing data access and data collection is also recommended. Access to technology and systems to collect data on the students who enter the centers and use the services is recommended for each existing and all future centers.[122] This will also allow centers to create demographic profiles of student users and assess the impact of use on student users' academic success. Assessing user data combined with student outcomes assessment, requires data accessibility in partnership with Institutional Research. However, this cannot be the sole responsibility of a single director for each center. While the model of one-professional staff is common among college resource centers, this structure has been proven inadequate for several reasons, and more specifically creates roadblocks to assessment.

Why is impact data important for student success?

How can research analysts help?

Embedding research analysts into the center models will allow the resource centers to more comprehensively assess the benefits and impacts of the programming and services supplied through the centers.[123] Outfitting each center with an IR trained data analyst can help meet the assessment needs of each resource center. Investigating external models, we found that staffed research analysts inside resource centers

[121] Jones, Tiffany, and Katie Berger. "Aiming for equity: A guide to statewide attainment goals for racial equity advocates." (2019).

[122] Bussey, Karen, Kim Dancy, and Mamie Voight. "Better Data, Better Outcomes: Promoting Evidence, Equity, and Student Success through the Framework for State Postsecondary Data Solutions." *Institute for Higher Education Policy* (2019).

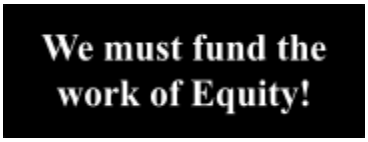
[123] Baer, Linda L., and Donald M. Norris. "A call to action for student success analytics." *Planning for Higher Education 44.4* (2016): 1.

have been the most effective model. In our follow up meeting with Institutional Research, this staffing approach was discussed and was fully supported by the Director of Institutional Research at CSUN. Therefore, we recommend embedding a research analyst in the existing and future identity-based resource centers at CSUN. The Research Analyst or Analytics Team should be trained and meet all security requirements and undergo routine training. They should have direct access to CSUN IR systems and data in order to conduct outcome assessments. Pre-generated reports from IR are not recommended, instead, the analytics officer should have direct access to data to generate all necessary reports.

The proposed assessment model will equip CSUN resource centers with data-informed design approaches to programming and services and will allow centers to create new initiatives based on students' needs and feedback, this is a priority discussed in CAS. Such an assessment model may also aid in strategic budgeting for the centers, that will aid them in capitalizing on opportunities to support students with highly successful programs, while reassessing the usefulness of less impactful programs and services.

Equitable Funding and Funding Security

Equitable funding and funding security are essential for the sustainability of resource centers and cultural houses.[124] Unfortunately, many resource centers, and in particular cultural resource centers are underfunded and do not possess any permanent revenue streams. Most centers funding is reliant upon one-time grants and dollars, student fee programs, and annual institutional grants.[125] Coupled with the lack of adequate staff, cultural resource centers are often limited by their inability to secure permanent funding, thus are unable to develop strategic plans for implementing high impact programming, this is another way that marginalization occurs in these spaces. Centers that are funded through student fees also experience insecurity and instability as student fees have been halted or impacted by a decrease in student enrollment. These funds could be redistributed and at other campuses suspended during and before the COVID-19 pandemic.



We recommend developing a permanent equitable funding model for the proposed and current resource centers and houses at CSUN. Funding security results in stability of programming, tenure of staff, and sustainability of centers. Therefore, we recommend full funding for the proposed:

1. Staffing Structure
2. Signature Programs
3. Assessment
4. Student Employment
5. Student Basic Needs Supports

[124] Crampton, Faith E., David C. Thompson, and Randall S. Vesely. "The forgotten side of school finance equity: The role of infrastructure funding in student success." *NASSP bulletin*88.640 (2004): 29-52.

[125] Jaquette, Ozan. "Funding for performance and equity: Student success in English further education colleges." *Education Policy Analysis Archives/Archivos Analíticos de Políticas Educativas* 14 (2006): 1-39.

Additionally, we recommend the university provide funding for:

1. Center Develop/Renovation
2. Relocation Expenses
3. Furnishings
4. Technology and Computer Equipment
5. Recruitment and Advertisement
6. Marketing Materials

Funding should be equitable across centers and based on the needs of students. Centers should not be forced to compete for limited resources which may create unhealthy competition and may disrupt opportunities for intercultural exchange.[126] Equitably funding staff positions means staffing at the title and level comparable to the work and thereby compensating at the appropriate title. Thus, centers need directors, we recommend hiring and justly compensating center directors, coordinators, administrators, etc. Equitable funding also includes sufficient funding to resource students and provide programming. CSUN can actualize its investment in inclusive excellence by equitably funding identity-based resource centers and by increasing supplemental funding opportunities for these centers.

Centralized Location and Campus-wide Visibility

The foundation of many identity-based resource centers across the nation were established due to campus climates that were impacted by racial incidents, protests and/or national political rhetoric that influenced state and local practices. Thus, most identity-based resource centers are placed in locations that are not optimal to maximize the student experience. Unless campus planning occurs, these identity-based resource centers start in offices, small cubicles, a basement of a building, etc., anywhere where space can be found. We have an opportunity as part of this proposal to recommend the creation of these identity-based resource centers to be housed in the center of campus.

(1) **We recommend** that the cluster of ethnic identity-based resource centers (Priority I) is housed in Sierra Hall and become part of the renovation project created by the construction of Sierra Annex.
(2) **We recommend** that the Thrive Center is housed in Bayramian Hall, where the Career Center, University Counseling Services, Financial Aid & Scholarships are all located, these are services that will be heavily used by students receiving services from the Thrive Center. Although there is no space available in Bayramian Hall at the moment, we recommend further analysis of the potential of creating the Thrive Center in Bayramian Hall.

As noted in our findings on *Marginalization and Invisibility,* our campus community has expressed a wavering support for the centers to be placed in close proximity to one another, on

[126] Krishnamoorthi, Raja, and Brian Kaissi. "The college transparency act: Strengthening transparency, equity, and student success in American higher education." *Harv. J. on Legis.* 57 (2020): 1.

the center of campus, where centers can collaborate and create intercultural exchange opportunities for students. As a student noted "Perhaps …resources like AASPP, the Chicanx House, the Black House, the Women's Resource Center, etc. I believe those resources are scattered on the outskirts of campus, so it could be helpful to have them all in one place to make it easier to access (Student Focus Group)." Another participant shared that "these identity based centers should be in a central location on campus and close to each other so they can cross-coordinate programming and dialogue" (Faculty/Staff/Administrator Focus Group).

Foster Intercultural and Intersectional Exchange

Identity-based resource centers are also found to enhance the educational environment of the entire campus community. By providing critical race conscious curricula, partnering with Ethnic Studies departments, and offering supplemental programming such as guest lectures, cultural resource centers provide a sustained model of inclusive excellence and educational equity.[127] Providing intercultural and intersectional programming is yet another way the proposed identity-based resource centers can further enrich the educational experiences of CSUN students and the work experiences of faculty and staff. Additionally, Cultural Houses can support student identity affirmation and sense of belonging and can partner with resource centers to build students' academic self-concept and help students meet academic and personal goals.

The intentional centralized placement of the recommended cultural centers and the proposed Thrive Center is designed to facilitate student and campus engagement in the programs and services offered through the centers. For the cultural centers, the close proximity to the Ethnic Studies departments will allow for synergy between the centers and departments without a bifurcation of faculty and staff resources.[128] Instead, course schedules and special topics can be collaboratively determined, certificate programs can be established and offered within the centers, and partnership planning can result in major keynote lectures and community forums.

Resource centers can foster intercultural exchange.

