



RECOMMENDATION TO ESTABLISH THE
BLACK UNITY CENTER AT SF STATE
STUDENT AFFAIRS & ENROLLMENT MANAGEMENT
May 19, 2017

Submitted on behalf of the *Center for the Advancement of Black Student Life Work Group*:

Ghilamichael Andemeskel, Vice President, Black Student Union

Oscar Martin Gardea, Educational Opportunity Program, Director

Luoluo Hong, Vice President & Title IX Coordinator, Student Affairs & Enrollment Management (convener)

Anthony D. Little, Chief of Staff, Office of the Vice President, Student Affairs & Enrollment Management

Serie McDougal, III, Chair & Associate Professor, Africana Studies

Jordan Thomas, Vice President for Internal Affairs, Associated Students

Robert A. Williams, Associate Professor, Counseling & Counseling Minor Program Coordinator

BACKGROUND

As stated in the history of San Francisco State University, The Black Student Union and the Third World Liberation Front (TWLF) led a strike to demand equal access to public higher education, more senior faculty of color and a new curriculum that would embrace the history and culture of all people including ethnic minorities. This student strike began November 6, 1968 and lasted until March 20, 1969, which resulted in the university instituting the College of Ethnic Studies.

It is in this same spirit that, and in keeping with the #BlackLivesMatter movement of current times, in May 2016, student activists participated in a hunger strike that lasted ten days. The strike ended after negotiations between university administrators and the hunger strikers led to an agreement of certain demands. One of the demands stated the following:

“We demand a Center for the Advancement of Black Life on Campus to be funded from Academic Affairs complete with a full-time staff to be in charge of the recruitment, retention, and successful matriculation of Black Students (undergraduate and graduate), Staff, and Faculty.”

To this end, a work group of students, staff and faculty was appointed in September 2016 and met throughout AY 2016-17, convened by the Vice President for Student Affairs & Enrollment Management. Members reviewed data provided by Academic Institutional Research, examined models for program and service delivery at approximately 15 campuses across the US, conducted a SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats) analysis, and examined the empirical evidence (see Appendix I) on black student centers (Cooper, 2014; Patton, 2006; Walker, 2007).

In addition, one of the work group members attended the *2016 Annual Association of Black Culture Centers Conference* hosted by Louisiana State University in October and shared what he learned with the work group. Work group members also contemplated the accreditation criteria for black culture centers (see Appendix II) as stipulated by the *Association for Black Culture Centers* (<http://www.abcc.net/directory>). Finally, the two student representatives served as liaisons to both Associated Students and the Black Student Union to share progress on our work and also solicit feedback from students at key milestones. This proposal represents our recommendations to the President’s Cabinet based on our analysis and inquiry.

CONTEXT

In Summer 2016, Chancellor Timothy White for the California State University System launched *Graduation Initiative 2025*, identifying several aggressive goals to improve student access, success and graduation. SF State’s goals are as follows:

Metric	2025 Goal	Most Recent Rate
Freshman 6-Year Graduation	69%	51%
Freshman 4-Year Graduation	33%	18%
Transfer 2-Year Graduation	49%	37%
Transfer 4-Year Graduation	86%	76%
Gap - Underrepresented Minority	0	10 % points
Gap – Pell	0	5 % points

The CSU also coordinates the *African American Initiative*, whose goal is “...to increase the college preparation, enrollment, and graduation rates of African American students from underserved communities” through partnerships with California churches serving predominantly African American congregations, (see <http://www.calstate.edu/externalrelations/partnerships/african-american.shtml>). While SF State has participated in the “Super Sunday” events, our student outcomes suggest that we need more integrated, sustained efforts to remove barriers, implement systemic change, and reduce institutionalized racism and unconscious bias in order to increase access and educational attainment for African America students.

