



**Report and Recommendations
for
Improving Black and
African American
Student Outcomes**

California Community Colleges
Black and African American
Advisory Panel

February 10, 2020



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Executive Summary

INTRODUCTION

The California Community Colleges' *Vision for Success* focuses on full and open access to higher education and improved student outcomes for all Californians. To that end, the Chancellor's Office is working to increase the lagging enrollment and completion rates of Black and African American students at college campuses throughout the state. This effort is supported by the Campaign for College Opportunity's 2019 report on the State of Higher Education for Black Californians, which found that 63% of Black community college students do not earn a degree or certificate, or transfer within six years. Moreover, according to the report, California community colleges transfer only 3% of Black students within two years, and only 35% within six years.

In a major step to address this issue, the Chancellor's Office organized the California Community Colleges Black and African American Advisory Panel (Advisory Panel) in fall 2017. The Advisory Panel was tasked with helping to increase enrollment rates in community colleges as well as the graduation, completion and transfer rates for Black and African American students. Composed of trusted community leaders in workforce development, civil rights, education, business, youth development and the faith community, the Advisory Panel works closely with the Chancellor's Office and is helping reframe the conversation around opportunities available through California community colleges.

Over the past two years, the Advisory Panel has immersed itself in this work and thrown its full support behind the *Vision for Success*.

This report outlines initial results of two activities – statewide town halls and informal focus groups – conducted by the Advisory Panel and T&T Public Relations specifically to:

- ✓ Better understand the challenges and barriers faced by the Black and African American community, which comprises only 6% of the total student population at the 115 community colleges in the state;
- ✓ Develop partnerships with critical educational and community organizations that can serve as advocates and trusted resources for the California Community Colleges among Black and African American students and their influencers; and,
- ✓ Identify specific recommendations that will improve access, enrollment and completion rates for Blacks and African Americans within the framework of the *Vision for Success*.

Additionally, this report puts forth recommendations by the Advisory Panel based on findings and input from experts on issues ranging from African American male

achievement in community colleges, the community college funding formula, programs for foster youth, formerly incarcerated and re-entry students, and support programs like Umoja, A2MEND, EOPS, and the African American Outreach Initiative.

The Advisory Panel recognizes that some of the recommendations in this report may already be in place at many colleges. In cases where this might apply, the Advisory Panel wishes to make the distinction that although similar programs may exist, such programs have not been effective for Black and African American students and must be modified or enhanced to improve opportunities for college success.

The Advisory Panel further recognizes that it is not the role of the system chancellor to mandate programs for individual college districts. However, the Advisory Panel strongly encourages the chancellor to share these recommendations with individual college districts and encourage their implementation on behalf of Black and African American students on their campuses and in the community at large.

About the Town Halls & College Fairs and Informal Focus Groups

The Advisory Panel created the town halls and college fairs to enable it to *get input directly* from Black and African American students and their families about the challenges they face in enrolling in community college and completing their educational goals once they begin. The attendees were also able to provide feedback about how the California Community Colleges can make positive changes that improve the graduation, certification and transfer rates of Black and African American students. A total of five town halls were held, one each in Los Angeles, Sacramento, Fresno, San Diego and Oakland.

The purpose of the informal focus groups was to delve more deeply into the *student perspective and experience* concerning college and to add to the information gathered at the town halls to ensure that the student voice was being heard. An ancillary purpose of the focus groups was to provide general direction and initial guidance that would inform formal focus group research that took place in fall 2019 to test creative concepts designed with Black and African American communities in mind.

Discussion at each town hall and each focus group centered around four major topics:

- Access – awareness of and barriers to accessing financial aid, social services, on-campus academic support, etc.
- Experience – the on-campus experience of Black and African American students
- Program Completion Rates – barriers and challenges students face that prevent them from finishing their course of study, whether it's obtaining a certificate or degree, or transferring to a four-year university

- Jobs of Today and the Future – awareness of the more than 200 career education programs offered at California community colleges that can lead to rewarding and good paying jobs and careers

In addition, the informal focus groups tested current ads being used by the three California Community College campaigns: Career Education, “I **Can** Afford College” and Associate Degree for Transfer, with Black and African American youth, ages 16 – 24, and adult students ages 25 – 54.

Methodology



Students and parents signing in at the Sacramento Town Hall and College Fair on January 31, 2019

TOWN HALLS

The town halls were created to provide an in-depth look into five communities (Los Angeles, Sacramento, Fresno, San Diego and Oakland) to learn more about the experiences, expectations and challenges to college enrollment and completion for current and prospective Black and African American students and families. In total, the town halls engaged more than 800 community members and were held as follows:

- October 16, 2018 Los Angeles | Holman United Methodist Church
- January 31, 2019 Sacramento | Dr. Ephraim Williams Family Life Center

- April 30, 2019 Fresno | Westside Church of God
- June 5, 2019 San Diego | San Diego City College
- January 28, 2020 Oakland | McClymonds High School

The town halls were planned by locally based work groups comprising Advisory Panel members, community leaders, educators and contractor staff who were responsible for planning events, inviting speakers and participants, and overseeing logistical elements of each town hall.

Importantly, the Advisory Panel had previously defined its work around a *challenge statement* that was crafted to ensure it was being strategic in how it approached that work, which is to help increase community college enrollment and improve completion rates.

Challenge Statement

“Improve access to, experience in and completion of educational, transfer and career opportunities for Black and African American students through the California Community Colleges by providing financial aid information, meaningful support, targeted outreach and strategic communications through collaborative partnerships”

The challenge statement framed the questions posed at each town hall:

1. How can we improve access to college?
2. How can we improve your experience on community college campuses?
3. What must be done to improve completion and graduation rates of Black and African American students?
4. What do you know about career education and the jobs of the future?
5. What do you know about the “I **Can** Afford College,” “Associate Degree for Transfer” and “Career Education” campaigns?

INFORMAL FOCUS GROUPS

The Chancellor’s Office sought to gain greater insights from current and prospective Black and African American college students in a setting where they could engage in frank discussions without the influence of parents, faculty or administrators.

Four informal focus groups were held: one each in Fresno, Oakland, San Diego, and Sacramento, with a total of 36 participants. The informal focus groups were administered

uniformly, utilizing a discussion guide that sought to measure participants' experiences enrolling in college, their experiences on the college campus, their intent to complete their programs, and their knowledge of career education. In addition, the effectiveness of current campaign advertising was tested.

Informal Focus Groups | Data Set

Date	City/Venue	Female	Male	HS Student	College Student
5/1/19	Fresno Westside Church of God	5	2	2	5
5/14/19	Oakland McClymonds High School	6	4	10	0
6/6/19	San Diego San Diego City College	1	5	1	5
6/14/19	Sacramento Greater Sacramento Urban League	9	4	1	12
	Subtotals	21	15	14	22

Major Findings

FINANCIAL AID IS A MAJOR STUMBLING BLOCK

For Black and African American students, the biggest barriers to attending community college are lack of financial support, knowledge about the availability of financial aid and, for those who are aware, self-disqualifying and assuming they will not be eligible for aid.

“Due to the fact that I don’t come from a very wealthy family, financial aid could really help out in my day-to-day needs.”

– Student at San Diego Town Hall

- Students and parents are mostly unaware of the many different programs and resources available at community colleges that could help students succeed in college (financial aid, housing, social programs, food security, child care, special education learners assistance, foster youth support, transfer programs, certificate programs, etc.), but are optimistic and excited about their college future once they learn about them.
- Financial aid or lack of awareness about the process is problematic for many students. In all four cities, participants in the informal focus groups talked about other problems that exacerbated their financial woes. These included issues such as homelessness, incarceration, foster care, lack of family support, and being asked to provide their parents’ financial information when they are no longer in the household with their parents.
- Almost all students said they chose to go to community college because it was less expensive than a four-year college or university.

ISOLATION IS A NEGATIVE FACTOR ON CAMPUS

Across all regions, Black and African American students reported that the on-campus environment is often unfriendly and unwelcoming, with few role models represented in the staff, faculty and administration with whom they could bond or seek advice and counsel.

“Before I found Umoja, when I walked around campus, I didn’t see any other Black people, and I felt a sense of isolation and despair, and sometimes I feel like giving up.”

– Los Angeles community college student

- Isolation is very often a determining factor in whether a student remains in college until completion/transfer/graduation. Having mentors and role models, even off campus, plays a pivotal role in ensuring a student stays in school, not just enrolls.
- Participants in the focus groups were universal in their concerns about the lack of staff, faculty and students who look like them. They talked about being treated differently because of the color of their skin, and some even expressed getting inaccurate information from counselors and other administrators which they attributed to them being Black or African American.
- The feeling of not belonging on campus was described as the “imposter syndrome” and some students stated that they have no voice and face microaggression on a regular basis.
- The “people like me” theme was raised in every focus group without prompting from the moderator. The issue came up either in the flow of conversation or in response to ads, and usually dominated the conversation once it was raised.

LOW AWARENESS OF CAREER EDUCATION PREVENTS STUDENTS FROM PURSUING NEW CAREER PATHWAYS

Informal focus group participants reported an extremely low level of awareness of career education, with students having difficulty identifying career education programs on their campus.

“I had never heard of the Career Education Program until last night at the Town Hall.”

– Fresno focus group participant

- In the town halls, students and parents expressed little awareness of career education program opportunities.
- The value of community college career education programs as a pathway to good paying jobs and careers must be emphasized and made clear to Black and African American current and prospective students and parents.

CAMPUS PROGRAMS ARE DIFFERENTIATORS IN ENSURING STUDENT SUCCESS

Students who participate in campus programs like Umoja, A2MEND and EOPS or have an otherwise strong support system, report higher satisfaction, greater success rates and are more engaged on their campuses.

“It’s important to find the right counselor earlier. If I had known about Umoja or EOPS when I first got here, I could have saved a lot of time and money.”

– Sacramento focus group participant

- In focus groups and town halls throughout the state, students who were involved in programs like Umoja and EOPS had a better handle on their course of study, had access to resources and were more likely to help other students learn the ropes.
- These students also seemed to be more confident about completing their college programs and knowing the ins and outs of obtaining financial aid to pay for college costs.
- Students who received assistance from parents, mentors, and college organizations experienced fewer problems applying for financial aid and successfully completing their educational goal.

OPTIMISM RUNS HIGH, IN SPITE OF BARRIERS

In spite of the many challenges and lack of awareness of resources, Black and African American young people were very optimistic about attending college and completing their programs.

“I believe I will successfully transfer because of the support I am receiving. I should be able to graduate, no problem, in three more semesters.”

– San Diego focus group participant

- Focus group participants stated they were very optimistic about completing their programs. This was true whether they were pursuing a certificate or degree or planning to transfer to a four-year university. None of the participants talked about giving up, including those who had once dropped out and were now on their second time around.
- This finding stands in direct contrast to the low retention rates reported for Black and African American students.

OUTREACH MUST BE CONDUCTED EARLY AND OFTEN

Despite current outreach efforts, awareness about community colleges remains low among students, parents and community advocates who say they need more information

“Bring the information to where the people are, like sports events, the Art Hop in downtown Fresno, and other “out of the box” fun places with fun activities for kids and information for parents.”

– Fresno focus group participant

- Outreach efforts need to be clearly tailored to the Black and African American community. This should include visual representations of students as well as messages about the benefits of attending community college, how to connect with specific support programs and navigate enrollment and financial aid processes to better manage life while completing college programs.
- In spite of being heavily reliant upon digital and social media as their primary information channel, students in the focus groups stated that peer-to-peer and face-to-face communication are most effective, at least initially, in establishing trust.

Recommendations for Improving Outcomes for Black and African American Students



Parents and students were encouraged to participate at the Oakland Town Hall and College Fair on January 28, 2020

The Advisory Panel believes the recommendations made in this document, if properly resourced and invested, could help spark a movement leading to true transformation for Black and African American students in the California Community Colleges. To that end, the Advisory Panel has framed six major recommendations to directly address the most pervasive and entrenched barriers that hinder successful outcomes for Black and African American students. These recommendations closely align with California Community Colleges Chancellor Eloy Ortiz Oakley's *Vision for Success* ([link](#)), which aims to reduce equity and regional achievement gaps through faster improvements among traditionally underrepresented student groups, with the goal of cutting these gaps by 40% within five years and fully closing those achievement gaps within 10 years.

RECOMMENDATION #1: OUTREACH AND AWARENESS

Begin targeted outreach and awareness activities while students are in high school, and ideally middle school, to ensure students, parents and influencers are fully aware of all the resources available regarding financial aid, transfer and career education opportunities at community colleges, and how to access them.

RECOMMENDATION #2: SUPPORT SYSTEMS

Engage and support existing on- and off-campus community leaders, college educators and administrators, support systems, programs and organizations to cultivate an environment of inclusion, trust and achievement for students and parents.