The importance of intercultural and intersectional identity exchange was frequently communicated in the focus groups and surveys during the identity-based centers project. From student engagement to curriculum enhancements, the CSUN community expressed a significant yearning for increased intercultural and intersectional exchange across campus.

> "We need discipline specific grounding for all students to aid in intercultural exchange. And we need to enhance curricular access to cultural exchange." (Faculty/Staff Focus Group)

[127] Patton, L. D. (2010). *Culture Centers in Higher Education: Perspectives on Identity, Theory, and Practice*. Stylus Publishing, LLC. PO Box 605, Herndon, VA 20172-0605.

[128] Richmond, Demetrius D. "A case study of two exemplary Black cultural centers in higher education." (2012).

> "We need cultural centers to focus more on cultural rights and intercultural exchange." (Student Focus Group)
>
> "There would be more opportunities to create and build communities which support and celebrate each other despite their differences. These identity based centers should support other centers' missions and volunteer their time to the others' cause." (Student Survey)
>
> "We also should have a space to meet people of different cultures, cross-cultural and a place to collaborate and meet new people." (Faculty/Staff Focus Group)
>
> "Social events and mixers should be more of a thing, opportunities for students and faculty to mingle. And as a White female, I'd love to learn about other cultures at cultural events. Need more social cultural events; faculty and staff can learn too." (Faculty/Staff Focus Group)
>
> "There is a great opportunity for hosting events on campus that would bridge cultural differences and encourage intercultural communication and friendships." (Student Survey Response)

The call for social justice engagement at CSUN was also highly referenced in the identity-based centers project.

> "We need more support service that has cross intersection solidarity between different races of students on campus to facilitate more improvement on the aspect of social justice." (Student Focus Group)
>
> "The centers should be used so that we are being prepared to address any issues in these communities, in regards to social justice, having the ability to address things like microaggressions and such. Social justice is our cornerstone." (Faculty Conversations)

How can resource centers advance social justice?

Currently, cultural centers are being leveraged to address social justice issues and racial inequities on campus and in the nation. Benitez (2010) documents how cultural centers are being resituated with a social justice framework to move campus communities to adopt anti-racist ideologies.[129] This equity-social justice framework equips college campuses with the knowledge, practitioners and resources to move the campus forward in affirming BIPOC students, their cultures and histories, while simultaneously addressing injustices. This model also challenges campus leaders to interrogate the policies and practices that create and sustain inequities in higher education.

[129] Benitez Jr, M. (2010). Resituating culture centers within a social justice framework. *Culture centers in higher education: Perspectives on identity, theory, and practice*, 119-134.

The current RISE Center proposal as part of the larger USU Renovation and Expansion Project presents an important opportunity to expand and connect the University's various social justice efforts under one larger umbrella of united social justice initiatives. The RISE center will be situated on the top floor of the new USU building surrounded by other resource centers including the Women's Research and Resource Center, the Pride Center, the Veterans Resource Center, and the DREAM Center. The centers-on-centers design model is intended to nurture intersectional exchange around larger equity and social justice challenges and advocacy efforts. The recommended resource centers can join in on these collaborative efforts to advance racial and social justice at CSUN, in Los Angeles and globally.

Example In Action: Priority I
Black Resource Center & Black House Partnership

California State University, Northridge is one of very few institutions that operates cultural houses, making it a unique service on this campus. As we explored the opportunity of identity-based resource centers on campus, it was to no surprise that concerns were raised about the utilization of the cultural houses. As identified in the *Equitable Funding and Funding Security* section, it is important and we recommend that with the creation of identity-based resource centers, the existing Cultural Houses must also be financially supported by the institution to maximize their capacity, utilization and their contribution to campus for our students. The Cultural Houses are assets to the campus, they provide cultural significance of the struggles students faced, which is noted in an earlier section.

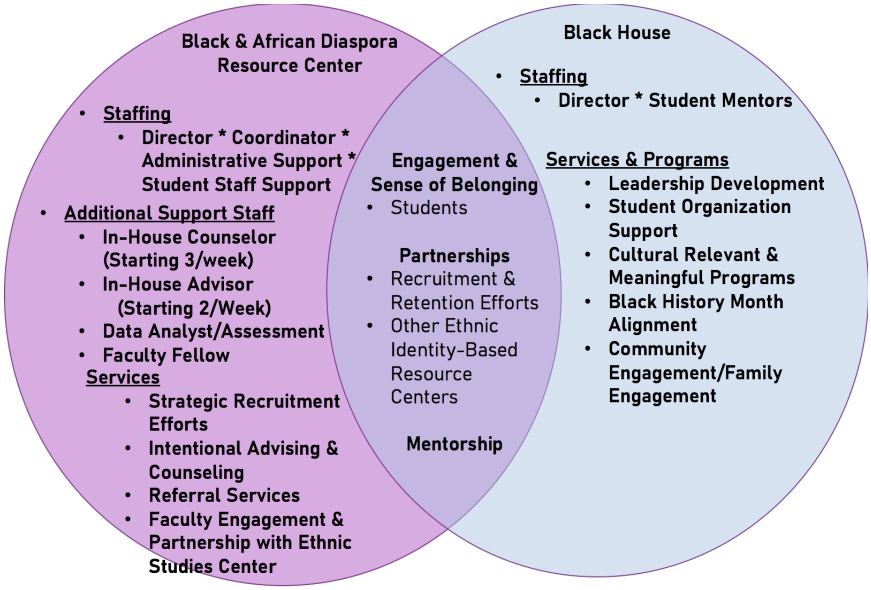
As we explored the uniqueness of our campus, the research team developed the following recommendation on how the cultural houses can work collaboratively with the newly developed identity-based resource centers.

- The *Black & African Diaspora Center* will provide academic, social and emotional support to students through in-house counseling, in-house advising, a faculty fellow program, strategic recruitment, referral services, engage faculty and staff and create partnership with the Ethnic Studies departments.

- The *Black House* will provide students with student leadership development opportunities, assist in student organizational development, develop cultural congruent programs, support community partnerships and embrace the celebration of Black culture.

Together, the Black & African Diaspora Resource Center and the Black House will cultivate engagement opportunities that lead to increased sense of belonging, create strategic partnerships to assist with the recruitment and retention of Black students, and develop mentorship relationships. See diagram on the next page demonstrating this vision.

Black & African Diaspora Resource Center & Black House Collaborative Services



We acknowledge that creating new spaces takes years to develop, and that there is also an immediate need to support our most vulnerable students. Thus, **we recommend a phasing-in** approach to ensure that our most impacted students (African American/Black Students) receive immediate support while the development of the ethnic identity-based resource center cluster is under construction. We recommend that in Spring and Summer 2022, the Black House is used to pilot the services that would be housed in the Black & African Diaspora Center (See Example in the next section). See detail recommendations for the upcoming two years:

Phasing-In Approach

- **Spring/Summer 2022**
  - Black House Support (Pilot Black Resource Center Components)
    - Develop Strategic Partnerships with UCS
      - Counseling Support at Black House (2/Week)
    - Academic Advising Support (2/Week)
      - Work with At-Promise Students
  - Work with SOAR on Intentional Recruitment Process
  - Develop Partnerships Across Campus on Black Resources (HUB)
  - Start conceptualizing the Ethnic Identity-Based Resource Center Cluster (Sierra Hall)
- **Fall 2022 – Spring 2023**
  - Pilot on Cultural Houses
    - Chicano House
      - Hire Full-Time Director
    - Glenn Omatsu House
      - Hire Full-Time Director
    - La Casita
      - Hire **Two** Full-Time Positions (CATS & AIS)
      - Identify Independent Space for AIS Cultural House
  - Assist in the creation of strategic plan for Ethnic Identity-Based Resource Centers
  - Develop Strategic Partnerships On and Off- Campus
  - Develop Counseling & Advising Strategies for Pride Center, DREAM Center & Veterans Resource Centers (Operationalize the Plan)
  - Start Conceptualizing the creation of the Thrive Center

CAPACITY & SUPPORT OF EQUITY INFRASTRUCTURE

Assessing the Current Equity Infrastructure Capacity

Assessing the current capacity and support for an expanding equity infrastructure is vitally important if California State University, Northridge is to develop sustainable models and practices for equity, justice and inclusive excellence. Adequate organization systems, staffing, budget, and resources are all cited as critical ingredients needed to establish and maintain equitable and inclusive educational models and serve as a foundation for institutions of higher education to embed racial equity and justice into its core infrastructure.[130] An absence of sufficient capacity to support the current and growing needs of universities to effectively service diverse student populations jeopardizes an institution's ability to sustain successful practices.[131]

Do we have what we need to build and sustain equity and inclusive excellence?