Institutional data indicate that African American students have comprised 5-6% of the total student enrollment (around 1400 headcount) at SF State for the last five years. While this is only slightly lower than the representation by African Americans in the local Bay Area communities served by SF State(6% at the 2010 Census), as an institution of higher education with a historical

legacy and tradition of educating a diverse community of students, we endeavor to enroll African American students at a proportionally higher rate.

Further, while first- and second-year retention rates for African American students are comparable to those of other underrepresented minorities at SF State, the six-year graduation rates for first-time freshmen (Table 1) and four-year graduation rates for new transfers (Table 2) lag behind those of their URM peers.

Table 1: First-Time Freshmen Six-Year Graduation Rates by Ethnicity

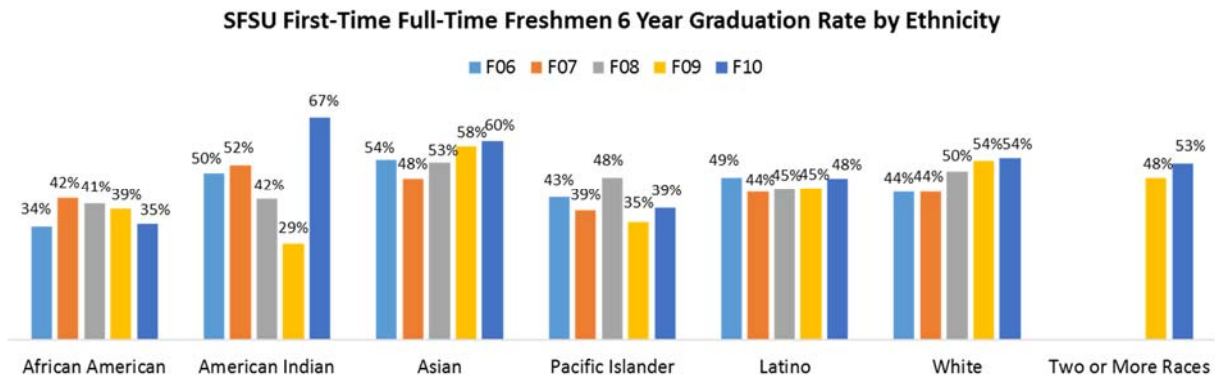
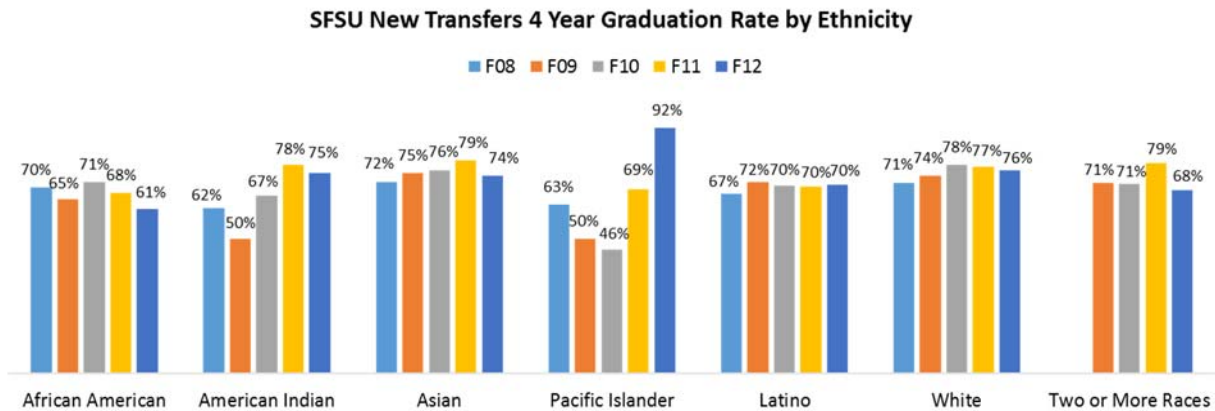


Table 2: New Transfer Four-Year Graduation Rate by Ethnicity



Members of the Black Student Union have also consistently reported Black students’ experiences with racism, cultural bias and stereotype threat – all of which serve as barriers to their sense of belongingness, institutional attachment, and feelings of being genuinely welcome on campus. When student success rates are disaggregated by ethnicity, they reflect disparities in outcomes that would otherwise be hidden; beyond just highlighting inequity, they suggest that SF State may benefit from being more discerning and targeted in its suggested student success initiatives.