RECOMMENDATION #3: ADVERTISING & INFORMATIONAL MATERIAL

Develop advertising, informational and outreach materials that clearly and obviously target Black and African American students and parents utilizing positive and culturally relevant imagery, people and content that will connect instantly and leave no doubt that they matter.

RECOMMENDATION #4: FINANCIAL AID

Address and eliminate obstacles that currently prevent many Black and African American students from learning about and completing the financial aid process.

RECOMMENDATION #5: CAREER EDUCATION

The Advisory Panel plans to intensify efforts to increase awareness in the Black and African American community of the role career education plays in preparing students for good paying jobs and careers that do not require a four-year degree. Along the same lines, the Vision for Success aims to increase the percent of exiting career education students who report being employed in their field of study, from the most recent statewide average of 60% to an improved rate of 76% – the average among the quintile of colleges showing the strongest performance on this measure – and ensure the median earning gains of the exiting students are at least twice the statewide consumer price index. Improvements on this measure would indicate that colleges are providing career education programs that prepare students for available jobs and offering supports that help students find and secure jobs.

RECOMMENDATION #6: TRANSFER

The goal of the *Vision for Success* is to increase by 35% the number of California community college students transferring annually to a University of California campus or California State University campus. This is the increase needed to meet California's future workforce demand for bachelor's degrees, as projected by the Public Policy Institute of California. (In California, occupations requiring bachelor's degrees are growing even faster than jobs requiring associate degrees or less college.) While ambitious, the pace of improvement envisioned in this goal is not unprecedented: between 2012-13 and 2015-16 (a three-year period), California Community College transfers to California State University campuses increased by 32% and between fall 1999 and fall 2005 (a six-year period), California Community College transfers to University of California campuses

increased by 40%. More specifically, the Advisory Panel aims to improve transfer rates of Black and African American students from the current 3% that transfer within two years, and 35% within six years to levels that are on par with the transfer rates to CSU and UC schools across the system as a whole.

Future



Students had a chance to interact with local community colleges during the Oakland Town Hall and College Fair on January 28, 2020

BACKGROUND AND FUNDING

In fall 2019, the Chancellor’s Office requested \$2.5 million in additional funding from the State of California’s Department of Finance to conduct statewide marketing and outreach specific to Black and African American communities during the 2020-21 fiscal year. Unfortunately, this request did not make it into the state budget in the first round. However, should this funding be allocated, the Chancellor’s Office will create a marketing and outreach scope of work with measurable goals, and provide a report at the end of the year detailing the success and outcomes of the marketing and outreach efforts in order to demonstrate the need for ongoing allocated funds to better reach Black and African American communities.

Following are recommendations for a three-phase approach:

PHASE I (2019-20)

The \$2.5 million funding request for 2020-21 is in addition to the dollars already allocated by the Chancellor's Office to conduct marketing and outreach during the 2019-20 fiscal year for its statewide awareness campaigns (Career Education, Associate Degree for Transfer and "I **Can** Afford College"). This report includes recommendations for activities that are currently underway within the statewide awareness campaigns in 2019-20, and which can be expanded upon, as follows:

Partnerships

- Partner with on-campus high school and college Black Student Unions (BSUs) to generate interest, appreciation and enthusiasm for community college.
- Partner with faith-based and community-based organizations and equip and empower them to be community college champions.
- Partner with cultural brokers who can help connect the dots from college to career.
- Partner with peer teams and mentors both within and outside the system that can find Black students and help them stay enrolled and graduate.
- Partner with on-campus organizations such as Umoja, A2MEND, and the African American Outreach Initiative, to be active partners in outreach to prospective students.

Advertising & Informational Material

- Develop advertising imagery that is aspirational and includes multigenerational, culturally relatable personas that pertain to the Black diaspora.
- Create advertising and informational materials clearly targeted to the Black and African American community.
 - Consider a campaign like UNCF's "A Mind is a Terrible Thing to Waste."
- Direct students and their influencers to online resources and to college and high school counselors, faculty and staff, workshops, support services and programs.
- Provide clear information on transfer opportunities and how to transfer to a guaranteed saved spot at many four-year colleges and universities.
- Increase awareness of the more than 200 career education programs available through community college that can lead to good paying careers.

- Provide easy-to-follow instructions on how to enroll in college and apply for financial aid.
- Create a toolkit with templates for Black and African American outreach that can be used by local colleges – include appropriate images, characterizations, etc.

PHASE II (2020-21)

To support the Chancellor’s Office request for \$2.5 million in additional funding for statewide Black and African American marketing and outreach, the Panel provided recommendations for activities that could be accomplished within that budget in the 2020-21 fiscal year, as follows:

Community Outreach

- Prepare a five-year communications plan that clearly defines the work to be done, persons responsible for doing the work, and measurable outcomes.
- Develop an awareness program that encourages middle school and high school counselors to be advocates for community colleges, especially targeting underserved populations.
 - Focus on helping counselors identify sensitivities and cultural nuances to ensure a higher quality of service to Black and African American students.
 - Consider peer-to-peer counseling using Umoja students to help access other Black students and be a support system to counselors. Provide stipends to the Umoja students.
- Hold an African American Community College Conference where best practices for African American students can be shared with all colleges and other interested parties throughout the state. Another possibility would be to tie-in to other large community college conferences or events where a portion of the focus could be allocated to this work.
 - Develop an outreach mechanism through which to share the best practices beyond the conference so that they can be replicated in other regions/colleges throughout the state.
- Promote dual high school/college enrollment, early and often.

- Conduct career education classes at community-based organizations (CBOs), churches, and service organizations to connect students with community college at the grassroots level, in a relatable, welcoming and comfortable environment.
- Incorporate messaging that conveys “career education *is* an education” into marketing, advertising and outreach efforts.
- Increase awareness and access to all resources and support services sooner.
- Increase financial aid awareness.
 - Conduct enrollment and financial aid workshops in partnership with community-based organizations and cultural brokers who are trusted messengers.
 - Identify community-based organizations that can work with families to ensure students are completing the FAFSA.
 - Include financial aid information and guidance in outreach to high school students in partnership with Umoja.
- Expand outreach efforts to help students complete the FAFSA on time with or without parental support.
 - Work with feeder high schools to encourage all students to complete the FAFSA regardless of whether they’ve decided to attend a four-year or community college or haven’t yet made a decision about attending college. This opens the doors and allows more time for a decision but also gets funding in place
 - Identify safe spaces within the community where students can be reached and will listen to the messages about financial aid.
 - Develop informational material designed to encourage parental support and participation and to reinforce the requirement that parent’s financial records must be submitted to complete the financial aid application process.

Employer Outreach

- Establish linkages with industry and union leaders who have the capacity and are interested in hiring Black students from community colleges.
- Partner with Workforce Development/Investment Boards to:

- Connect students with information about jobs, what’s required, and who’s hiring.
 - Encourage colleges to collaborate with and/or expand on working with local employers to ensure instruction aligns with employer needs. This will help ensure that students are fully prepared for the world of work.
 - Develop best practices list for partnering with Workforce Development/Investment Boards for use/distribution throughout the state.
- The goal of the Vision for Success is to increase by at least 20% the number of California community college students annually who acquire associate degrees, credentials, certificates or specific skill sets that prepare them for an in-demand job. This increase is needed to meet future workforce demands in California, as analyzed by the Centers of Excellence for Labor Market Research. Equally important to the number of students served will be the type of education they receive, and programs, awards, and course sequences needed to match the needs of regional economies and employers.

PHASE III – LONG-TERM RECOMMENDATIONS AND SUPPORT SYSTEM IMPROVEMENTS

The Advisory Panel identified non-communications components that are critical to improving outcomes for Black and African American students but fall outside the scope of the \$2.5 million marketing and outreach funding request. One of the ways to improving outcomes is to reduce the number of units required for a student to obtain a degree. Specifically, the Vision for Success aims to decrease the average number of units accumulated by California Community College students earning associate degrees, from approximately 87 total units (the most recent systemwide average) to 79 total units – the average among the quintile of colleges showing the strongest performance on this measure. (Associate degrees typically require 60 units.) Reducing the average number of units-to-degree will help more students reach their educational goals sooner, and at less cost to them. It will also free up taxpayer dollars that can be put toward serving more students.

Memorandum of Understanding

- Prepare a **Memorandum of Understanding** from Chancellor Oakley to district chancellors regarding expectations and documentation regarding services to support Black and African American students.
 - Include a statement in the narrative that acknowledges the importance of sharing these recommendations with local college boards.

- Direct funding toward colleges where there is a significant Black and African American population and apply these recommendations in an effort to demonstrate gains in enrollment and completion. Work collaboratively with the statewide Umoja, A2MEND and EOPS to shore up areas where gaps in representation and funding might exist.
- Create an overall support system on every campus, akin to Recruitment & Retention Centers, to promote the success of Black and African American faculty and staff. Work in collaboration with guidelines set forth by the Vision for Success Diversity Taskforce.
- Expand and elevate the visibility of existing, effective strategies and programs, such as Umoja, EOPS and A2MEND, and deploy on individual campuses and system wide to:
 - Engage more students early in their college experience.
 - Retain students to completion.
 - Increase face-to-face communication, peer-to-peer testimonials and a greater number of role models for Black and African American students on campuses.
- Provide training for faculty, administrators and counselors especially focusing on sensitivities and cultural nuances to ensure a higher quality of service to Black and African American students.
- After report is completed, Panel must also advocate at the local level to encourage implementation of the recommendations.

Curriculum Recommendations

- Offer culturally relevant orientation sessions to expose students to the myriad options of various course offerings available through community college, including information about transfer, financial aid, career paths and good paying jobs.
 - Develop more paid internships in the field of study that students are enrolled in.
- Modify curriculum to allow students to study in modules that enable them to earn stackable certificates while continuing to work.
- Provide more paid internships and job shadowing opportunities.

- Provide entrepreneurial training:
 - Offer more courses on how to start your own business.
 - Teach students what it means to be a Black entrepreneur, so they understand the basics of what's involved and what it takes to succeed in owning your own business.
 - Work with local colleges and youth entrepreneurial programs of local chambers of commerce and offer college credits to students who complete the entrepreneurial training courses.

California Community College Non-Outreach Recommendations

- Encourage more meaningful articulation agreements at the community college level with K-12 partners focusing on curriculum, outcomes, etc.
- Research the relationship dynamics with Black and African American students, especially with high school and college counselors. Students frequently report receiving incomplete and sometimes inaccurate information from high school and college counselors, and even more troubling, many Black and African American students fail to keep appointments with instructors and counselors after agreeing to attend important information sessions. Documentation of contacts with Black and African American students will reinforce the importance of engagement with this audience while also providing deeper insight into lack of contact with staff and administrators as a specific barrier to success.
- Identify and work with community college dropouts to get them re-enrolled and back on track.
- Identify and work with foster youth programs and help them increase enrollment and college completion.
- Develop and enhance programs for previously incarcerated individuals to better support their unique needs, and to ensure they are enrolled in programs that lead to careers in fields where they can be hired.

APPENDIX

SUMMARY REPORTS FROM EACH OF THE FIVE TOWN HALLS

SUMMARY REPORTS FROM EACH OF THE FOUR INFORMAL FOCUS GROUPS

Los Angeles Town Hall Debrief – November 1, 2018

- Planning
 - Advisory Panel Work Group
 - Useful as a resource, but not necessarily as a planning group
 - Provided structure to LA-based Panel members, and a sense of accountability
 - Ultimately, backed off having this group do actual day-to-day work, and focused their efforts instead upon outreach and fulfilling their commitment to bring 10 people
- Outreach (What worked/Didn't Work)
 - Comprehensive Database
 - Categorized by organization/affiliation
 - Instrumental for mass distribution
 - Instrumental for more focused/targeted mailings such as invitation for tabling, targeting high school counselors
 - Lists need to be updated frequently, especially for PIOs as these positions seem to change frequently
 - Did we reach the target audience?
 - Yes, but more can be done to ensure larger turnout of AA students and parents
 - Suggest utilizing Panel members as point persons with community-based organizations and others that have connections with prospective students
 - How did we get so many non-African Americans?
 - Dr. Robert Hill assigned his USC class (studying to become school counselors) to attend to learn more about issues AA students face.