Accounting for the current and future needs of an inclusive equity infrastructure entails mapping out the existing resources including personnel and aligning them with the present and potential needs of the University. CSUN is currently undergoing a road mapping process that is guided by the principles of equity and inclusive excellence. This process should also include assessing the University's ability to successfully establish and maintain the recommended resources, values, and practices grounded in equity and justice as detailed in the Identity-Based Centers Project Report.

Systems checks for accountability and assessment is also required. Any infrastructure assessment conducted must also include examining the University's data collection, storage and accessibility; along with assessing the data analytics capacity.[132] CSUN is experiencing a growing need to have user-friendly and accessible disaggregated data especially on equity gaps, student success outcomes, and DFU rates. The recommended center models detailed in this report, also required increased access to disaggregated data and data analysts. As noted, the current data and assessment capacity must increase in order to meet the increasing need in real time.[133]

Measuring CSUN's capacity to further develop and build on higher education service to minoritized students equips CSUN with the opportunity to innovate a strategic path forward as one of the nation's largest Hispanic-Serving Institutions. In our assessment of data gathered in the Identity-based Centers Research Project, we find that CSUN may be severely under-structured to support the wide-scale equity infrastructure. While CSUN has several non-permanent programs and grants to support minoritized students, additional support systems are needed to embed these services into the master plan of the University. Also, this report highlights the underrepresentation of diverse faculty, staff and administrators, lack of anti-racism

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[130] Gravley-Stack, Kara Elizabeth. *Achieving inclusive excellence: The role of change agents and institutional artifacts in diversifying institutions*. Diss. North Dakota State University, 2014.

[131] Robbins, Sherard A. *Moving beyond Inclusive Excellence: Operationalizing Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion through Organizational Alignment in Higher Education*. Diss. The University of Arizona, 2021.

[132] McNair, Tia Brown, and John Veras. "Committing to equity and inclusive excellence: Intentionality and accountability." *Peer Review* 19.2 (2017): 3.

[133] Chun, Edna, and Alvin Evans. "Linking diversity and accountability through accreditation Standards." *Hispanic Outlook* (2010).

and diversity training, a need to increase culturally compatible pedagogies and curriculum in the classroom and need to establish resources dedicated to serving unique student populations. Therefore, **we recommend CSUN explore the development of a new division that would bridge Academic Affairs with Student Affairs through an Equity, Justice and Inclusive Excellence Division**.

Explore Development of an Equity, Justice and Inclusive Excellence Division

The investment in advancing equity and inclusion as the hallmarks of institutions of higher education has caused a divergence from the traditional organizational structure of universities nationwide. Much of the work surrounding equity and inclusion have been housed in offices of diversity and largely the responsibility of a Chief Diversity Officer (CDO). Some chief diversity officers role have been limited to Title IX protections and evaluations of sexual assualts. However, many scholars on structural equity in higher education argue that the role of the chief diversity officer can be extremely limiting if the institution does not embed the principles of equity, justice, and inclusion in the fabric, culture and policies, of the institution and if the university does not empower the Chief Diversity Officer to hold the university accountable for employing these principles.[134] Shifting the focus to advancing the principles of inclusive excellence has resulted in some universities exploring and implementing expanded or new divisions dedicated to fostering inclusive excellence and equity.[135]

Many colleges and universities have conducted campus climate studies to assess the state of affairs as experienced by students, faculty and staff. Such studies have been coupled with equity scorecards to document the extent of transformational change needed to equitably serve and educate diverse students, and equitably employ and retain diverse faculty and staff.[136] In the past, CSUN has administered campus climate surveys, however the results of these surveys have not been made widely available to the campus and many speculate whether or not the results have informed any structural changes at the university. Moving forward, we must close the loop on all of the assessments conducted on campus and communicate with the campus community what we learned from the results, how we recommend to move forward and the steps we will take to move us forward.

Should Inclusive Excellence be our long-term goal?

Building the capacity for a sustained equity infrastructure is an iterative process that will evolve with the university as the culture shifts to a more inclusive and just environment.[137] While long-term planning models are commonplace in higher education, the actualization of an inclusive equity rich campus culture often

[134] Marshall Sr, Gabriel. "Chief diversity officers (CDOs): The relationships between organizational structure, institutional commitment to inclusive excellence, and cdos' perceptions of their performance in facilitating transformational change." (2019).

[135] Doscher, Stephanie, and Hilary Landorf. "Universal global learning, inclusive excellence, and higher education's greater purposes." *Peer Review* 20.1 (2018): 4-7.

[136] Nolan, Jaime, and Nancy M. Targett. "Developing and Sustaining Inclusive Excellence and a Safe, Healthy, Equitable Campus Community at UNH." *Interim Report Presidential Task Force on Campus Climate. New Hampshire* (2017).

[137] Williams, Damon A. "Inclusive Excellence: UConn Builds Capacity for Diversity and Change." *Connection: The Journal of the New England Board of Higher Education* 21.1 (2006): 17-19.

remains out of reach and equity gaps persist.[138] Ten-year planning models fail to assess the real-time impact on current students, especially students whose first year disenrollment rates and equity gaps are high. Thus, the work of equity must start now. Closing equity gaps at CSUN means being intentional about the current and future educational environment and climate we create.

Currently, two new models are being operationalized among colleges and universities nationwide. The first model is to embed equity and justice into the Division of Student Affairs while maintaining the Chief Diversity Office in the Division of Academic Affairs. The second model is to launch a new division dedicated to fostering equity and inclusion for all students, faculty and staff. The sections below highlight the two models.

Model 1: Embed Equity, Justice and Inclusion in Student Affairs

For many academic institutions, the Division of Student Affairs is the home of cultural resource centers, multicultural centers and centers for social justice. Since these centers primarily serve students, it is not surprising to find them housed in Student Affairs. The recent wave of institutions adopting models of inclusive excellence has propelled the initiatives of Student Affairs forward to include diversity and inclusion values in its mission and strategic planning.

CSU sister campus San Diego State University recently expanded its division of student affairs to include campus diversity. The Division of Student Affairs and Campus Diversity at SDSU seeks to provide cultural experiences, guidance and support to diverse communities, while aiding students throughout their academic journeys as they navigate through the university and professional world. The Student Affairs subdivision contains the standard offices including health services, student life, athletics, financial aid and scholarships. The Campus Diversity subdivision includes cultural centers, a student ombudsman, professors of equity in education, the office of restorative practices, EOP and Ethnic Affairs, Intracommunity Councils, and Inclusive SDSU a communication system. Additionally, Campus Diversity includes the *Center for Inclusive Excellence* which provides professional training and learning communities for faculty and staff.[139] The center also provides policy recommendations, advocates for recruitment of diverse faculty and staff through equity-minded hiring practices, and provides a supportive environment for faculty and staff of underrepresented groups.