Culturally homogenous approaches have not been able to solve the ethnic disparities in student success thus far. This means that we must understand diversity not just in terms of representation among our student and faculty populations; this same diversity should be reflected in student engagement efforts, pedagogical approaches, and strategies to change the campus climate.

To respond to the needs of our African American students and the imperatives and priorities of the SF State strategic plan - specifically to advance equity - **it is our strong recommendation that SF State act immediately.** Several campuses within the CSU are ahead of SF State in establishing black student centers; Cal Poly Pomona has had an African American Student Center for several years (<https://www.cpp.edu/~oslcc/aasc/>), while CSU San Marcos just opened up a new Black Student Center this past February and CSU Dominguez Hills cut the ribbon on The Rose Black Resource Center in March.

RECOMMENDED PROGRAM

Name of the Center. The work group proposes that the center at SF State be named the “Black Unity Center.” The work group considered very carefully the input and perspectives of our students, in particular the students and student organizations that comprise the Black Student Union. Students felt this name provided the substantive and symbolic messaging necessary to let students know both that this is “safe space” and to readily ascertain the purpose of the Center.

Vision Statement. After substantial vetting within the work group and consultation with Associated Students and the Black Student Union, the work group advances the following vision statement for the Center: “The vision of the Center is to advance educational equity for students of African descent by serving as a unifying force for many efforts to ensure the highest potential for and self-determination by students, using an afro-centric framework.”

Mission Statement. Again, following consideration dialogue and seeking feedback and input from Associated Students and the Black Student Union, the work group endorses the following mission statement for the Center: “The mission of the Center is to provide black students, through cross-campus community collaborations and an intersectional, Afro-centric environment, with transformative, impactful and socially conscious programs that allow them to grow academically, interpersonally, culturally and professionally, in order to advance their recruitment, matriculation, retention and graduation.”

Administrative Structure. We propose that the new Center be housed administratively in the Student Affairs & Enrollment Management (SAEM) cabinet area, where partnerships and collaborations with colleagues delivering similar co-curricular programs and services is facilitated. However, the Director and other Center staff are expected to work with all of the

cabinet areas on campus to achieve its vision, mission and goals. To ensure a successful launch and incubation period for this new unit, the Director should report directly to the Vice President; if and when an Assistant Vice President/Chief Diversity Officer is established and appointed in the future, the Center would be appropriate to administratively reassign the Black Unity Center to this sub-cabinet area. ***We recommend appointing an interim Director to serve beginning July 1, 2017, and then concurrently launch a national recruitment and search process to fill the position on a permanent basis as of January 1, 2018.***

Core Programs & Services. While the work group wished to defer the determination of a specific work plan to the Director and staff of the Center, they did outline a multi-year plan for the day-to-day activities, programs, services and events that support the mission of the Center. They further recognized that the specifics of this plan may need to shift or adapt to respond to changing priorities/needs, as well as context for the work and student success.

- Year One: Focus on cultivating resource/opportunity awareness; relationship and network building; conducting workshops on academic and interpersonal skills and capacity-building; career and graduate school preparation; intellectual and academic recognition/stimulation (e.g., providing academic excellence awards); encouraging creation of and participation in culminating experiences; supporting residential life living-learning communities, including the Afro-Centric/Africana-themed student housing community.
- Year Two: Focus on expanding and scaling up existing areas; begin planning for pre-college programs and outreach
- Year Three: Continue expanding and scaling up existing programs areas; implement pre-college programs and outreach; begin planning for cultural enrichment/celebration
- Year Four: Reach full implementation of all core program areas and service functions
- Year Five: Fully evaluate, reassess, and realign; consider and (if applicable) initiate process for receiving accreditation by the Association for Black Culture Centers