This group participated at a high level, particularly in the Listening Sessions

- Latino students responded to the flyer, billboards, and radio ads and expressed a desire to learn more about how to go to college
- College administrators, counselors, etc.
 - Personal invitation from Chancellor Oakley was extremely effective in capturing the interest of this group
- College Outreach Specialists
 - Encountered issues related to territory; some colleges expressed that they didn't respond because the event was being held outside their recruitment area
- High school principals, counselors
 - Responded that they would attend, but none actually attended the event
- Students & parents
 - Approximately 30 students attended (not counting the USC students and a handful of parents were present)
- Media Outreach
 - KABC sent camera and interviewed Chancellor Oakley; aired on 11:00 p.m. newscast.
 - PACE News – wrote story critical of CCC and the outreach
 - WAVE/Southwest ran pre-event story on October 11 – “Community Colleges Topic of Town Hall”
- Attendance
 - 150 people attended the event
 - 60% Black and African American; 40% Latino, White, & Asian
 - Students did not RSVP; individuals who came at the behest of a Panel member also did not RSVP
 - People stated that the subject was compelling, or they wanted to get information about how to enroll or get financial aid

- Registration
 - It was good to have three people since the actual registration process was complicated: sign in or check in, then sign the Photo release form, then select a Listening Session, then get your name tag! For future, we can have people fill out the Photo form while waiting in line to check in. Also, lanyards for name tags next time.
 - Add more details to the sign-in sheet to get demographic info from participants
 - Some people didn't want to state their age on the Photo Release form – maybe just add “are you over 18 years old” to avoid that.
- Food
 - Nearly unanimous that the food was good
- Materials
 - Meeting Packets – distributed to speakers, facilitators, convenors, CCC and contractor team
 - Postcards – well received
- Green Room
 - Three separate briefings were conducted; one for staff, and two rounds for speakers, facilitators and convenors
 - All participants received a personalized folder
- General Session(s)
 - Speakers – too many general session speakers, George McKenna was very well received
 - Clarity of message – Opening session provided the framework that helped people stay on message throughout the evening
 - Length of Time – time management issues, due primarily to opening session not starting right at 6 pm, and speakers going long. Also, Listening Sessions were deeply engaging and went long
 - Listening Session Reporting – well done by Advisory Panel Members
 - Prizes -- Very well received (t-shirts, gift cards)

- Listening Sessions
 - Most popular and well-received part of the program
 - Facilitators/Convenors – followed assignment and scripts and kept sessions on focus
 - Transcribers – provided back-up of comments from Listening Sessions
- Evaluations
 - 20 evaluations received (see attached)
- Comment Cards
 - Biggest barriers/challenges Black and African American students face
 - Lack of K-12 preparation
 - Lack of resources (2)
 - Lack of information on higher education in general
 - Lack of mentors
 - Financial (2)
 - Stigma of community colleges as being below universities
 - Financial Literacy
 - Lack of funds, confidence, awareness and guidance
 - Not having the knowledge and access to systems
 - Lack of social & cultural capital & navigational capital
 - Personal engagement to gain interest during adolescence
 - Institutional racism
 - High cost of college and awareness of the benefits of higher education
 - Finding a home on campus

- Greatest opportunities for improving graduation and completion rates for Black and African American students at California community colleges
 - Enhanced & extended support service at community college (counseling, academic/program cohorting, guided pathways)
 - Outreach in middle school & high school so students and parents can be exposed to post-secondary education & be better prepared
 - Having supportive community & mentors
 - Outreach in community organizations & high schools
 - Improve knowledge about resources for students in high school Understanding the challenges students face and how we can assist/facilitate comprehension by providing more resources & awareness of these resources
 - Mentoring. Free tuition, food, transportation, books, childcare, etc.
 - Students can't pass the math classes and therefore cannot graduate.
 - Poor counseling
 - Access to classes available for full-time weekly students
 - Hope & belief & love to create change
 - Relying on the ideas and principals of Sankofa
 - Hire and train staff that have a genuine vested interest in serving communities with people of color
 - Reach out to low-income students of color, provide mentor programs for Black/African American youth
 - African Americans student brotherhood

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Debrief Summary & Notes
Summary

The Sacramento Town Hall & College Fair was held on Thursday, January 31, 2019 at the Dr. Ephraim Williams Family Life Center. Approximately 250 people attended the event, including students, parents, community residents, college administrators and college staff. The Sacramento Town Hall & College Fair featured exhibitor tables with all four Los Rios Community Colleges participating along with Sierra College. The colleges were on hand to answer questions, provide enrollment and financial aid information and help students get started in the enrollment process. Representatives from Umoja and A2MEND also hosted tables at the event. Following the College Fair, the formal program featured Cassandra Jennings as the master of ceremonies and Chancellor Eloy Ortiz Oakley as the keynote speaker. The general session was followed by breakout sessions, called Listening Sessions, which were facilitated by Advisory Panel Members and college presidents. Participants were pre-assigned to Listening Sessions to assure equal participation in all sessions.

Below is a chart depicting key elements of planning and implementation and action steps recommended based on findings and lessons learned. Following the chart are verbatim statements from participants that were provided as part of the evaluations or written comments submitted during the Listening Sessions.

Category	Findings & Lessons Learned	Action Steps
1. Advisory Panel	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Outstanding resource ▪ Include at the outset ▪ Focus on Outreach ▪ Less restrained by process 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Take time at the beginning of the planning process to walk through processes and reporting requirements
2. Outreach	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Very effective ▪ Utilize on-the-ground influencers ▪ Expect some pushback on sharing lists ▪ Identify students during RSVP process 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Allow leaders to engage their teams in the implementation ▪ Ask for items Chancellor's Office will need to see at the beginning of the process

3. Eventbrite	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Worked extremely well ▪ Can capture more information to aid in planning 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Indicate status, i.e. student, parent, community leader, college administrator, etc.
4. Attendance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ 250 people attended ▪ Predominantly African American audience ▪ Student audience was 99% Black and African American ▪ General audience members were approximately 80% Black and 20% Latino, White, and Asian ▪ RSVPs outpaced attendance by nearly 100 people – more than one-third of those that RSVP'd did not attend 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Follow-up with people that RSVP, at least once or twice before the event ▪ Connect people on RSVP list with who invited them to enable one-on-one follow up
5. High School Principals & Counselors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ RSVP'd, but did not attend ▪ Findings indicate there is a breakdown between information provided between high schools and community colleges 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Create a role for principals & counselors either as general session speaker or in the Listening Sessions
6. Student Speaker	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Must be a current community college student or a transfer from community college 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Include this requirement in “ask” for recommendations for student speakers
7. Black and African American Students	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Succeeded in reaching and appealing to the student target ▪ Adding the college fair was significant 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Continue to work through advisory panel to recruit students & parents

8. Earned and Paid Media	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Partnership with <i>Sacramento Observer</i>, KDEE and SacCultural Hub worked very well ▪ Cassandra Jennings' and Pam Haynes' interview the day before created buzz and excitement 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Continue to engage Black media for Town Halls
9. General Session	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Speakers received high marks ▪ Demonstrated concern and interest in helping Black and African American students be successful in college ▪ Part II of the General Session went long ▪ Prizes were fun & engaging for audience 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Return from Listening Sessions on time ▪ Shorten the reports from facilitators – keep to the “5 things” format
10. Listening Sessions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Received high marks from almost all participants in the evaluation ▪ People wanted more time in the Listening Session ▪ People felt they were able to express their views and be heard 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Consider lengthening by at least 15 minutes ▪ Consider keeping group sizes small, approximately 20 people, so everyone can be heard
11. Evaluations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ 33 evaluations submitted ▪ 25 were more aware of the Campaigns as a result of the Town Hall ▪ 32 said they were able to be heard 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Emphasize evaluations earlier in the program and set aside time during the start of the closing session to give people an opportunity to complete them ▪ Consider giving a prize or an incentive for turning in a completed evaluation

Briefing Notes

- **Planning**

- Advisory Panel Work Group
 - Functioned at a high level – engaged in all phases from planning to outreach to day-of execution
 - Demonstrated a strong ground game and commitment to reaching goals they set for themselves
 - Highly useful as a local resource; connected to St. Paul which saved time and money
 - Very responsive to directives from the Chancellor’s Office and respectful of the process

- **Outreach (What Worked/Didn’t Work)**

- Comprehensive Database
 - Worked well as a way to reach colleges, high schools and boards of education
 - Community organization databases are viewed as more proprietary and are closely guarded, but Greater Sacramento Urban League shared their database upon request
 - Instrumental for more focused/targeted mailings such as invitation for tabling, targeting high school counselors, school districts, etc.
 - Lists need to be updated frequently, especially for outreach specialists as these individuals seem to change frequently
- Did we reach the target audience?
 - Yes, we were able to reach AA students and parents and community members
 - Utilized Panel members as point persons with community-based organizations and other influencers that have connections with prospective students
 - College administrators on the Panel were proactive in reaching out to Umoja students and other Black and African American students and placing materials in conspicuous locations on campus where these students tend to gather

- Unlike Los Angeles, the audience in Sacramento was overwhelmingly African American and even the administrators/professors seemed to be mostly Black
 - College administrators, counselors, etc.
 - Personal invitation from Chancellor Oakley was extremely effective in capturing the interest of this group. However, the response was mostly from Los Rios Community College District, with the exception of Sierra College
 - College Outreach Specialists
 - Interest was high among all four Los Rios colleges, and Sierra College
 - High school principals, counselors
 - Some high school principals attended, but turnout of this group was still lower than expected
 - Students & parents
 - Parent participation was strong. Many parents were proactive about getting information they could use to support their children's decision making and making sure their kids participated in the College Fair and the Listening Sessions. At least two parents tended to their younger children so the older ones could focus on getting the information they needed.
- **Media Outreach**
 - KDEE interview on "Family Matters" featured a one-hour live interview with Cassandra Jennings and Pamela Haynes the day before the Town Hall that was very effective. Leveraged the paid media buy to achieve this earned media coverage. Collaboration with Regina Wilson was effective.
 - **Attendance**
 - 250 people attended the event – based on registration count and count of those that did not register, but were present and active
 - 80% Black and African American; 20% Latino, White, & Asian
 - Unlike Los Angeles, students did RSVP, but it may be that those that registered early did not show up or that some that showed up did not register at all
 - Students, educators and adults came because they wanted to learn more about community colleges and also because they wanted to be heard on the issue of equity for Blacks and African Americans

- **Registration**

- The registration process was complicated but was efficient and thorough: Registration included check in, signing the Photo Release form, and obtaining name tag which included assignment to one of four Listening Sessions.
- Recommend we add additional demographic questions on registration form
- Lanyards were used for name tags which helped save time and eliminate backlogs
- The Photo Release forms were handed out on clipboards to people waiting in line, which eliminated this step at the registration table and helped save time and kept the line moving

- **Food**

- Excellent. Need to have a plan in place to donate leftover food to charity (both the LA and Sacramento catering companies were not allowed to do so by law)

- **Materials**

- Meeting Packets – distributed to speakers and facilitators and included Run of Show and All Speaker Talking Points
- Program Packets – distributed to guests and included Infographic, FAQ, Student Resources, Panel Fact Sheet, Campaigns Overview and Event Program

- **Green Room**

- Two briefings were conducted; one for Cassandra Jennings as emcee and Pam Haynes who sat in to focus on her remarks, and one for all speakers and facilitators combined.
 - This was highly efficient and generated comradery and a great deal of give and take regarding what all the speakers and facilitators were there to achieve and securing a commitment to time allocations
- All speakers and facilitators received a personalized folder

- **General Session(s)**

- Speakers – Evaluations were very good for all speakers, considered them to be very informative and committed to hearing from the community

- Clarity of message – Opening session provided the framework that helped people stay on message throughout the evening
- Length of Time – The session started on time and speakers adhered to time limits, allowing the general session to end at 6:48 pm as planned
- Listening Session Reporting – well done by Advisory Panel Members, but went past 8 pm due to one Listening Session not adjourning on time
- Prizes – Very well received (t-shirts, gift cards)

- **Listening Sessions**

- Very popular and well-received by almost all participants
- Facilitators – three facilitators followed instructions and kept sessions on focus, while one facilitator decided to organize one session into three which created confusion in the room and in their ability to wrap up their discussion in a timely manner
- Transcribers – provided back-up of comments from Listening Sessions
- Participants rated the Listening Sessions very highly and commented that they felt they were able to express their point of view or others expressed what they felt in a way that satisfied their need to have their views heard
- All Listening Sessions were very well attended, and participants were deeply engaged

- **Evaluations**

- 33 evaluations received (see attached)
- Q: Are you more aware of career pathways, financial aid and Associate Degree for Transfer programs after tonight's Town Hall & College Fair?
 - 25 said yes
 - Five said no
 - Three declined to state
 - In Los Angeles, almost all respondents said they did not know more after attending the Town Hall

■ Q: Were you able to express your opinion today?