Other CSU campuses such as CSU Fullerton, Long Beach and Los Angeles also advance Diversity, Equity & Inclusion (DEI) initiatives in their Division of Student Affairs, without any explicit name changes to the divisions. At Fullerton, the Divsion of Student Affairs offer a host of required and voluntary training to the campus community ranging from sexual harrassment and sexual misconduct training to LGBTQ+ Ally and UndocuAlly training. They also partner with various DEI programs offered around campus and host campus conservations on DEI issues. Recently, CSU Fullerton implemented the Associate Vice President Identity & Belonging,

[138] Provost, Nam, and Pat Pratt-Cook. *Organizational Development and Strategic Planning through an Inclusive Excellence Lens*. Diss. The College of St. Scholastica, 2017.
[139] https://sacd.sdsu.edu/organization-chart

as a member of the Student Affairs Leadership Team. At CSU Los Angeles, their Vice President has the title of Vice President for Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Student Life.

This model centers the work of equity and inclusion within Student Affairs as its primary purpose is to provide services, resources, and support to students of diverse backgrounds. Implicit in this model is the student-centered approach designed to cultivate rich educational experiences. The centers, programs, and resources enhance the learning, social and cultural engagements for students. This includes professional development and training for faculty and staff in the areas of cultural competency, anti-racism and implicit bias training. At some institutions, policy development around equitable recruitment of diverse faculty and staff are also tied to student affairs, as research accurately documents the impact of faculty and classroom pedagogy on students' academic success and retention.

Other Campus Models

University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire

Oakland University

University of Louisville

Model 2: Establish a New Division of Equity, Justice and Inclusion

Encompassing the values of DEI partnered with accountability structures, some institutions are opting to create an additional division focused on advancing equity, justice and inclusion in both Academic Affairs and Student Affairs. While equity, justice and inclusive excellence naturally bonds to Student Affairs, students must encounter these same principles in the classroom and in their engagement in offices and units within Academic Affairs. Universities must also foster inclusion and belonging for faculty and staff of diverse backgrounds and provide the necessary DEI and justice training for all faculty and staff. Equally, leadership accountability is required to dismantle inequities in educational and employment access, retention, and success. These newly formed divisions of equity, diversity and inclusion cultivate transformational change throughout the organizational structures of the institution from academic departments/programs, health services, financial aid and cash services, to resource centers, housing and transportation services. Faculty development and leadership training are additional areas of support offered through this division. Inclusive pedagogy adoptions are also advanced with inclusive hiring and evaluation practices for faculty in and outside of the classroom.

As an example, UC Berkeley Division of Equity and Inclusion[140] integrates equity, inclusion and diversity into the university by providing leadership, accountability and models of inclusive excellence. The division provides intentional programming to students to increase access and success, provide leadership development for staff and faculty advisors, and focus on closing equity gaps with the goal of ensuring that all students thrive. The division structure includes centers for educational justice and community engagement (cultural centers), educational

[140] https://diversity.berkeley.edu/about

partnerships (Upward Bound, Community College Transfer Center, etc.), disabled students programs, basic needs, centers for educational excellence and equity (veteran services, EOP, re-entry student program, student parent center, etc.). The Division also includes the Othering & Belonging Institute, Student Equity & Success, Graduate Diversity, and Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Belonging offices.[141] Highlighted in the first annual impact report, UC Berkeley launched several initiatives to address inequities in education for students. A scholarship program to increase recruitment of African American students was launched, a steering committee was formed to provided recommendations on how to become an anti-racist campus, building names were reviewed, a gender recognition policy was established, and an experience survey was created.

Other campuses across the nation have also established new divisions for DEI advancements. At Ohio University the Division of Diversity and Inclusion promotes the university's Inclusive Excellence Strategic Plan whereby students' access, equity, inclusion and success are fostered. The division houses the multicultural center, the LGBT Center, the Women's Center, and the Office of Multicultural Success and Retention. Recruitment and inclusion initiatives for diverse faculty are also championed by the division. Ohio University has been awarded the HEED award for diversity four years in a row.

Other Campus Models

Ohio University

University of Wisconsin , Whitewater

University of New Mexico

Grand Valley State University

Developing a Pathway to Model Inclusive Excellence

Where do we go from here?

The opportunity to reset and model accountability for equity work is before us. While Academic Affairs manages the bulk of the academic learning on campus, Student Affairs also affords a high level of educational, social, and cultural engagement. Housing the employment of equity, justice and inclusion in either division limits the University's ability to transcend these values across the university and restricts accountability efforts. The work of equity and inclusive excellence has to be a larger campus priority.[142] Therefore, ***it is our recommendation to build a Division of Equity, Justice and Inclusive Excellence*** to serve as the central hub of the University's equity infrastructure. The division would have branches to both Student Affairs and Academic Affairs, and would:

[141] https://diversity.berkeley.edu/sites/default/files/ei_orgchart_jan_2021.pdf

[142] Williams, Damon A. "Achieving inclusive excellence: Strategies for creating real and sustainable change in quality and diversity." *About Campus* 12.1 (2007): 8-14.

1. Communicate and advance the University's commitment to equity, justice and inclusion,
2. Spearhead DEI initiatives and policies in recruitment and success of students, faculty and staff of diverse backgrounds,
3. Work in partnerships across campus on inclusive and diverse curriculum and pedagogy development,
4. Develop restorative justice partnership and land acknowledgements with indigenous communities,
5. Lead research and training on equitable educational access and success,
6. Provide anti-racism, implicit-bias training and other equity-focused trainings,
7. Advance educational and social justice for the campus and community,
8. House and fund the cultural and resource centers,
9. Lead DEI assessment and accountability efforts, and
10. Champion rights and protections for students, faculty and staff to learn and work in a just and inclusive environment free of discrimination.

The Chief Diversity Officer and the Office of Equity and Diversity can be leveraged to start the foundation of this new division. The current office contains trained specialists who can lead the university's efforts to model inclusive excellence. To start, expanding the office into a new division would entail establishing a clear mission and direction, increasing the staff, mapping resources and offices that would fall under the division, and providing adequate funding to support the operations of a new division. The Division should also be led by a Vice President for Equity, Diversity and Inclusion. The VP for Equity, Diversity and Inclusion should report to the President. Further investigation is warranted to assess the feasibility and financial support to build out the recommended division.

FURTHER CALL TO ACTION:
PRIORITY 3

Throughout the Identity-Based Resource Center Research Project supplemental resources and support were advanced as additional opportunities to enhance the educational experiences of CSUN students, faculty and staff. One of the main areas articulated was building a welcoming, equitable and inclusive campus culture. Also, the need to maintain and sustain high impact programs that cultivate student success was communicated. Third, enhancing financial aid and housing structures with an equity framework was deemed essential for low-income, Pell eligible and parent scholars. Finally, supportive transportation services were also offered as an additional means for enriching students' experiences by meeting their basic needs. Each of these areas are examined in this section.

Building a Welcoming, Equitable and Inclusive Campus Culture

Colleges and universities pride themselves on the culture and community of the campus which contributes to the overall sense of belonging. This is especially true for universities with major sports teams. Community is often built around support for the sporting teams and mascots are symbols of pride and ownership. For universities without significant sports cultures, community building is situated around the values and experiences of the students, faculty and staff, and the university mascot represents those values which may diverge significantly for students of color.[143]

Does our campus culture reflect our commitment to inclusive excellence?