Operating Budget. Based on our vision and mission for the proposed Center, as well as considering the entire range of envisioned programs and services, the work group developed the following incremental budget plan for implementation over a three-year period. The work group also expressed hope that University Advancement would be willing to aggressively cultivate and solicit donors for major gifts to support the Black Unity Center, especially to support the costs of training/outreach activities or to host a major speaker series. Further, the work group anticipates the Director collaborating with faculty in various academic colleges and departments to apply for and secure extramural funding support to advance scholar-practitioner approaches to the activities of the Center.

- **Year One** – Proposed inaugural general fund resource investment (i.e., the minimal resource needed to establish the Center) with an estimated total of 1,200 undergraduate black students and 1000 black graduate students potentially being served by the Center.

Director (1.0 FTE)	\$85,000
Program Coordinator, SSP III (Student Success Initiatives)	\$52,000
Operating Expenses* (\$20k – programming, \$8k – graduation event, \$2k – academic excellence awards)	\$30,000
Four Student Staff (academic year, \$2,500 per student)*	\$10,000
Total Request	\$177,000
Total Base Budget after Year One	\$177,000

*Operating expenses can potentially be covered with Lottery Funds (\$40k)

- **Year Two** – Proposed budget augmentation to support expansion of programs and services.

Program Coordinator, SSP III* (Pre-College & Outreach)	\$52,000
Operating Expenses – additional program needs	\$15,000
Total Additional Request	\$67,000
Total Base Budget after Year Two	\$244,000

* Other viable options, should there be a need to minimize the general fund budget impact in the initial years would be to (1) consider the role of buying out course release time of lecturers and/or tenured/tenure-track faculty lines or (2) utilize faculty fellows. However, these should not be used as the primary or long-term model.

- **Year Three** – Proposed additional budget augmentation to support expansion of programs and services.

Program Coordinator, SSP III (Black Cultural Programs)	\$52,000
Operating Expenses – additional program needs	\$10,000
Total Additional Request	\$62,000
Total Base Budget after Year Three	\$306,000

Governance Structure. Members of the work group felt strongly that the Center should be a conduit for building and sustaining strong collaborations and partnerships between the campus and the community, for the benefit of our students. Two governance bodies are proposed to be affiliated with this Center:

- Black Unity Center Advisory Board – The Advisory Board will provide recommendations, guidance, and consultation to the Center director and staff on programs, policies, and procedures. This Board should be comprised of mostly students as follows: Center Director (ex-officio), BSU Representative, Afro-American Department faculty member, Administrative Representative, four student liaisons (that will include an Associated Students At-Large, non-Board member), three representatives from other black student clubs/organizations, and one community member. The Board shall meet at least once monthly.

- Black Unity Center Council of Elders – The Council will promote engagement, share ownership, and provide accountability to the university. Members will also serve as confidential sources of advice/assistance and maintain the institutional memory for the Center’s work. The by-laws or articles of operation, as well as the Center organization chart, should clearly define the level of authority of the Council of Elders and ensure there is appropriate delineation from the Center’s day-to-day operations.

Facilities & Space. The work group recognizes that appropriate space to house a new Center will be difficult to find immediately. Long-term, the work group hopes that the Center could be accommodated in a centrally-located, visible and readily accessible location within the Cesar Chavez Student Center (CCSC). The Pyramid in CCSC has been identified by the Black Student Union as particularly ideal; it is currently being used for storage, so one solution is to identify another space that could be used for storage purposes.