- Yes: ||||| ||||| ||||| ||||| ||||| ||||| || = 32
- No: || = 2 (one person said yes and no)

Comments:

- It went well. We need more time and commitment to the voices
- Listening is a virtue, they listened
- Yes, others felt safe speaking on their experience
- I may not have spoken out about my opinions, but all my thoughts & concerns were addressed by others and given good info
- I was extremely impressed to hear that my concerns were addressed with possible solutions
- People really thought about what's good for the community
- I was very satisfied explaining my concerns and having people agree with me
- The Listening Sessions were well thought out, the conversation was varied and thought provoking
- I expressed my opinion, but it was overlooked. Community colleges need to partner with non-profits who are already doing the work and empower them instead of trying to fill every need
- There were excellent and varied comments at Session #4. The session was well run by Pamela Haynes
- Never made it to any workshops, too busy talking to the college reps to get Black Student Unions in their schools
- Definitely, this forum was outstanding. Please continue to poll & survey our students
- I wasn't able to express my opinion today and/or was satisfied that others did a good job expressing my concerns because I didn't understand it
- I was finally able to be heard about some of my concerns as a student
- I'm wishing that the Chancellor & host & audience could hear our voice – not just in workshops

- Some of the things that I wanted to say were able to be said. Others around had good ideas and we were able to speak
- It felt good to be represented and listened to by someone who will actually help make change
- The breakout session was great
- I expressed my experience with the sources at high school and hand picking those students to push them forward
- Key Quotes and Comments
 - “I learned that both my children and I have many resources and opportunities that make it easier to apply, enroll, and get support to ease the process of enrolling.”
 - “That there is genuine support.”
 - “I didn’t think this was important and didn’t know about community colleges. (Now), I might attend Sierra College.”
 - “I learned to keep going because this is the beginning.”
 - “I would like to learn more about career pathways and how would I actually know that they are really for me.”
 - “Didn’t know Los Rios District served so many students of color, especially Black students.”
 - “CCCs are trying.”
 - “This improved my knowledge of the CCCs and programs to increase Black & African American student’s lives exponentially.”
 - “Some people don’t like school due to their middle & high school experiences, so they think college is not for them.”
 - “We will make it a priority to connect our students to community college opportunities.”
 - “It influenced my decision about possibility of attending or not attending because I got info that will change my mind.”
 - “Community college is not friendly or welcoming to all communities.”

- “I was made aware of the Umoja program for my son who wants to be an educator.”
- “We (Black students) really need marketable trade classes and on campus work experience.”
- “I didn’t know there were this many people advocating for the Black community/Black students.”
- “There are plenty of resources on campus for Black students, they just aren’t represented/known about.”
- “Info was distributed that was very helpful.”
- “Well, I’m not a parent, however, I did learn more about community college in a way I can share with others.”
- Recommendations for improving future town halls
 - Include employers to explain job opportunities
 - Spread the information (more widely) and having longer sessions about the issues
 - More time for the workshops because it got good at the end
 - Nothing about us, without us, include us; include the successful personal story of the student experience as keynote speaker or as one of the speakers
 - More invitations
 - There should be more time to speak in classes. More Black people speaking and less times for the announcements
 - I would have liked there to be a quick Q&A from audience
 - More honest discussion of Los Rios & Black student panel
 - Really emphasize the 85%, two-year ADT graduation rate
 - Giving our students more information
 - More time for discussion in small groups
 - Extend program to 8:30 pm so we have enough time
 - More media promotion of the event

- Sharing student groups that could also provide support to them
- Need more programs for African American students that are in science, tech, math, and engineering
- African American parent, grandparent, or other guardian need to be part of the team's planning.
- Allow folks to engage online, give feedback live, bring a list of scholarships and grants, and present at schools and churches, etc.
- Always tell staff that deal with enrollment to tell all African Americans about all programs & disability programs
- More advertising & longer breakout sessions
- Possibly having more and smaller groups that would allow more people to give input at a deeper level
- This was very well run. I have no changes to recommend. Speakers before breakout sessions were great
- Make sure that administrators stay for the whole event
- Advertise the follow up and results the same way this was advertised

###

Overview

The Fresno Town Hall & College Fair was held on Tuesday, April 30 at the Westside Church of God. Pastor Paul Binion was the host Advisory Panel member and the Fresno Work Group provided guidance, counsel, and logistical support throughout the process.

Most observers agree that the Fresno Town Hall & College Fair was the most successful to date. This is due primarily to the overall attendance, delivery and consistency of message, and anecdotal comments made by Town Hall participants. More than 200 people, including students, parents, community leaders, and college administrators and trustees attended the Fresno Town Hall & College Fair.

Below is an overview of key elements that contributed to the program's success or that offer learnings for future town halls.

Planning Process

Members of the Fresno Work Group included Advisory Panel member Paul Binion, and Gurdeep Hébert, Vice President of Student Services, Clovis Community College along with the T&T team. We also received assistance from Lucy Ruiz, assistant to Dr. Paul Parnell, Chancellor, State Center Community College District, and Angie Barfield, African American Outreach Coordinator, Fresno County Office of Education. Highlights and takeaways include:

- Having a community college representative on the Work Group enabled smoother process of working through issues like facilitator participation, outreach on the college campuses, and cutting through red tape that would have proved extremely difficult if we did not have that resource available to us.
- Pastor Binion's presence and reputation in the community was invaluable. He conducted early outreach and invited key influencers to be present which generated enthusiasm, support and commitment of high school and college educators in the Fresno region.
- Chancellor Eloy Ortiz Oakley was a huge draw from the very beginning. The Fresno community responded strongly and positively to his personal invitation and the awareness of his presence drove attendance from college administrators, trustees and faculty.
- The two-month lead time was critical to being able to plan and execute to complete assignments and tasks given the fluid nature of projects of this magnitude.

- The internal working group comprising the Chancellor's Office, Ogilvy and T&T worked seamlessly to ensure all materials were reviewed and approved in advance, recommendations were properly vetted, and unforeseen events were handled within protocol established by the Chancellor's Office.

Outreach

Outreach for the Fresno Town Hall included traditional outreach to community organizations, school districts, community colleges and faith-based organizations, and also emphasized the importance of engaging more students and parents than at previous town halls.

As a result, Fresno reported the highest student participation of any event to date and more community influencers than other events. Of the 200+ participants, at least 70 were high school and college students.

Additionally, community organizations participated at a high level and were responsible for general outreach within the Black and African American community. As an example, the Neighborhood Revitalization Program, the West Fresno Family Resource Center, and the Fresno Black Chamber of Commerce helped recruit students and young people to attend the Town Hall.

The Work Group, including extended Work Group members from State Center Community College District and Fresno County Office of Education, made significant contributions to outreach efforts as did African American churches throughout the Fresno region.

Green Room Briefing

Green Room Briefings continue to be invaluable in terms of creating esprit de corps on the day of the event, but also in getting the speakers and facilitators to agree on the timeline and the importance of everyone sticking to their allotted times for presentations.

In Fresno, Chancellor Oakley was able to address the speakers in advance, to express thanks for their participation and to underscore how their individual role contributes to the work and purpose of the Town Halls. He specifically called out the importance of the Advisory Panel being present and how that contributed to the consistency and strength of the overall work that the Chancellor's Office is doing to address issues that impact African American students.

All Speaker Talking Points

Pastor Binion, unlike any other emcee preceding him, used the Talking Points as a guide to facilitate the meeting. As a result, the general session(s) flowed smoothly and the feedback was overwhelmingly positive in terms of the message being delivered and received by the target audiences. All Speaker Talking Points will have to be tweaked in

terms of flow and actual content to facilitate the actual dialogue and story we are attempting to tell.

Chancellor introducing Chancellor

It worked well to have the Chancellor of the host district, in this case Dr. Parnell, introduce Chancellor Oakley. Therefore, going forward, we will combine the speaking parts for the host district chancellor so that person will only have to speak once. Combining the chancellor's remarks with the introduction of Chancellor Oakley will also save approximately one or two minutes.

Employer Speaker

The Fresno Town Hall & College Fair marked the first time that we've had an employer speaker. The speaker was Brett Hedrick who owns Hedrick Chevrolet and whose company works in partnership with Fresno City College (FCC). The partnership entails collaborating with FCC on the following:

- Providing counsel and guidance on the type of training required in the automotive industry
- Hiring students as interns while they are in school
- Hiring students as full-time employees in good-paying jobs, once they receive their certificates

Brett Hedrick hit on all the notes we asked of him and he was very well received by all audiences. Hedrick Chevrolet also brought a vehicle on site to demonstrate the type of work students need to learn in order to qualify for jobs at the company. Based on the Fresno experience, we recommend incorporating an employer speaker in all Town Halls going forward.

Timing/Speaker Allotments

We continue to work on the timing of the event to ensure we start and end on time and enough time is allotted to accommodate the Listening Sessions. As in previous town halls, the Fresno event did not end on time which resulted in a huge part of the audience leaving before the event ended.

Listening Sessions

The Listening Sessions were very popular with all audiences and participants reported being able to express their point of view or being satisfied that their concerns and issues were adequately expressed by others. As with previous town halls, facilitators had to be reminded to close out their sessions and return to the general session meeting room. Due to the additional time taken in the Listening Sessions, the General Session did not

reconvene in a timely manner. This issue will have to be addressed for the next town hall so participants can participate in all aspects of the event.

College Fair

The College Fair was the best by far of the three town halls. The colleges went all out to provide materials, answer questions and to make themselves appealing to students and parents. Students and parents were deeply engaged and spent time visiting as many booths as possible. Hedrick Chevrolet brought a brand new vehicle to provide a hands-on demonstration of the type of coursework students in the automotive certificate program are required to take. The college tables were colorful and informative and helped create an atmosphere of excitement and curiosity.

Evaluations

We received a total of 20 evaluation forms and 13 questionnaires from the Listening Sessions. The 18 evaluations received represents the fewest number of evaluations for any town hall thus far. The 13 Listening Session questionnaires reflected the questions asked in each session and the participant's responses to them. The low evaluation return rate was attributed to the fact that participants were also asked to complete SB 291 forms, which took time but also resulted in more SB 291 forms being returned.

Overall, the comments were very positive, with many people encouraging the California Community Colleges to hold these events annually, focus more on financial aid and encourage more students to attend. Among other comments were:

- The Idile Program at Fresno City College has helped me achieve my academic goals.
- Lack of programs designed to assist minorities is the main issue.
- When you feel inclusivity on campus, you are more inclined to excel. There is a lack of inclusion.
- Identify students in need while they are still in high school.
- They need to understand Black unity is essential.
- Students need to know about the 90 attempted units cap, because if they change majors more than once, they may not be able to afford college anymore.
- Teach students to be their strongest advocate.
- Don't get rid of the EOPS. That will only hurt and not help students at all.
- Get rid of the negative connotation of community college.

- The colleges do not do a good job letting students know about the certificate programs.
- Church leaders need to come alongside students and assign a mentor to each one.
- Need consistent contact from colleges in high school.
- Black students' lack of a support system is a barrier.
- Barriers that African American students face are housing, childcare, incarcerated youth, and not having staff that look like them.
- Other barriers are reducing the stigma around community colleges, removing the oppressive “eye” in educational institutions, lack of a community-based support systems, and mental health awareness.
- We are more than just a number.
- Parents' pre-conception about college is a challenge to overcome.
- Greater usage of social media for advertisement and outreach.
- Expand methods for student enrollment including community access.
- Increase usage of social media & non-traditional methods of “Reg to Go” in community.

###

Overview

The San Diego Town Hall & College Fair was held on Wednesday, June 5 at San Diego City College. Ray King, President and CEO of the San Diego Urban League was the host Advisory Panel member and the San Diego Work Group provided guidance, counsel, and logistical support throughout the process.

Participants and observers agreed that the San Diego Town Hall & College Fair was successful: well-attended, informative, and sparked meaningful dialogue. This was evident by positive feedback from the listening sessions and anecdotal comments made by town hall participants. More than 175 people, including students, parents, community leaders, college administrators and trustees attended the San Diego Town Hall & College Fair.

Below is an overview of key elements that contributed to the program's success or that offer learnings for future town halls.

Planning Process

The San Diego Work Group included Advisory Panel member Ray King and members of his staff Al Abdallah and Kea Hagan. Like Fresno, the San Diego Work Group included staff from San Diego City College. It also included staff from the San Diego Community College District Chancellor's Office as well as community-based organizations that work closely with the Urban League on outreach events. Highlights and takeaways include:

- The work group met on a bi-weekly basis to coordinate town hall planning and implementation. This enabled the team to address issues in a timely manner and facilitated a smoother decision-making process.
- Given that the town hall was held on the San Diego City College campus, it was especially helpful to have staff from the college on the work group. They helped identify space, obtain approvals and secure resources that were critical to the success of the town hall.
- It was also effective to have the communications director from the SDCCD Chancellor's Office involved. He acted as a liaison between the work group, the Chancellor and the four college presidents, which kept the senior leadership in the loop at all times and motivated them to participate at a high level. This was especially important because we had less time to plan and execute this event due to a date change imposed by San Diego City College.
- Unlike previous town halls, the diversity and autonomy of the work group also led to a work style which required that we work independently with each organization. For example, we worked with Genevieve Esguerra on all issues dealing with the facility;

for matters pertaining to the presidents and the Chancellor we worked with Jack Beresford; for matters dealing with event coordination and outreach, we worked with Al Abdallah and Kea Hagan. In some cases, such as Run of Show, speaker recommendations, and facilitator briefings the entire work group provided input and support.