At CSUN, community and belonging is experienced vastly different by diverse communities. While some campus members buy into being a "Matador," many are unclear about exactly what the Matador culture is. Even still, many campus members find the Matador mascot to be culturally inappropriate and insensitive. The lack of cultural connection and the feelings of racial bias pose as barriers to underrepresented campus members of diverse backgrounds.[144] The question of a culturally conscious and inclusive campus culture that is welcoming of diverse communities continues to be a question that CSUN must answer.

> ***"Representation Matters! Address the Mascot!" (Faculty/Staff Focus Group)***

> ***"Represent their native roots: Oaxacan, Aztec, Mayans, Quechua, etc. Matadors should not be represented – it is a Hispanic figure that doesn't represent us." (Faculty/Staff Focus Group)***

Community members expressed concern surrounding the culture of the university and many belief that the university is unwelcoming, racist, and is culturally incompetent to serve the diverse populations. As an HSI, some argue that CSUN is an Hispanic enrolling institution and not an Hispanic-serving institution because CSUN is not reflective of the cultural diversity

[143] Hussain, Maryam, and James M. Jones. "Discrimination, diversity, and sense of belonging: Experiences of students of color." *Journal of Diversity in Higher Education* 14.1 (2021): 63.

[144] Garcia, Gina A. "Defined by outcomes or culture? Constructing an organizational identity for Hispanic-serving institutions." *American Educational Research Journal*54.1_suppl (2017): 111S-134S.

among Latinx/a/os, community and family values are absent, and teaching and learning are normalized to white culture; which many argue is a reflection of the faculty composition.[145] Within the Identity-based centers research project, many participants communicated feeling disconnected to the university and have routinely experienced an uninviting campus culture especially for students and faculty of color.

> "For me, resources only go so far, when the culture & the system itself is transphobic, racist, & exclusionary." (Student Focus Group)

> "Ethnic studies is the only place where I have a sense of belonging and feel welcome. Outside of ethnic studies, you are alone." (Student Focus Group)

> "Provide support services in an environment that is welcoming, and sensitive to the specific needs of students. No one size fits all systems." (Faculty/Staff Focus Group)

> "CSUN does have spaces, but not catered space and it is not welcoming." (Student Focus Group)

> "Our administrators are all white. We need more administrators of color. Because they don't get the ethnic struggle, or how to fix the campus to be more welcoming. We need a welcoming space, and it is not right now." (Faculty/Staff Focus Group)

> "Many students don't come to campus because of how much they're put off by their first experience. We could build good will by having a plan of reaching out and making them feel welcome and letting them know how you can help them." (Faculty/Staff Focus Group)

Cultivating a sense of belonging goes beyond the campus mascot, it entails promoting an inclusive welcoming environment[146] (See *Marginalization and Invisibility*). For underrepresented groups, universities must be intentional about including these communities in the faculty and staff/leadership composition and in the visual representation around campus, promote culturally compatible curriculum and pedagogies, and must model inclusive excellence in the policies, practices and attitudes of all community members and especially by university leadership.[147]

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[145] Garcia, Gina Ann. "What does it mean to be Latinx-serving? Testing the utility of the typology of HSI organizational identities." *Association of Mexican American Educators Journal* 11.3 (2017): 109-138.
[146] https://www.aacu.org/making-excellence-inclusive
[147] Museus, Samuel D., Varaxy Yi, and Natasha Saelua. "How culturally engaging campus environments influence sense of belonging in college: An examination of differences between White students and students of color." *Journal of Diversity in Higher Education* 11.4 (2018): 467.

CSUN Welcome Center

Identifying the core values of CSUN grounded in equity and inclusive excellence will lead the campus in espousing those values to its community and increase buy-in and sense of belonging. Many college campuses utilize campus welcome centers to promote their campus culture to potential students and faculty[148], they support belonging among current community members, and build connections while increasing engagement with the local community.[149] A campus welcome center can serve as a centralized hub for all things CSUN, promote programming and advertise resources. It can also serve as a central communication system for the campus regarding campus promotions, events, and opportunities to connect to the campus and local community. After identifying the university's equity core values and principles of inclusive excellence, CSUN can design a strategic plan for implementation of those values which should include cultivating a sense of belonging to the campus and advancing the campus culture. **We recommend CSUN investigate the usefulness of a Campus Welcome Center that is inclusive and representative of the diversity of the campus.**

Anti-Racism and Cultural Training

Building capacity to support and equitably serve diverse communities requires ongoing training and professional development of university leadership, faculty, staff and students.[150] Creating inclusive excellence promotes teacher education that is culturally competent and relevant to the diverse learners in the classroom.[151] Racism and cultural biases continue in higher education however, the traditional DEI models arguably fall short of transforming campus cultures to be just, inclusive and equitable.[152] This reality has caused many to rethink anti-racism and cultural inclusion approaches on college campuses. Ash et.al (2020) published a model for change that advocates for shared governance and leadership across racial lines while simultaneously advancing knowledge on systemic inequities. The promotion of shared responsibility, shared accountability and shared power is presented as a structural shift in the direction of inclusive excellence. Central to this model of inclusive excellence is racial equity-focused training.

Within the CSU system, several mandatory and voluntary trainings are offered, including training on sexual harrasmnet and sexual misconduct and information security. Supplemental training generally varies from campus to campus and typically are housed within faulty development and human resources. Increasingly, the CSUN campus community has advocated for cultural competency and anti-racism trainings for faculty, staff and administrators.

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[148] Leece, Rhonda. "Building a Sense of Belonging for New Students Through the Use of a Welcome Pack." *Journal of the Australian & New Zealand Student Services Association* 44 (2014).
[149] Ning, Ling, Kimberly Kruchen, and Crystal Cyr. "Belonging and Mattering in the First-Year Welcome Experience: A Comparison Study Before and During COVID-19." *Journal of College Orientation, Transition, and Retention* 28.2 (2021).
[150] Ash, Allison N., et al. "Anti-racism in higher education: A model for change." *Race and Pedagogy Journal: Teaching and Learning for Justice* 4.3 (2020): 2.
[151] Everett, Sakeena, and Theda Gibbs Grey. "Creating inclusive excellence: A model for culturally relevant teacher education." *Urban Education Research & Policy Annuals* 4.2 (2016).
[152] Ash, Allison N., et al. "Anti-racism in higher education: A model for change." *Race and Pedagogy Journal: Teaching and Learning for Justice* 4.3 (2020): 2.

Unsurprisingly, participants in the Identity-Based Centers Research Project also articulated a need for the university to invest in teacher and leadership training (See Figure Word Tree Training).

Participants stated:

> "Having faculty training on cultural competence would help because one of my white professors was talking about a racially sensitive issue and didn't discuss or give proper recognition to the impact it had rather than what happened which made me feel out of place as a student of color." (Student Focus Group)
>
> "The university has to model their mission of diversity with faculty and staff to really connect with students of color. Students also need access to identity based peer mentors. We also need more equity training and available resources for faculty and staff around DEI sponsored by CSUN." (Faculty/Staff Focus Group)
>
> "Representation is the most important. Students have to be able to see themself in order to take it seriously. Bringing in alumni, giving students visibility, and making professors feel comfortable talking about culturally relevant resources and making sure they're trained to do that." (Faculty/Staff Focus Group)
>
> "We need training for faculty and staff to be able to engage the diversity of our students. Training on cultural humility and race consciousness." (Faculty/Staff Focus Group)
>
> "Faculty need training yearly to disrupt the matrix of domination and racism and microaggressions. Direct and frequent training on awareness of microaggressions, interrupting the matrices of dominance, and supporting cultural wealth. University refuses to fund it, saying it's a Union issue." (Faculty/Staff Focus Group)

For participants, both instructors in the classroom and university leaders should engage in inclusive educational training that equips them with the historical and contemporary knowledge of BIPOC and other diverse communities and their experiences with injustices, inequities and systems of domination. Researchers note positive implications for equity training on students overall experience and academic success.[153] Faculty of color also experience improved work environments and relations when equity training and an equity rich culture is advanced.