Another possible permanent home could be in one of the new residence halls being developed and constructed as part of the multi-phase Holloway Project, or space on the third floor of the Student Services Building when the offices for Enrollment Management Technology are relocated elsewhere. We urge the President’s Cabinet to identify a space for the Black Unity Center in the campus’ master plan. Providing a dedicated physical space for this Center is also an indication of the University’s understanding of the particular challenges our African American students confront and the resources they need to be successful; a Center provides a sense of safety, promotes community and cohort connections, and also serves as a symbolic statement of SF State’s commitment to black students and their educational attainment.

In the short-term, we recommend asking University Housing for an in-kind contribution by offering an apartment or unit in University Park South, the Village A Lounge, or the Mary Park Lounge with no rent charges assessed to the Black Unity Center (or allocate funding to the Center’s budget to cover the rent charges), as well as absorb the costs of a nominal renovation to make the space suitable for student programming.

Assessment & Outcomes. In order for the Center to be successful, the Director must be data-driven and evidence-based. The work group believes strongly that ongoing assessment and evaluation of the Center’s programs and services is an essential element of the Center’s function. As such, the position description for the Director should include language highlighting the need for qualifications related to conducting assessment, as well as emphasizing accountability for implementing regular assessment activities.

The work group declined to provide specific goals or targets at this time (e.g., “The Center will increase Black student graduation rates by 5% by 2025), in particular because some of these potential goals cannot be independently impacted by the Center – they reflect an institution-wide, collaborative efforts. Instead, the specific goals and measurement targets for the Center will be determined by the Director in consultation with the Advisory Board, the Council of Elders,

the Data Analytics & Assessment Coordinator in SAEM, and Academic Institutional Research. Fortunately, SF State already has the metrics and data that can support a comprehensive assessment plan for the Center (e.g., NSSE, UCLA HERI “Your First College Year Survey,” AIR Graduation Senior Survey, CSU Campus Climate Survey, etc.). These and other instruments can be used to track the progress and impact of the Black Unity Center over time, for example engagement scores on NSSE should improve notably over 3-5 years, for both lower-division and upper-division Black students.

SUMMARY

Graduation Initiative 2025 has delineated ambitious goals for SF State to achieve in a relatively short timeframe, among them closing the educational equity gap for underrepresented minorities. While existing programs like the Educational Opportunity Programs and Metro Academies are making notable progress in improving retention and graduation outcomes for some of our historically underserved students, including those who are first-generation, low-income and/or ethnic minorities, disaggregated data clearly demonstrate the need for focused student success efforts on behalf of our Black Students. Letters of support for this proposal from various campus and community-based organizations are attached in Appendix III,

Given SF State’s history, legacy and strategic values, we should be leading the CSU system and the nation in terms of our initiatives to ensure the success and educational attainment of Black students. To reiterate, in order to respond effectively to the needs of our African American students and the imperatives and priorities of the SF State strategic plan - specifically to advance equity - **it is our strong recommendation that SF State act immediately to establish a Black Unity Center.**

APPROVED / DISAPPROVED:

- signature on file -

Leslie E. Wong, President

August 4, 2017

Date

Drafted May 12, 2017 by L. Hong

Reviewed May 13, 2017 by S. McDougal

Updated May 13, 2017 by L. Hong

Reviewed May 15, 2017 by Center for the Advancement of Black Student Life Work Group

Corrected May 18, 2017 by L. Hong

Finalized May 19, 2017 by L. Hong

APPENDIX I

Black Culture Centers on College Campuses Across the Country

Compiled by Serie McDougal, III, PhD, Chair & Associate Professor, Africana Studies

One of the unsung solutions in Black higher education is the role that Black Culture Centers (BCC) (also known as Black Student Centers) play in the college experiences of Black students. This is especially true for Black students on campuses where they are underrepresented and/or in the numerical minority. On these campuses, Black students face marginalization, social isolation, underrepresentation in curriculum, and lack of cultural understanding. This can result in diminished sense of school-pride and spirit, and sense of belongingness. According to Patton (2006) Black students explain that they are sometimes stereotyped and treated in one of four ways: the spokesperson for all Black people; the academically underprepared beneficiary of affirmative action; the angry, defensive minority; or the invisible student (p.2). In one of the few studies on the impact of Black Culture Centers, Patton (2006) interviewed students who participated in BCCs. She explains how BCCs benefit students in many ways, including increased opportunities for involvement and preparation for student leadership, a richer understanding of their community, enhanced development of their Black identity, increased pride in their shared history, and an enrichment of strategies for thriving in college.