- Chancellor Eloy Ortiz Oakley was a catalyst for attendance, leading to a large turnout of faculty and staff from surrounding Districts. In general, the San Diego community responded strongly and positively to his personal invitation. The Chancellor's message regarding equity and closing the achievement gap for African American students and other students of color resonated strongly with many in attendance.
- It was challenging to plan and execute an event of this magnitude with only one month between the Fresno and San Diego events, but the experience of the contractor team and Chancellor's Office working together proved extremely beneficial and helped achieve efficiencies that might otherwise not have been possible without our ability to rely on the original pilot and the participation of Advisory Panel members from throughout the state.
- The internal working group comprising the Chancellor's Office, Ogilvy and T&T worked seamlessly to ensure all materials were reviewed and approved in advance, recommendations were properly vetted, and unforeseen events were handled within protocol established by the Chancellor's Office.

Outreach

Outreach for the San Diego Town Hall included traditional outreach to community organizations, school districts, community colleges and faith-based organizations, and also emphasized the importance of engaging more students and parents than at previous town halls.

As a result, San Diego had a higher turnout of students, but unfortunately many of them participated from the overflow room. This gave the appearance that there were more adults and administrators in the audience than students. Of the 175 participants, at least 80 were high school and college students.

Additionally, The San Diego Urban League enlisted its community partners in conducting outreach to students. One of its key partners, Union of Pan Asian Communities (UPAC), provided transportation for students to attend, while others actively engaged in recruitment efforts.

Green Room Briefing

Green Room Briefings continue to be invaluable in terms of creating esprit de corps on the day of the event, but also in terms of getting the speakers and facilitators to agree on the timeline and the importance of everyone sticking to their allotted times for presentations.

In San Diego, Chancellor Oakley addressed the speakers and facilitators during the Green Room briefing. This was particularly helpful since a couple of the presidents and the Chancellor had been unclear about the purpose of the town hall and the Chancellor's visit to San Diego. During the briefing, Chancellor Oakley was able to clarify the purpose and also provide context that was helpful to the presentations being made during the general session. Chancellor Oakley thanked the Advisory Panel for their ongoing support and participation.

All Speaker Talking Points

Almost all speakers took advantage of the talking points they were provided and used them to stay on message, even if they used their own prepared notes.

Employer Speaker

The employer speaker, Bruce Mayberry from San Diego Gas & Electric was extremely effective. He connected the San Diego City College Lineman Program and the SDG&E Lineman workforce. He talked about the requirement to complete the Lineman certificate program as a prerequisite to being hired as a lineman at SDG&E and the salary these positions pay. His presentation graphically illustrated the role community colleges play in helping students get the hands-on training they need to qualify for good-paying jobs.

Timing/Speaker Allotments

Timing was executed better in San Diego than any of the previous town halls. As a result, more people stayed for the closing session and more people were present during the drawing for prizes.

Listening Sessions

The Listening Sessions received positive feedback from participants who appreciated the opportunity to discuss and provide input on relevant topics and key issues facing African American students in community colleges. Attendance was fairly equal in each of the four sessions, and participants were engaged as in previous town halls. Also, as in previous town halls, participants said they wanted more time in the listening sessions.

College Fair

All four San Diego Community College District colleges participated in the College Fair along with the outreach team from Mira Costa College. Students and parents were engaged and visited multiple booths including the "I **Can** Afford College," Career Education, Associate Degree for Transfer, and NextUp tables.

Evaluations

We received a total of 11 completed evaluation forms, representing the fewest number of evaluations for any town hall thus far. The low evaluation return rate was attributed to the

fact that participants were asked to complete too many forms: the evaluation, the listening session questionnaire and the SB 291 form. In addition, time ran out at the end of listening sessions, and most participants walked out without completing the questionnaire.

Overall, participants' responses were positive and insightful. Respondents suggested that future events be held at a high school, and that more time be allowed for listening sessions for the sharing of ideas and dialogue. Attendees also appreciated the presence of both the local and state Chancellors. Among other comments were:

- I was able to hear and appreciate that our State Chancellor is concerned.
- It was nice knowing how intentional community colleges are about helping minority students and, being a student at a community college, it was nice to hear.
- The ability to afford and pay for college is much clearer.
- Need to help black men, e.g. tutoring and alumni network.
- Building awareness about career pathways, financial aid and Associate Degree for Transfer programs available to students at California community colleges should be an ongoing outreach effort. Interact with K-12.
- I was once again reminded that there are jobs available that people don't think about that are amazing options with good pay (jobs that don't require a 4-year degree but pay well).
- Financial aid is out there, you just need to go find it and not wait for it to come to you.
- There's a great need for money for training and re-training for older adults.
- Learned about online resources, as well as the availability and access to free and low-cost job training.
- Improve the perception of community colleges. A community college isn't any less than a 4-year and is a great viable option that can benefit students in the long-run.
- Educate people not to give up, and to look for opportunities.
- Need more outreach and recruitment in the community.
- Provide more outreach to reach down to younger kids more intentionally.
- Use a high school or middle school for the next event.

###

Overview

The Oakland Town Hall & College Fair was held on Tuesday, January 28, 2020 at McClymonds High School in Oakland. This Town Hall was the final event in a series of five Town Halls hosted by the Black and African American Advisory Panel of the California Community Colleges. While it presented some challenges, such as securing a venue at an affordable cost, fielding an Oakland-based Work Group, and yielding the lowest turnout of any of the previous four events, some key successes were achieved, including the establishment of critical partnerships in Oakland to further African American outreach efforts on behalf of California Community Colleges and the Chancellor's Office.

Ultimately, the Oakland Work Group unlocked doors in a difficult market and provided guidance, counsel, outreach and logistical support throughout the process. Approximately 100 individuals participated in the Town Hall & College Fair, including African American students, parents, community leaders, high school and college educators and administrators.

Participating Advisory Panel members included Dr. Teresa Aldredge, Dr. Steven Boyd, Dr. Janet Clark, Michael Dolphin, Nzingha Dugas, Pam Haynes, Gregg Irish, and Cassandra Jennings.

Below is an overview of the Oakland Town Hall's key successes, challenges and learnings.

Planning Process

The Oakland Work Group consisted of Advisory Panel members Dr. Teresa Aldredge, Dr. Steven Boyd, Nzingha Dugas and Pam Haynes. Unlike with previous Town Halls, the Work Group did not include staff from the local community college district. However, Tiago Robinson of Oakland Unified School District's African American Male Achievement Program joined the Work Group, and made vital contributions to the event, especially ensuring that high school students and administrators were aware of and attended the event.

Highlights and takeaways include:

- The work group met on a weekly basis to coordinate Town Hall planning, outreach and implementation. The process paid strict adherence to the methodology developed for the Los Angeles pilot and subsequent refinements that were added based on ongoing lessons learned. This facilitated quick decision-making and action, such as identifying and securing the venue, speakers and facilitators.

- Chancellor Eloy Ortiz Oakley's personal invitation allowed us to secure prominent speakers and facilitators, including Jumoke Hinton Hodge, Oakland School Board President; Dr. Kyla Johnson-Trammell, OUSD Superintendent; and Dr. Regina Stanback Stroud, Chancellor of the Peralta Community College District.
- Tiago Robinson provided boots on the ground throughout Oakland Unified School District, assisting with outreach and pre-event logistics, and direct access to Jeffrey Taylor, principal of McClymonds High School, to coordinate venue logistics, ensure that robocalls were recorded and disseminated, and to help address issues as they arose.
- An added element was the presence of student volunteers who were recruited by Principal Jeffrey Taylor. The students were recruited to help with check-in, serve as escorts, and participate in the General Session and Listening Sessions.
- It was extremely helpful having Mr. Taylor as the direct contact. This avoided the need to go through a third party to make requests and get timely approvals regarding the venue. Principal Taylor made himself available and accommodated our needs before, during and after the Town Hall. Notably, during our site visit to McClymonds, Mr. Taylor intervened on behalf of the California Community Colleges and used his authority to waive facility rental fees. Without this action McClymonds would have been unaffordable and we would have been forced to find an alternate venue, which had already proven to be quite difficult in Oakland. The total cost savings exceeded \$3,000.
- One challenge faced during the planning process was the decision to disinvite individuals who accepted invitations from Chancellor Oakley to serve as speakers. This was necessary to shorten the program and ensure that the General Session would appeal to and engage high school students. We believe we were able to achieve this objective with minimal disruption and key stakeholders feeling whole and appreciated.
- However, the shortened program may have led to a less coherent General Session presentation due to the elimination of the employer speaker, the campaigns overview, and additionally, each speaker being required to introduce themselves which robbed the audience of learning more about each speakers background and heightening interest in their remarks.
- Another challenge was the lack of RSVPs though there were a high number of page views on the Eventbrite page, in line with other Town Halls. This made anticipating attendance and planning around that attendance extremely difficult. As page views grew in the days leading up to the Town Hall, the Chancellor's Office, T&T and the Agency Team became concerned about the possibility of an overflow crowd. The wild cards were the on-air announcements by Shay Diddy, and the number of robocalls that were made by individual schools and the District-wide announcement that featured Shay Diddy.

- In response, we developed a contingency plan that contemplated various scenarios such as overflow parking, additional security, ordering additional food and increasing and staffing additional Listening Sessions.
- One challenge worth noting was the lack of engagement of the Peralta Community College District. Unlike previous Town Halls, we did not have participation by the colleges on the Work Group, which made it extremely difficult to reach college students and promote the event among this audience. In previous Town Halls, college students (and college administrators) were a significant percentage of the overall turnout, but these groups were noticeably absent at this event.
- The internal working group comprising the Chancellor's Office, Ogilvy, Misfit, RSE and T&T worked seamlessly to ensure all materials were reviewed and approved in advance, recommendations were properly vetted, and unforeseen events were handled within protocol established by the Chancellor's Office.

Outreach

Promotion of the Oakland Town Hall included traditional outreach to students, parents and educators throughout Oakland Unified school district, community leaders, Bay Area community colleges, and faith-based organizations. A print ad also ran in the Oakland Post.

As an addition, robocalls were used to reach parents and students directly. T&T wrote the scripts which were recorded and distributed by individual schools, including the host school McClymonds. RSE worked with Shay Diddy to record a robocall that was sent to parents, students and school personnel districtwide. Tiago Robinson hand-delivered 6,000 postcards to schools throughout the district encouraging students to attend. Principal Taylor got in the mix by strongly encouraging juniors and seniors at McClymonds to attend. Given these outreach efforts and Shay Diddy's involvement, attendance was expected to far exceed the target of 200 attendees, with the hopes of reaching more than 800. However, despite these efforts, the outcome was a much lower than expected attendance, lower than any of the 5 Town Halls. The Eventbrite RSVP page showed more than 4,000 visits, but there were only 45 RSVPs – many of whom did not attend. Possible factors resulting in the low attendance was the lack of engagement of the Peralta College District, lack of transportation support for students, a second HBCU College Expo being held later that week, and the holiday season and semester break impacting actual number of days that were available to do outreach.

Sadly, of those who attended, a significant number left after the college fair and more than half of the students remaining left after the general session. However, between pre-event exposure and college fair, general session and listening sessions attendance, the Town Hall was successful at reaching African American high school students in Oakland – the target audience – with campaign messages that built awareness of California Community Colleges and programs available to them.

iHeart Media and Shay Diddy

Different from other Town Hall events, iHeart Media was a major partner for the Oakland Town Hall. This brought the wonderful addition of Shay Diddy of KMEL and KYLD who became a key player in the program. Shay's involvement started at the December 5 Advisory Panel meeting at iHeart Studios in Burbank where she provided insight into the Oakland market, high schools and community colleges, and shared her close connection to and involvement in the Bay Area. Not only did she promote the event on-air, she also recorded a robocall that was sent to parents throughout OUSD and served as a presenter at the event, which included conducting the interactive survey. Shay stayed for the duration of the event and shared that she had been invited by four schools to speak to their students.

Green Room Briefing

The Green Room Briefing was well attended by speakers, facilitators, Chancellor's Office staff, and Chancellor Oakley. Most had participated in the Speaker/Facilitator Briefing and were fully engaged in their role and executed according to the responsibilities they were given. Additionally, Panel members participated in the Green Room briefing.