Center for Ethnic Studies (Draft Proposal)

Some institutions have launched centers for Ethnic Studies to advance systematic anti-racism research and literature, training and professional development, and curriculum development. Currently underway, the CSUN Council of Ethnic Studies is preparing to implement an Ethnic Studies Center. The background as provided notes that CSUN was provided with funding from the Chancellor's Office to implement AB 1460 legislation on the CSUN campus. Part of that

[153] Derman-Sparks, Louise, and Carol Brunson Phillips. *Teaching/learning anti-racism: A developmental approach*. Teachers College Press, 1997.

training

the diversity of our students
to have access to events
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DEI does is policy
MSA students Faculty education
to provide support , assistance ,
yet still dignified nutrition
and
and faculty have had diversity
and microaggressions . Direct and frequent
Anonymous Domestic violence by standard
based peer mentors . More equity
collective conference rooms , a collective
community . Unisex bathrooms . Actual disability
Conflict and cultural conflict resolution
cultural inclusion . Need culturally relevant
Culturally relevant and anti - racist
equity minded . Provide cultural awareness
A student said having
students . Need appropriate staff /
faculty
Faculty Development and collaboration on
based peer mentors .“ More
from a privileged position .”
FREE
is going to be a
living in dorms . Trauma informed
in school so giving
support , faculty / staff need
more
more formalized mentoring . Faculty need
need anti - racist and cultural
one year to another . Educational
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no structure built no
Student
that they are engaging with
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training . So be intentional in
training for faculty Anti - racism

it doesn’t directly serve students .“
,
teach students to be mindful
to best address student intersectionality .
Need to have cultural relevancy
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So be intentional in training
: I feel tokenized in class
about topics like microaggressions to
accessibility support , not just
and
available resources for faculty
center Wellness Center has wellness
CORE Change the institution by
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for
Anti - racism training
families Crisis intervention
grant writing and research .
is not available afterward , events
Need to address faculty and
no assessment no student armed
nor preparation as an instructor ,
awareness of microaggressions , interrupting
on
competence would help
cultural
humility and race
or voluntary resources about different
piece where we ensure students
students to be thoughtful of
There are a lot of
deal with so much .
to
staff , faculty , admin , etc .
the professors to understand
with them . They don’t feel
yearly to disrupt the matrix

strategy, as determined by the CSUN Council on Ethnic Studies (CES), was to establish a multidisciplinary Ethnic Studies Center for the purpose of implementing activities, programming, and research to support that intended goal. The purpose of the center states:

> The CSUN Ethnic Studies Center is committed to the growth, development, and sustainability of ethnic studies through the cultivation of the current and next generation of ethnic studies scholar- practitioners. Key pillars include pedagogy, research, solidarity, and community. (Provided by CSUN Ethnic Studies Council)

The Center for Ethnic Studies proposals the following framework of activities:

1. Build a pipeline of Ethnic Studies scholars practitioners.
2. Provide mentorship and scholarly engagement to students.
3. Conduct leading research justice and community transformation.
4. Provide Ethnic Studies focused faculty development.
5. Serve as a faculty consultation ARM on equity infrastructure.
6. Provide culturally competent professional development training for teachers.
7. Foster collaborative relationships with local cultural communities.
8. Advance Ethnic Studies, anti-racism, and decolonial pedagogies and methodologies.
9. Promote cross-institutional scholarship.
10. Disseminate equity-informed research, practices and programming.

The proposed Center for Ethnic Studies can be leveraged by the university to provide expert consultations, professional development and training, and lead research studies on equitable and inclusive curriculum and pedagogies. Ideally, such a center would be housed with the ethnic cultural houses, which is recommended to be placed in Sierra Hall. Given the proximity of the Ethnic Studies Departments to Sierra Hall and the interconnectedness to the cultural resource centers, it makes logical sense to carve out space in Sierra Hall for the Center for Ethnic Studies.

Other Campus Models

CSU Los Angeles College of Ethnic Studies

The Ohio State University Center for Ethnic Studies

University of Nebraska, Lincoln Institute for Ethnic Studies

University of Wisconsin, Parkside The Center for Ethnic Studies

Maintaining and Sustaining High Impact Programs that Cultivate Student Success

CSUN is home to a variety of grant funded programs that are supported by local, federal and institutional funding sources. As part of this research study, the research team met with a variety of programs that could have direct impact on the creation of identity-based resource centers. As part of our data collection process, we requested that these entities participate in the study to identify how identity-based resource centers could provide support to their structure, and how to build collaborative relationships with each existing entity. Below is a list of campus departments and organizations who participated in this process:

(1) *Civil Discourse & Social Change (CDSC):* A campus-wide initiative that combines education, community involvement and sustained activism on issues around social justice and social change. The initiative operates under the auspices of the Provost, offering dynamic programming designed to provide social justice education opportunities to students and faculty.

(2) *BUILD Poder:* Building Infrastructure Leading to Diversity (BUILD) Promoting Opportunities for Diversity in Education and Research (PODER) is a large undergraduate biomedical research training program established in 2014 by a $22 million grant from the National Institutes of Health.

(3) *HSI Pathways:* The program aimed to support undergraduate students in the humanities and related fields to pursue a career in the professoriate by preparing them for admission to and persistence through a Ph.D. program.

(4) *Asian American Studies Pathways Project:* The Asian American Studies Pathways Project (AASPP) is a student retention initiative supported through the Campus Quality Fee (CQF) and sponsored by the Asian American Studies Department at CSUN since late 2017. The Asian American Pathways Project is in its 3rd year of existence, founded by Professor Tracy Lachica Buenavista from the Asian American Studies department.

(5) *African American/Black Student Success Initiative:* A CQF grant funded program operated by the University Student Union to support Black males (Black Male Scholars) and female students (WISDOM) build community, develop identity and create lasting relationships with faculty and staff.

We identified the need to institutionalize these initiatives, some of which have demonstrated years of success supporting students to connect and succeed on campus and beyond. Others have been unable to continuously assess impact, which we've addressed in our findings earlier. Many of these initiatives are yearly funded by the Campus Quality Fee program and are not guaranteed to continue. Others are federally funded and grants are near completion or will be ending in the upcoming years. There is an opportunity for the campus to explore and identify how these initiatives impact student success, continue to assess how the campus can support capacity building and provide sustainable funding for these initiatives.