General Session

As mentioned, one success of the Oakland Town Hall was the eagerness of key figures in Oakland to participate as speakers. Interest in the event was even expressed by the Oakland Mayor's office. Unfortunately, due to the length of the event and out of consideration for an audience of high school students, invitations made and accepted by two speakers were rescinded. An employer speaker, which was part of the program at the San Diego Town Hall, was cut from the final program and Nzingha Dugas was reassigned. Phyllis Tucker made calls to each person to express apologies on behalf of the Chancellor's Office and to offer an explanation, striving to ensure that current and future relationships were not compromised.

T&T made necessary changes to the all speakers talking points. Cassandra Jennings, Advisory Panel Co-chair, was moved into the role of Emcee and Shay Diddy, with whom Oakland students are familiar, took a more prominent role in the General Session. All speakers made good use of the talking points, adding their own style while staying on message, which led to an engaging presentation.

For the first-time in the Town Hall series, an interactive survey was included in the General Session to engage the audience more while gathering feedback in real-time. Ogilvy secured and managed the software, Kahoot, which was used successfully. Approximately 30 participants answered questions using their smartphones.

Listening Sessions

Like with previous Town Halls, the Listening Sessions received positive feedback from participants who appreciated the opportunity to discuss and provide input on relevant topics and key issues facing Black and African American students in community colleges. Attendance was balanced in three of the four sessions with approximately 10-12

participants. A smaller group of 7 participants took part in the “Jobs of the Future” Listening Session. Following are comments taken from Listening Session questionnaires completed by participants:

- Not many black people I know think college is for them because they don’t have proper knowledge about college.
- To increase African American awareness of community colleges, do more advertising and more through social media because so many people use social media.
- More outreach should be done at high schools.
- My child wants to attend college whether it’s a community college or 4-year college/university. I want to make sure she’s prepared.
- What does community colleges have for students who learn differently or didn’t have a great high school education and fell behind?

Key takeaways from Listening Sessions:

- **Listening Session #1: Improving Access**
Participants described motivations for going to a community college, which included financial necessity and to achieve educational goals of transferring to a 4-year college/university. Participants stated that they do not find some counselors to be informed or willing to offer information about programs offered at community colleges. For example, one participant stated that counselors are either not aware of or do not inform students about dual enrollment. There was discussion of ways to improve access such as utilizing mentors and support groups for African American students and educating students about taking the initiative to seek out information themselves. In addition to addressing issues such as adequate financial aid and transportation, participants offered that the issue of relevance needed to be addressed, that is “Why should I go?”
- **Listening Session #2: Improving the Experience**
Jonathan Piper, General Session Student Speaker, participated in this session and described an “imposter syndrome” faced by many Black and African American students, which is a feeling that they do not belong. Other participants shared examples of the weight Black and African American students feel in campus environments where they have no voice and face microaggression. They stated the need to ensure that campus environments and classrooms are fair, welcoming and supportive of Black and African American students. The group also discussed how to empower students and create better experiences for them at community colleges, particularly through support groups such as Umoja and EOPS.
- **Listening Session #3: Improving Graduation & Completion Rates**
Participants expressed barriers to entering and completing college, including affordability, life challenges, lack of preparation for college success, feeling disconnected from faculty and administrators, isolation on campuses with few Black and African American students, and a lack of support, but felt these could be overcome with greater awareness, support and preparation. They expressed some awareness of the campaigns and a desire for more information. They suggested visits

to high schools, visits to college campuses by high school students, and peer influence as effective ways to build awareness.

- **Listening Session #4: Jobs of the Future – Why Career Education Matters**

This group saw community college as a less expensive alternative to 4-year colleges, an option that offers a more personal experience, and being more geared toward career education. Areas of career interest included healthcare, business, technology, construction and animation – all programs offered at California community colleges. One participant was aware of the strong construction program offered at Laney College. When asked, participants mentioned sports and entertainment as top fields for African Americans and agreed that a greater awareness of career education programs, the job market and salaries is needed. A third-grade student, Samson, who sat in with his parents was proof of the power of reaching students at a young age. He completed a questionnaire, showing some awareness of careers (fire fighters and business owner) and naming Laney and Merritt as colleges where he could achieve his career goals.

College Fair

The Oakland College Fair was larger than the College Fair portion of the San Diego Town Hall. College participation was high with 7 community colleges staffing tables: Berkeley City College, Cañada College, Chabot College, College of Alameda, Laney College, Merritt College and Ohlone College. Four of the colleges were accompanied by their campuses' Umoja representatives. The Umoja Community Education Foundation had a separate table. In addition, the East Bay Municipal Utility District (East Bay Mud) staffed a booth to build awareness about career opportunities for students coming out of community colleges. Students and parents were engaged and visited multiple booths including the **I Can** Afford College and Career Education combined table, and the Associate Degree for Transfer table.

Evaluations

A total of 7 completed evaluation forms were received (from 3 students, 3 parents/grandparents, and 1 individual who did not identify themselves). This represented the fewest number of evaluations for any Town Hall, which is not surprising considering the low attendance and more than half of the student attendees leaving the event after the General Session. Others left after the Listening Sessions without returning to the auditorium or completing the evaluation form.

Overall, participants' responses were positive and indicated that they learned more about California Community Colleges and the three campaigns: "**I Can**," Associate Degree for Transfer, and Career Education. Respondents unanimously responded "yes" to having the opportunity to express their concerns; learning something that would influence their decision about possibly attending/not attending a California community college; and learning something that would help student overcome obstacles to enrolling in a community college.

Comments included:

- I was able to get advice on what to do when I get to college.
- Things were said similar to what I thought.
- I was able to voice my opinions and hear the opinions of others.
- I learned more about the transfer guarantee from community college to a 4-year college.
- Hearing that I could transfer into an HBCU could influence my decision to go to a community college.
- I need more time to get more information and resources about California Community Colleges programs.
- I would like to hear from more community college graduates that are graduates of 4-year colleges/university and can share their experiences.

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Summary Recap

FRESNO

Wednesday, May 1, 2019 – Westside Church of God

► Purpose & Objectives

The purpose of the focus group was to seek feedback from current and potential college students as well as high school students in the Fresno area about their experiences, opinions and attitudes regarding community college. Specifically, the objectives were to:

- Better define the barriers they encountered when learning about/enrolling in community college
- Better define the barriers they experienced pertaining to persistence (completion of degree, certificate or transfer)
- Identify the most effective ways and channels for outreach and marketing
- Refine the messages that will resonate most effectively
- Identify unique, new and creative marketing, advertising and outreach methods

Ultimately, findings from the Fresno group will be combined with findings from the other focus groups to help inform campaign strategies and priorities for 2019/2020 in order to ensure that outreach, marketing and advertising elements of the “**I Can Afford College,**” Career Education and Associate Degree for Transfer campaigns are not only reaching Black and African American youth, but also motivating them to:

- ✓ Learn about the career opportunities available to them through community colleges and the potential for well-paying jobs;
- ✓ Take advantage of all the financial aid available to help pay for college; and,
- ✓ Learn about and access the myriad student resources and programs available to them that can provide support throughout their community college experience.

Specific topics tested were:

- *Ease of Enrollment*
- *On-campus Experience*
- *Expectation of Completion*
- *Jobs in Field of Study*
- *Awareness of CCC Campaign*
- *CCC Campaign Video Ads*

▶ **Data Set**

Fresno Focus Group

Seven young men and women from the Fresno area participated in the informal focus group, they were predominantly college students, with a couple of high school students. All seven participants were Black/African American.

Number of Participants	College Students/ High School Students	College Students Currently Attending	Colleges HS Students Attending in the Fall
Total – 7	• College – 5	• Fresno City – 4	• Fresno City – 1
• Men – 2	• High School – 2	• Clovis – 1	• CSU Sacramento – 1
• Women – 5			

▶ **Key Findings**

Ease of Enrollment

Both high school students are attending college in the fall (Sac State and Fresno City) and found it relatively easy to learn about and enroll in college. College student participants stated they had relatives in education or strong HS counselors that were very helpful in giving them direction. However, several participants stated they knew of others that did not get a lot of help or support and experienced a lot of barriers to enrollment, such as family financial issues, cost and unhelpful high school counselors, as well as stigma of attending a community college vs. a 4-year university.

On-campus Experience

College students had mixed experiences while on campus. “Good” experiences included having open access to their professors, feeling connected and liking the “cool environment.” They specifically cited Umoja and EOPS (Extended Opportunity Programs

and Services) as being very helpful and supportive. However, some stated that some professors were not at all helpful, that they “felt lost” in the first year, and that some counselors gave them the wrong classes to take and they lost an entire year.

Expectation of Completion

All participants had every expectation that they would successfully complete their college program – in spite of some experiencing “life issues” such as losing their jobs or housing. They had specific goals to transfer to 4-year universities (including CSU San Jose & Sacramento, an HBCU and out-of-state university) and had ultimate goals of becoming social workers, criminologists, sports kinesiology, entrepreneurs and president of the United States.

Jobs in Field of Study

Participants felt confident and optimistic that they will be able to get a job in their field of study or felt they could create their own jobs by becoming entrepreneurs. Some stated that just having a BA might not be enough, that a master’s degree was needed.

Awareness of CCC Campaigns

“**I Can Afford College**” – A few participants had heard of the **I Can** program, recalling hearing it on Pandora, but had not “clicked” on it or researched it further. Most others had never heard of it, in spite of already being in college. One HS student had attended the Town Hall the night before and knew it helped pay such things as rent, she also mentioned that a bill needed to pass for increased financial aid and associated her own Promise Grant with the program.

Career Education – No one had heard of the Career Education program by that name, except the participant who had attended the Town Hall who was able to cite automotive and nursing as two careers offered at Fresno City. Subsequently, one participant was then able to confirm that he’d heard of “Career Technical Education” as pertaining to the automotive field. However, no one else had ever heard of “Career Technical Education” either.

Associate Degree for Transfer – Five of the seven participants had heard of the ADT program and were able to describe it accurately in terms of how it worked – one even used the words “putting you on the path to get to a 4-year.” Several participants are currently going through the ADT and said they do use the term “Associate Degree for Transfer” but also spoke often about EOPS and having a Student Education Plan (SEP) set up with their counselors to ensure they take the right courses.

What else do you need to know about these programs?

There were questions and confusion about financial aid based on hearsay:

- Does the amount you get decrease with each academic year?
- Do you only get financial aid for a certain number of years – regardless of whether you’re at a community college or 4-year?
- The amount increases once you transfer to a 4-year since universities are more expensive - right?

CCC Campaign Video Ads

Career Ed Ad – There was overall positive reaction to the ad (“looks nice, everyone is having a good time, like the hands on, inviting”) but it didn’t necessarily resonate enough to have them pay closer attention or remember it later. They said it needed to have more information on how affordable it was to do everything that’s shown on-screen as well as how long it takes to complete and how much you could earn doing these types of hands-on jobs. Also, would like to see more diversity – more African Americans on the screen, a representation of the Black community, so that younger Black HS kids see someone who looks like them being successful. They just remembered seeing one. Some said that it seemed like a generic ad that one might see on Instagram or Snapchat but not necessarily intended for someone who is actually interested in going to college.

Follow-up on “Seeing People Like Me”: Important to see successful Black people they can relate to. People need to know that they can make it, that it’s possible – that “I can do it, too.” A motivation is that they will be able to do what they want to do in life, to have the lifestyle they want and seeing others who have done it already is critical. For African American males, it’s important that they see successful Black men in fields other than athletics or entertainment.

“**I Can Afford College**” Ad – Most liked the jingle and said it was catchy and easy to remember, especially the repeating of the website. They liked hearing about paying for books and supplies, made them listen closer. They liked that there were more African Americans in the spot. No one remembered seeing the ad, some thought they heard the song before; many said they would remember the song now. Liked that they showed different classes showing different and more options for students. Lastly, (after second viewing) a few said they seemed *too* happy and had fake smiles.

Associate Degree for Transfer Ad – Generally, they all liked the simple graphics, showing the process of the beginning and end, the path you need to take. It was short and sweet and got the point across quickly so people (kids) don’t get bored.

No one remembered seeing any of the three ads.

What do you want to see & hear?

- Show the benefits to them while at college, show that there’s help along the way, the steps needed to their major/goal.

- Show all student services available to kids that can help alleviate some of the stress students go through, especially African American students, like EOPS, tutoring, job programs/internships and even free photocopying. Not knowing about these services could be deal-breakers for many students and families, not just applying or enrolling but continuing on through to graduation/completion.
- Demonstrate success stories, show people that have gone through the program and are now role models for others.
- Emphasize that it's easy to apply, that it's affordable, that there is an easy path.

How do we communicate with African American students and parents?

- Bring the information to where the people are, like Sports events, Art Hop in downtown Fresno, and “out of the box” fun places with fun activities for kids and information for parents.
- Written materials are not environmentally conscious; however, it does initiate face-to-face interaction which is very effective – “you can trust them, and they can trust you.”
- Face-to-face can be the initial contact, then switch to a digital kiosk or smartphone app where you can quickly get all the info you need about college, financial aid, etc., by clicking two buttons (instead of flipping through five pages).
- Video calls/conference calls where a lot of people can get information at the same time.
- College enrollment vans in communities/neighborhoods where people can enroll on site.
- Utilize students to talk to other students/younger kids – demonstrate they can do it, too.
- Face-to-face works best, like going into door-to-door in communities and schools
- Text blasts.
- Have college counselors go into high schools.
- Send parents emails with information and a link to websites.

Final Thoughts

It was clearly evident that for those students that had access to – and availed themselves of – either on-campus mentors and counselors (Umoja, EOSP, HS counselors) or a personal network of influencers (moms, grandmothers, uncles), the entire college

experience was made considerably easier – from enrollment to financial aid to the on-campus experience to matriculation and transfer. Once they connected with someone with whom they could count on for advice and counsel, their path to their goal had a clearer direction.

Also evident was the sentiment that Black students need and want to see successful Black people they can relate to – by demonstrating success stories, these people become role models for others. Many African American students just don't know enough about college and what it entails, they don't feel prepared and are overwhelmed. Having these role models makes all the difference.

###

Summary Recap

OAKLAND

Tuesday, May 14, 2019 – McClymonds High School

► Purpose & Objectives

The purpose of the focus group was to seek feedback from current high school seniors in the Oakland area about their experiences, opinions and attitudes regarding community college. Specifically, the objectives were to:

- Better define the barriers they encountered when learning about/enrolling in community college
- Identify the most effective ways and channels for outreach and marketing
- Refine the messages that will resonate most effectively
- Test for awareness and recognition of existing CCC ads
- Identify unique, new and creative marketing, advertising and outreach methods

Ultimately, findings from the Oakland group will be combined with findings from the other focus groups to help inform campaign strategies and priorities for 2019/2020 in order to ensure that outreach, marketing and advertising elements of the “**I Can Afford College,**” Career Education and Associate Degree for Transfer campaigns are not only reaching Black and African American youth, but also motivating them to:

- ✓ Learn about the career opportunities available to them through community colleges and the potential for well-paying jobs;
- ✓ Take advantage of all the financial aid available to help pay for college; and,
- ✓ Learn about and access the myriad student resources and programs available to them that can provide support throughout their community college experience.

Specific topics tested were:

- *Awareness of Community College*
- *Expectation of Completion*
- *Jobs in Field of Study*
- *Awareness of CCC Campaign*
- *CCC Campaign Video Ads Data Set*

Oakland Focus Group

Ten high school seniors from Oakland participated in the informal focus group – six girls and four boys, all of whom were Black/African American except one boy and one girl. All the participants are attending either a community college or 4-year university in the fall.

Number of Participants	Students Attending a CCC in the Fall	Students Attending 4-year in the Fall	Students Attending an HBCU in the Fall
• Boys – 4	• Boys – 1	• Boys – 4	• Boys – 2
• Girls – 6	• Girls – 1 (in Oregon)	• Girls – 2	• Girls – 0

► Key Findings

Awareness of Community College

Participants were all aware of community college, many learning about them while in high school, usually through career/college events onsite. Several were aware of the ability to transfer to 4-year university after community college and getting dual enrollment in high school and community college. With regard to 4-year universities participants stated they had always known about them, since elementary school, from their parents and family members, and where expected to attend 4-years.

Ease of Enrollment

Enrollment process was easy for most, however, one said it was a long process “with all the resumes and letters of recommendations and personal statements.” They received a lot of help from the high school staff and counselors who provided websites and phone numbers to call and also while attending college fairs (such as Black College Expo) and events on campus. One student enrolled onsite at the Black College Fair. Students seemed to be aware of financial aid, mentioning the FAFSA specifically.

Expectation of College Life

Participants had realistic expectation of college life, stating they expect a huge culture shock, i.e., used to being around mostly black people, being entirely on their own, and academically more of a challenge with a lot of hard work, based on what they've been told by others. However, they expect to have access to tutoring and mentoring and they will ask a lot of questions.

Expectation of Completion

While most participants stated they expect to finish college, some were unsure they would and cited money issues as a probable cause. One student stated that financial aid was misleading, because not everyone gets financial aid or scholarships and even if they did, it does not pay for everything. All participants expected to work while attending college.

Jobs in Field of Study

Participants felt very confident and optimistic that they will be able to get a job in their field of study or felt they could create their own jobs by becoming entrepreneurs. Many had completed internships while in high school and felt they had made connections in the business world that would help them after they graduate.

Awareness of CCC Campaigns

Career Education – No one had heard the term “career education” though some could describe what some career education jobs were (nursing, electrical, cosmetology).

Follow-up question: What do you consider a middle-income job & salary?

They named teachers, engineers, tech jobs, firefighters, public health and business as middle-income jobs making from 30K to 90K/year. Students themselves expected to earn anywhere from 50K/year to “millions” as a sport agent and acknowledged that in California they would have to earn a lot more than in other places.

“**I Can Afford College**” – Participants knew a lot about financial aid, mentioning the California Promise Grant and the federal Pell Grant, having to submit their parents' tax information to FAFSA, and getting their “EFC” which is then sent to colleges to determine how much financial the college will provide. All participants had applied for and received financial aid for the coming school year.

Associate Degree for Transfer – Participants had not heard of the ADT program by name but were very familiar with how the process worked - transferring from a community college to a 4-year, including pathways to an HBCU, and that CC students get first priority to automatic enrollment in a UC.

What else do you need to know about these programs?

They stated that financial aid packages could be misleading because loans are “hidden” in the packages to make it seem like they don’t have to pay anything, but it’s actually a loan, “You have to learn how to read the financial aid package.”

CCC Campaign Video Ads

Career Ed Ad – unable to test, the video would not play all the way through, likely because it was being streamed through the school’s website, which has a firewall.

“**I Can** Afford College” Ad – A few had seen the ad, after watching shows on Hulu, cable and a few on Pandora. About half generally liked the ad while some felt the ad wasn’t motivating for students; that the information was not directed to high schoolers, the jingle was memorable, but it seemed a bit too childish. Recommended to use real-life students.

Associate Degree for Transfer Ad – Generally, they all liked this spot the best because it was straight to the point, straightforward that you get the message right away: “graduate, get your diploma, start your life.” Also like it visually. However, no one remembered seeing this ad.

Are these videos connecting

Where should we be connecting with young people?

- Social media sites with interactive ads specifically targeting teenagers, especially on their phones
- “.org” sites, such as federal websites for information on grants
- Ads on Instagram with links to the other sites, like financial aid
- Also, Snapchat, Google, WhatsApp and YouTube
- Many don’t watch TV at all, but rather search and watch things online, mostly YouTube
- A few said flyers

How should we reach your parents?

- Radio, Facebook, Instagram, church
- Also, TV
- Alumni community

Who are your trusted messengers?

- Injeans (sp?) Program – they teach skills for life and provide advice; are college educated and went through the same things
- Mentors, teachers
- Parents
- A few stated they don't trust the news on TV

What is the biggest obstacle African American students face?

- Overwhelmingly stated that it was money
- Money, then geography of school
- Not enough support system at school and at home; no one to push them
- A lot of parents just don't know enough or anything about college or financial aid
- Some kids are scared, don't feel ready to go to college to fail

What convinced you to attend college?

- Seeking independence
- Do better than their parents, don't want to work as hard as they did, or work three jobs – work smarter
- In elementary school, teachers put college in their heads
- Want to make her family happy/proud; almost disrespectful not to go to college and finish because their parents struggled
- Was encouraged by an internship where she worked with nurses who really took care of their patients

What would you say to a friend to encourage them to go about going to college”?

- That they should go to Community College, give them all the pros, but in the end, no one can convince them; it's their choice, they have the final decision
- Not to sell themselves short
- Remind them that things aren't cheap, that they shouldn't depend on others (parents or “the system”

Thoughts around stigma against community Colleges

- If they really knew that it was easier, they would go
- The stigma is real, when “they” talk about college, they mean a 4-year
- Everyone doesn’t have the resources to go to a 4-year
- Some people would say that going to a community college is selling themselves short, but if they really knew that it was easier to get into, that you get more opportunities and are able to get prepared so that you’re not so overwhelmed, they would go
- It’s real, but someone who starts at a 2 year is more prepared when they go to a 4-year
- Stigma is real, since middle school, when you start thinking about college, a 4-year is more valued by teachers, parents and other students
- A stigma, sometimes not even thought about until junior year when something happens... no money, grades not good enough, not accepted into the college you want

What the one thing to do to reach young people?

- Face to face communications
- Explain benefits, the process to enroll, that it’s easier, that’s the better choice even if you have the money
- Community college counselors should visit high schools/talk to classes and students should visit college campuses
- Teach people about CCC when they’re younger; take them to the campuses as little kids; have activities for them there and have people as examples that they can talk to
- Tell them about the cost, how much cheaper it is to start there
- In-person contact – face to face works best
- Bring them to the campus

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Summary Recap

SAN DIEGO

Thursday, June 6, 2019 – San Diego City College

► Purpose & Objectives

The purpose of the focus group was to seek feedback from current and potential college students as well as high school students in the San Diego area about their experiences, opinions and attitudes regarding community college. Specifically, the objectives were to:

- Better define the barriers they encountered when learning about/enrolling in community college
- Better define the barriers they experienced pertaining to persistence (completion of degree, certificate or transfer)
- Identify the most effective ways and channels for outreach and marketing
- Refine the messages that will resonate most effectively
- Identify unique, new and creative marketing, advertising and outreach methods

Ultimately, findings from the San Diego group will be combined with findings from the other focus groups to help inform campaign strategies and priorities for 2019/2020 in order to ensure that outreach, marketing and advertising elements of the “**I Can Afford College,**” Career Education and Associate Degree for Transfer campaigns are not only reaching Black and African American youth, but also motivating them to:

- ✓ Learn about the career opportunities available to them through community colleges and the potential for well-paying jobs;
- ✓ Take advantage of all the financial aid available to help pay for college; and,
- ✓ Learn about and access the myriad student resources and programs available to them that can provide support throughout their community college experience.

Specific topics tested were:

- *Ease of Enrollment*
- *On-campus Experience*
- *Expectation of Completion*
- *Jobs in Field of Study*
- *Awareness of CCC Campaign*
- *CCC Campaign Video Ads*

▶ **Data Set**

San Diego Focus Group

Six men and women from the San Diego area participated in the informal focus group, they were predominantly college students, with one high school student. The male participants were all Black/African American, while the female participant was Latino with Biracial sons (Latino and African American) approaching college age.

Number of Participants	College Students/ High School Students	College Students Currently Attending	Colleges HS Students Attending in the Fall
Total – 6	• College – 5	• San Diego City – 4	• Grossmont – 1
• Men – 5	• High School – 1	• Mesa – 1	
• Women – 1			

▶ **Key Findings**

Ease of Enrollment

Overall, participants found the enrollment process to be easy and straightforward. The high school student received assistance from his parents who connected him with a counselor at the community college who provided guidance. Three participants were previously incarcerated, and two were in the foster care system. They received assistance from outreach coordinators who “took the barriers away”. Some of the older and re-entering students found the process of making the personal decision to enroll the most difficult part. One student who did not have parental support or transportation found the process to be labor intensive and had difficulty with the travel required to get to and from campus. He found the financial aid application process to be a challenge as he had difficulty proving homelessness. One of the men who was previous incarcerated found the

online application process to be a challenge and time consuming, as he was not familiar with computers or the Internet.

On-campus Experience

College students who were in foster care cited EOPS (Extended Opportunity Programs and Services) as being very helpful and supportive. The returning adult student stated that having a plan helped him to better communicate his needs. However, some stated that they did not feel supported by college counselors. Some credited being in a diverse environment with helping them to better interact with their peers from different backgrounds and ethnicities. Those coming out of incarceration found support groups and mentors to be helpful, especially as they deal with the stigma that comes with it. Some found professors to be helpful while others cited improved relationships with professors and administrators.

Expectation of Completion

All participants had every expectation that they would successfully complete their college program – either receiving an associate degree or transferring to a 4-year college/university. Most had the goal of transferring to a 4-year college/university. Those who mentioned barriers to completing their college program, such as transportation, financial resources and disabilities, talked about overcoming those barriers through self-determination, a clear plan and support.