Equitable Financial Aid and Housing Structures

Housing Support for Students

Housing security continues to be a major social justice issue impacting the nation and California. Homelessness, housing instability, and lack of affordable housing all plague the greater Los Angeles area and CSUN students encounter these same housing insecurities.[154] Student parents and students with families and caregiving responsibilities, formerly incarcerated students, student veterans and former foster youth students experienced heightened housing challenges that impact their ability to access and pursue a college degree.[155]

Increasingly, colleges and universities are exploring inclusive housing practices to address the injustices and insecurities experienced by students, faculty and staff.[156] Housing support, especially for low-income and unhoused students was consistently articulated in the Identity-Based Centers Research Project. Inclusive housing options, short-term housing, and basic needs were all discussed as areas for improvement within the current CSUN housing programs. (See Word Tree for Housing)

> "Overnight sleep options especially for students unhoused and commuters where students can reserve a bedspace for the night." (Student Focus Group)

> "Address housing insecurity and support for unhoused students and provide family friendly housing." (Faculty/Staff Focus Group)

> "We need shelter for unhoused students and unhoused student support." (Faculty/Staff Focus Group)

> "Accessible housing for students. People who are needing support services, we need to figure out how we can support APIDA students' emergency needs." (Student Focus Group)

> "We need to increase unhoused student support and provide safe spaces." (Faculty/Staff Focus Group)

> "While SRC offers showers, a great resource would be additional hygiene stations on campus like washrooms dedicated spaces for students commuting and unhoused." (Student Focus Group)

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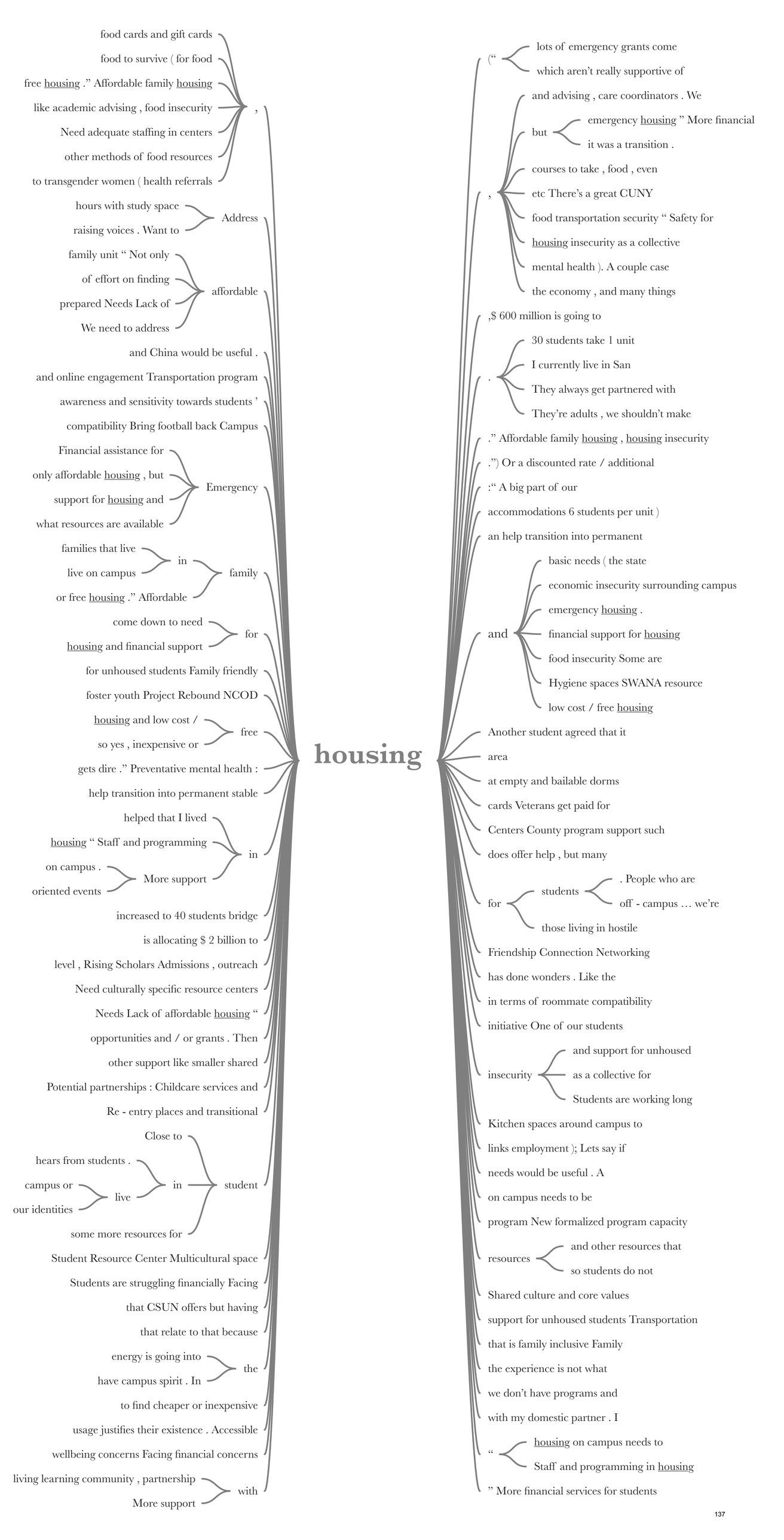
[154] Broton, Katharine, and Sara Goldrick-Rab. "The dark side of college (un) affordability: Food and housing insecurity in higher education." *Change: The Magazine of Higher Learning*48.1 (2016): 16-25.

[155] Schudde, Lauren T. "The causal effect of campus residency on college student retention." *The Review of Higher Education*34.4 (2011): 581-610.

[156] Toth, Isabel, et al. "Columbus Scholar House: Innovative Housing for Student Parents." (2016).


housing
food cards and gift cards
food to survive (for food
free housing ." Affordable family housing
like academic advising , food insecurity
Need adequate staffing in centers
other methods of food resources
to transgender women (health referrals
,
hours with study space
raising voices . Want to
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family unit " Not only
of effort on finding
prepared Needs Lack of
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affordable
and China would be useful .
and online engagement Transportation program
awareness and sensitivity towards students '
compatibility Bring football back Campus
Financial assistance for
only affordable housing , but
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Emergency
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or free housing ." Affordable
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housing and financial support
for
for unhoused students Family friendly
foster youth Project Rebound NCOD
housing and low cost /
so yes , inexpensive or
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gets dire ." Preventative mental health :
help transition into permanent stable
helped that I lived
housing " Staff and programming
on campus .
oriented events
More support
in
increased to 40 students bridge
is allocating $ 2 billion to
level , Rising Scholars Admissions , outreach
Need culturally specific resource centers
Needs Lack of affordable housing "
opportunities and / or grants . Then
other support like smaller shared
Potential partnerships : Childcare services and
Re - entry places and transitional
Close to
hears from students .
campus or
our identities
live
in
some more resources for
student
Student Resource Center Multicultural space
Students are struggling financially Facing
that CSUN offers but having
that relate to that because
energy is going into
have campus spirit . In
the
to find cheaper or inexpensive
usage justifies their existence . Accessible
wellbeing concerns Facing financial concerns
living learning community , partnership
More support
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which aren't really supportive of
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and advising , care coordinators . We
but
emergency housing " More financial
it was a transition .
courses to take , food , even
etc There's a great CUNY
food transportation security " Safety for
housing insecurity as a collective
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They're adults , we shouldn't make
." Affordable family housing , housing insecurity
.") Or a discounted rate / additional
:" A big part of our
accommodations 6 students per unit)
an help transition into permanent
and
basic needs (the state
economic insecurity surrounding campus
emergency housing .
financial support for housing
food insecurity Some are
Hygiene spaces SWANA resource
low cost / free housing
Another student agreed that it
area
at empty and bailable dorms
cards Veterans get paid for
Centers County program support such
does offer help , but many
for
students
. People who are
off - campus … we're
those living in hostile
Friendship Connection Networking
has done wonders . Like the
in terms of roommate compatibility
initiative One of our students
insecurity
and support for unhoused
as a collective for
Students are working long
Kitchen spaces around campus to
links employment); Lets say if
needs would be useful . A
on campus needs to be
program New formalized program capacity
resources
and other resources that
so students do not
Shared culture and core values
support for unhoused students Transportation
that is family inclusive Family
the experience is not what
we don't have programs and
with my domestic partner . I
"
housing on campus needs to
Staff and programming in housing
" More financial services for students

We recommend CSUN conduct an analysis of the current student housing programs and evaluate how the campus can:

1. Develop and sustain support for unhoused students.
2. Expand existing emergency housing program and options for students.
3. Expand housing and policies to be more inclusive and welcoming of students with children and families.