Jobs in Field of Study

Participants felt optimistic that they will be able to get a job in their field of study. Some are still exploring their career interests and options. The high school student expressed interest in becoming an entrepreneur. Two stated that they already are working in their desired fields and getting a degree will allow them to advance their careers and earn higher salaries. One student discussed getting a master's degree to create more opportunities for himself. Another did not think he would get a job or a higher paying job in his field of journalism. He is considering changing his major to software engineering. Most stated that being in college is helping them to explore career options. The high school student stated that he knew he wanted to start a business but was unsure who what type of business.

Awareness of CCC Campaigns

“**I Can Afford College**” – One student said while he had heard of **I Can**, he did not know what it was about. Two stated that **I Can** was related to the “BOG” fee waiver. While one student was familiar with the FAFSA application, Cal Grant, and Pell Grant, he did not have a clear understanding of the “**I Can Afford College**” campaign.

Career Education – None had heard of the Career Education program by that name and could not articulate a clear understanding of what it meant. One student said he

was familiar with career education. One student described it as hands-on training, similar to an internship. Another described it as getting hands-on education, or practical versus theoretical learning.

Associate Degree for Transfer – All six participants had heard of the ADT program and were able to describe it fairly accurately.

While participants had some knowledge of the campaigns, they did not have extensive knowledge of **I Can** or Career Education. They had enough knowledge of Associate Degree for Transfer to seek more information or to get assistance to achieve their transfer goals. Those interested in transferring expressed interest in transferring to San Diego State University (locally) and Georgia State University (to be closer to family).

CCC Campaign Video Ads

Career Ed Ad – None of the participants had seen the ad before. However, they found it to be informative and had an overall positive reaction to it, finding it to be “motivating”, “enlightening”, and “effective.” After seeing the video, participants recognized their community college as having a career education program – they just didn’t know the program by name. Some equated certificate programs to be career education. The high school student stated that the video motivated him to use the California Community Colleges system to the best of his advantage. One of the students stated that career education provides more programs than community college offered in the past.

“**I Can** Afford College Ad” – One of the students saw the video before and found it to be beneficial to him. Another found it to be “catchy”, but said he wasn’t sure if he liked it. One of the students enjoyed it and was able to sing parts of the song. Others had strong reactions on the opposite spectrum. The high school student found it to be “over the top” and did not understand the message. The female student said while she could sing along to the song, she did not fully understand the message. One student had a negative reaction to it and did not feel the video was created for an inclusive audience. One questioned whom it helped. A participant also had doubt about some of the message points, stating ‘financial aid is not going to pay my rent and bills’, because he had to pay a great deal of money out of pocket. Another stated that the actors did not look like him, pointing out that they were either Caucasian or Biracial. There was some confusion regarding the difference between what **I Can** promotes and the FAFSA. Some found the message to be vague but were not motivated to go to the website to learn more.

Associate Degree for Transfer Ad – Overall, participants had a positive reaction to the video. One had seen it before. They commented that it was precise, provided adequate details/action steps, and had a clear and interesting message. One student stated that

the video did not give “pie in the sky” promises, but was instead direct, simple, to the point, and appealing to all students.

Obstacles Faced by African American Students

- The dropout rate of African American high school students was cited as a major obstacle which prevents them from going to college.
- Transportation to and from campus for classes can be costly and inconvenient.
- Lack of support from family members and friends, and criticism from those around them about attending college instead of going to work, particularly for older students.
- Lack of information and negative perceptions about community colleges. One student stated, “Everything I was told about college previously was a lie. What I found out when I got here was completely different.”
- The female student has sons who are biracial (Latino and African American). Her sons stated that they are not going to college because “that is not what we do”.
- The impact of popular culture, such as rap music and the “hustle mentality” it portrays, was cited as a negative influence.
- The high school student stated that his generation “has no drive”.
- Other obstacles cited included systemic racism in higher education, incarceration of African American males, and the mentality of those living in inner-city neighborhoods versus those from the suburbs.

All participated were determined to succeed and confident that they could break through these barriers.

How do we communicate with African American students and parents?

- Face-to-face communication is best.
- Use social media, such as Instagram, to convey the message through images.
- Offer rewards and incentives. Some are motivated by what they can get in return.
- Give young people options. They are hard to reach and think they know the answers. Let them know that there are endless options, more than one path.
- Get them on campus to see all that is happening.
- Share personal experiences.

- Advise them to speak with a counselor to get advice and guidance.
- Not all will be motivated because college is not for everyone.

Final Thoughts

The theme that was clear with this group is that support, via EOPS, mentors or parents, played a major role in helping them to attend college, complete the enrollment process successfully, and overcome barriers they faced. Given their background and experiences, including homelessness, foster care, incarceration, and disabilities, they are proof that positive influences and support are key to helping students take steps toward changing their lives by attending a community college, getting a degree or certificate, or transferring to a 4-year college or university for bachelor's degree.

Access to financial resources presents a challenge as some individuals do not believe that financial aid will cover all costs, such as living expenses, costs of computers, or transportation. Information about resources available to them and how to access those resources is needed and desired.

African American students identify with others who look like them, but also appreciate and desire diversity. They want clear, straightforward messages and useful information. Many African American students are not familiar with career education, but once enrolled at a community college, see college as a path to their career goals and chance to create new opportunities for themselves.

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Summary Recap

SACRAMENTO

Friday, June 14, 2019 – Greater Sacramento Urban League

► Purpose & Objectives

The purpose of the focus group was to seek feedback from current and potential college students in the Sacramento area about their experiences, opinions and attitudes regarding community college. Specifically, the objectives were to:

- Better define the barriers they encountered when learning about/enrolling in community college
- Better define the barriers they experienced pertaining to persistence (completion of degree, certificate or transfer)
- Identify the most effective ways and channels for outreach and marketing
- Refine the messages that will resonate most effectively
- Identify unique, new and creative marketing, advertising and outreach methods

Ultimately, findings from the Sacramento group will be combined with findings from the other focus groups to help inform campaign strategies and priorities for 2019/2020 in order to ensure that outreach, marketing and advertising elements of the “**I Can Afford College,**” Career Education and Associate Degree for Transfer campaigns are not only reaching Black and African American youth, but also motivating them to:

- ✓ Learn about the career opportunities available to them through community colleges and the potential for well-paying jobs;
- ✓ Take advantage of all the financial aid available to help pay for college; and,
- ✓ Learn about and access the myriad student resources and programs available to them that can provide support throughout their community college experience.

Specific topics tested were:

- *Ease of Enrollment*
- *Decision to Attend a Community College*
- *Barriers Faced by African Americans*
- *Expectations for Completion*
- *Awareness of California Community Colleges Campaigns*
- *California Community Colleges Campaign Video Ads*

▶ **Data Set**

Sacramento Focus Groups

Thirteen men and women from the Sacramento area participated in the informal focus group. The group consisted of 1 recent high school graduate who was going to the Air Force while obtaining college credit, 10 students attending community college, and two recent community college graduates who are attending or transferring to a 4-year university. All participants were Black or African American.

Number of Participants	College Students/ High School Students	College Students Currently Attending	Colleges HS Students Attending in the Fall
Total – 13	• College – 12	• American River – 5	• Air Force – 1
• Men – 4	• High School – 1	• Sacramento City – 6	
• Women – 9		• Sacramento State – 1	

▶ **Key Findings**

Ease of Enrollment

The younger students found the enrollment process to be easy and straightforward. Most agreed that finding the right counselor early made the process easier. In addition, participants stressed the importance of finding counselors who understood the needs of African American students. However, the older students stated that working with counselors during the enrollment process was more of a hindrance than help. One student who re-enrolled after 20 years away, found the enrollment process to be difficult to navigate. These students stated that they were not informed of resources and programs available to them such as EOPS and Umoja. The financial aid application process was challenging for some students who needed their parents' financial

information, which may not have been available to them, or even useful since they are now on their own.

Decision to Attend a Community College

Many of the students chose to attend a community college because it was less expensive than attending a 4-year college, presenting an affordable option. Some were influenced by their parents to attend a community college or inspired by others they knew who attended and had a positive experience. Others, who may have struggled in high school or at a university, stated that community college presented an opportunity to build toward their educational goals. One student stated that he discovered that much could be achieved at a community college at a lower cost, prior to attending a 4-year university.

Barriers for African American Students

Students described many barriers they faced including acts of microaggression they face on campuses, being labeled or pre-judged, or feeling dismissed and disregarded by professors and administrators because of the color of their skin. They attributed this to a lack of understanding about the needs of African American students and a need for training on racial equity and inclusion. Students found that getting involved in programs on campus, such as working in the EOPS program, being a student ambassador, or becoming an advocate allowed them to create alliances and overcome barriers by understanding and addressing issues; and sharing helpful information with other African American students. Participants stated that administrators are not aware of social issues and do not understand how to help African American students. Some students expressed concern that the budgets for programs that support African American students are being cut, leaving future students vulnerable.

Expectations to Complete Program

All participants felt confident that they would complete their programs, though the length of time required varied. Students expect to receive an associate degree, with many planning to transfer to a 4-year university to receive a bachelor's degree. Some plan to further their education to receive an advanced degree, while others considered completing a certificate program.

Pay Expected

Most students stated that they expect to earn between \$60,000 and \$80,000 in their chosen career, including dietician, attorney, physical therapist, sociologist, and interpreter. Those who plan on running their own business(es) expect to make significantly more, one student stating millions.

Awareness of California Community Colleges Campaigns

Fewer students were familiar with the **I Can** and Career Education campaigns than they were of Associate Degree for Transfer. They were better able to articulate their knowledge of the Associate Degree for Transfer campaign.

- “**I Can Afford College**” – Six students said they heard of “**I Can Afford College**” via commercials and from materials distributed at college and community fairs. One student commented that the program seemed to be targeting younger students coming out of high school.
- Career Education – One student was able to clearly describe Career Education, stating that it was previously referred to as “CTE”. Others were familiar with career education, describing it as a technical certificate program for careers not requiring a college degree, such as HVAC tech, certified nursing assistant, IT tech, etc.
- Associate Degree for Transfer – Eleven of the 13 students said they were familiar with Associate Degree for Transfer. Some stated that counselors may not understand the requirements or do not direct African American students to the proper classes to transfer successfully. Some also stated the importance of knowing that not all degrees fall under the transfer guarantee.

California Community Colleges Campaign Video Ads

- Career Education Ad – Students had mixed reactions to the Career Education ad, with five stating that they liked the ad and five stating that they did not. Students commented that it “sold the dream” about opportunities for training for higher paying jobs. However, they found the ad to be focused on traditional technical jobs versus other job opportunities such as those in human services. To some, the ad seemed to show that community colleges now offer programs that trade schools have. Comments included that if the ad is targeting African Americans, it should feature African American students. Nine students agreed that the ad raised awareness about career education.
- “**I Can Afford College**” Ad – While some liked the **I Can** ad and thought it was “cute”, they did not believe it was effective as an ad about financial aid. Some stated that it did not reflect their true experiences accessing financial aid and made securing funds to pay for college seem easy. Some did not like the song and found it to be reminiscent of for-profit college ads, namely the ICDC College ad. They did not find it to be informative.

- Associate Degree for Transfer Ad – Students had mixed reactions to the Associate Degree for Transfer ad. Overall, they found it to be direct and informative. Some found the information to be limiting, almost implying that the goal is to stop at a bachelor’s degree and move into a career. This did not appeal to students who wish to pursue an advanced degree. Some felt it implied that receiving a bachelor’s degree would lead to their dream job. However, the ad does not clarify that some careers require further education, training or recertification.

Reaching African American Students about Community Colleges

- Get to them early and often. Encourage them to give community college a try at least one semester.
- Don’t forget older students – do more than reach traditional students.
- Go out into the community and reach the at-risk population. “If you want to reach out, stoop down.”
- Get feedback directly from high school students on how to attract them into community colleges.

Final Thoughts

Students participating in the Sacramento focus group represented the diverse experiences of African American students: students just graduating from high school, re-entering adults, low-income students, single parents, student athletes, working students, students who struggle academically, and students who excel academically. They all sought access to programs and information to help them succeed.

Students communicated a need for support and an understanding of the needs of African American students among college administrators, counselors and professors. They expressed needing information about programs and resources available to help African American students to achieve their educational and career goals, without placing limitations on what they can achieve. Some students stated they have observed other students receiving preferential treatment because of their ethnicity, such as Russians or Latinos, while Black students are not afforded the same level of support. Participants recommended more direct outreach in the community, reaching both younger students in high school and older students entering or re-entering college.

Like with the other focus groups, it was clearly communicated that African American students identify with others who look like them and share or understand their needs and experiences. They want clear, straightforward messages and useful information that leads them to the resources they need to succeed.

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