Financial Support for Students

Financial insecurities are reported as barriers to students' academic success and improving financial support is noted as an essential way to increase academic achievement.[157] Financial aid policies that do not consider low-income students, parent scholars, undocumented students, student veterans and formerly incarcerated students can be extremely harmful to students and their retention and graduation.[158] Financial aid policies also affect access to college and advanced degrees, especially for low-income students.[159]

Financial aid challenges were frequently discussed among student participants in the identity-based resource centers research project. From lack of guidance through the FAFSA process to threatening billing notices, students expressed experiencing a non-inclusive environment surrounding financial aid on campus. Additionally, students, faculty and staff communicated great concern regarding policies for paying and financially supporting undocumented and international students. Ultimately, students reported that roadblocks with financial aid add barriers to their retention and success.[160] Students stated:

> "I have no idea how to register for classes with financial aid issues." (Student Focus Group)
>
> "Need more advertised support for class registration. Many students take semesters off because of financial aid because they don't know the process. Some drop out and take a semester off because they miss financial aid deadlines." (Student Focus Group)
>
> " No help with financial aid, got the runaround with financial aid and enrollment and registration." (Student Focus Group)

Students also articulated a need for increased paid employment opportunities including internships.

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[157] Chaplot, Priyadarshini, et al. "Beyond Financial Aid How colleges can strengthen the financial stability of low-income students and improve student outcomes." (2015).

[158] Lynch, Mamie, Jennifer Engle, and Jose L. Cruz. "Priced out: How the Wrong Financial-Aid Policies Hurt Low-Income Students." *Education Trust* (2011).

[159] Hansen, W. Lee. "Impact of student financial aid on access." *Proceedings of the Academy of Political Science* 35.2 (1983): 84-96.

[160] Lynch, Mamie, Jennifer Engle, and Jose L. Cruz. "Priced out: How the Wrong Financial-Aid Policies Hurt Low-Income Students." *Education Trust* (2011).

"We need financial service resources for low-income students- especially paid internships." (Student Focus Group)

"I would like to see paid internship support." (Student Focus Group)

We recommend CSUN conduct an equity assessment of financial aid and student financial services policies to address the following:

1. Evaluate FAFSA and scholarship application support for students.
2. Inclusive cost of attendance formula.
3. Reimagine financial aid policies that do ot penalize students for non-academic related assistance received .
4. Build a work-study model that supports undocumented and international students.
5. Model Inclusive Excellence and communicate care in messaging to students.

Supportive Transportation Services

CSUN reportedly operates as a commuter campus for faculty, staff and students. As a commuter campus, transportation concerns surrounding access, affordability, and sustainability frequently arise. Not surprisingly, participants in the Identity-Based Centers Research Project communicated areas of need and importance in transportation services on and off-campus. We recommend that campus transportation review and consider the following obstacles faced by the campus community.

Accessibility of the Campus

Differently-abled community members at CSUN access and traverse the campus in various ways. However, given the size of the campus, access to programs and resources may be restricted for students with various needs, faculty and staff. Support for differently-abled students to access and get around campus was articulated frequently in the focus groups sessions and on the student survey.[161] Campus maps with accessibility markers were advanced along with transportation assistants from parking lots to classrooms and offices.

" CSUN needs to provide transportation for the disabled on campus from class to class." (Student Survey)

" I would like to see some form of transportation on campus like the golf carts so that it's able to take people around on campus. For example, people like myself who have a visual impairment or some form of other disability. The reason being because the campus is very big." (Student Survey)

"Accessible transportation for disabled students & campus maps." (Student Focus Group)

[161] Balsas, Carlos JL. "Sustainable transportation planning on college campuses." *Transport Policy* 10.1 (2003): 35-49.

Considering and meeting the transportation needs of our diverse campus community is a way to advance disability justice and model inclusive excellence.

Accessing Resources-Getting Around Campus

On-campus transportation services were reported as limited or non-existent access to cultural houses and resource centers. Currently, no transportation services exist to transport the campus community to cultural houses and centers on Halsted Ave. Students expressed that the lack of transportation to these resources limits and/or prevents their ability to access the services and programs provided. Additionally, students expressed concern for the single shuttle pickup location on campus to the local Metrolink. Shuttle bus services around campus to access resources and centers is recommended.

> "We need more Black resource centers on campus, we have the Black House but you have to leave the campus for that. We need something that is near Sierra Hall because a lot of Africana Studies classes are in that hall. Having a place where you can get out of class and don't have to go far to access that resource center would be great." (Student Focus Group)

> "I had to run from one end of campus to University Commons to get a shuttle, we need better transportation around campus." (Student Focus Group)

> "We need to make the Black House a shuttle stop due to its current location." (Faculty/Staff Focus Group)

Commuter Transportation Support

Transportation support for commuter student, faculty and staff especially after hours was the most frequently discussed area for improvement with transportation services at CSUN. Challenges with public transportation and cost contribute to students' concerns and present a barrier to their education.[162]

> "Transportation support, had to take a bus at 6am to get to class on time. Classes also end about 11pm so I had to Uber home for an entire semester, it was expensive." (Student Focus Group)

> "Free public transportation. Gas is expensive and parking is outrageous. I would like free Metro rides for students. And no, not a discount. I pay $5,000 for 3 months of school in tuition alone. I would hope the university would at least cover the cost of our inefficient service that is LA's public transport." (Student Survey)

[162] Troester-Trate, Katy Elizabeth. "Food insecurity, inadequate childcare, & transportation disadvantage: student retention and persistence of community college students." *Community College Journal of Research and Practice* 44.8 (2020): 608-622.

> “I would like to see transportation services and maybe a daycare for parents that don't have a place to leave their kids while in class. A parenting group support could also be beneficial.” (Student Survey)

> “We need accessible transportation, currently only 10-5pm available. We need after hours transportation since classes run late.” (Student Focus Group)

> “We need a carpool or fast and easily accessible transportation from across the greater Los Angeles area.” (Student Focus Group)

> “Classes end after 6pm and thus would miss the shuttle or had to leave class to get home. Thus, we need after-hours transportation.” (Student Focus Group)

> “Need CSUN Uber transportation that is free of charge and don’t want student fees to increase.” (Student Focus Group)

Some universities have introduced shuttle, Urber and Lyft services to supplement and support the transportation needs of their campus community. For instance, the University of Southern California provides a free Lyft service to its campus members during late night hours. **It is recommended that CSUN evaluate the feasibility of a free transportation service for its students, faculty and staff to access campus and the greater Los Angeles area.**

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Final Thoughts:

MODELING INCLUSIVE EXCELLENCE

The call for a university system rooted in *Inclusive Excellence* entails systematically aligning the universities mission, values, and strategic priorities into the heart of the campus infrastructure and culture.

AREAS OF CONCERN

Absence of Equity, Justice and Inclusion

Underrepresentation & Marginalization of BIPOC Communities

Void of Culturally Relevant Resources
Need for anti-racism and implict bias training

Racial exclusion in curriculum & pedagogy

Lack sense of belonging

Unwelcoming campus climate
Lack of inclusive housing, financial aid and transportation services

ANSWERING THE CALL TO ACTION

BUILDING EQUITY INFRASTRUCTURE

Mission and Vision Alignment
Advancing Equity Core Values
Diversification of Faculty, Staff & Admin
Equity Rich Campus Accountability & Policies

EQUITY RICH RESOURCES

Cultural Resource Centers & Houses
Thrive Center
Racial Equity Training
Advancing cultually relevant curriculum

PROMOTING AN INCLUSIVE AND WELCOMING CAMPUS CULTURE

CSUN Welcome Center
Equitable Housing
Inclusive Fin Aid
Supportive Transportation