Involvement

Students reported that the Black culture center's activities and workshops taught them leadership and organization skills. They also provided them opportunities for leadership, and served as a pathway to membership in campus wide organizations.

Community

Students reported that the Black culture center provided them with culture specific services that were geared toward their needs and interests and styles. The center provided them with an opportunity to form social relationships with other students and faculty and staff. They felt that faculty and staff at the centers were like mother and father figures and their peers, like family members.

Historical Pride and Identity

Students reported that the Black culture center provided them a place to learn about their culture and identity. They believed that the BCC was a place they could learn about and discuss Black issues and current ideas.

Self-Preservation and Mattering

Students felt that the BCC was a place they could go and feel a sense of comfort and relief. For them, they could speak freely and not feel treated as strange at the Black culture center compared to the larger campus.

Black Culture Centers are able to accomplish these outcomes through a range of services, including:

Pre-College Programs

- Campus visits for middle and high school student/ tours; Mentoring middle and high school students; Middle and high school recruitment visits; Inviting middle and high school students to attend and participate in cultural, motivational and education activities; Middle school, on-campus performances

Resource/Opportunity Awareness

- Orientations for 1st year students (college readiness skills); Welcome weeks (awareness of campus resources-scholarships and financial aid, services, and opportunities for membership in campus organizations)

Cultural Enrichment/Celebration

- Student dance, drama, and musical performances; Kwanzaa celebrations and teach-ins; Black history month; Black family day-typically including cultural performances; Martin Luther King Day celebrations; Gospel Choir; Cultural Film series; Dance organizations; Open Mic Nights; Juneteenth Celebrations; Pageants

Relationship and Network Building

- Leadership training; Peer mentoring; Social Retreats to learn leadership and team building; Educational (historical/cultural) road trips; Formally established faculty/staff mentors of students

Skill Building

- Leadership training workshops; Writing skills; Research training; Tutoring; Science, technology, engineering, and math initiatives

Career/Graduate School Preparation

- Foster awareness of employment opportunities; Graduate school application assistance; Grad school fellowship and scholarship referral

Intellectual and Academic Recognition and Stimulation

- Study tables; Black historical site trips out of state (i.e. to civil rights museums and monuments); Academic excellence awards handed out at events; Scholarships offered for service and achievement; Computer lab space; Discussion groups on topics relevant to Black people; Guest lecturers on relevant topics; Conference sponsorship and attendance / some hosted conferences

Culminating Experiences

- Black graduation ceremony; Black family dinners

Works Cited

Cooper, K. J. (2014). Black culture centers are embracing multiculturalism and intellectual conversation. *Diverse: Issues In Higher Education*, 31(15), 6-9.

Patton, L. D. (2006). Black culture centers: Still central to student learning. *About Campus*, 11(2), 2-8.

Walker, M. A. (2007). The evolution of Black culture centers. *Diverse: Issues in Higher Education*, 23(24), 16-17.

APPENDIX II

Association for Black Culture Center - Criteria for Center Accreditation

Adapted from [Black Culture Centers: Politics of Survival and Identity](#), the following framework of criteria may be used by each [Center](#) for its self-study and peer review. It will also provide the general structure for the eventual review by the Council for Black and Ethnic Minority Centers.

I. Institutional Commitment and Responsibilities

- A. There should be a direct reporting connection of Center to chief academic or student activities administrator.
- B. Center should be integral part of institution's educational and environmental culture.
 - 1. Institutionalization of college/university support to Center.
 - 2. Long-term prioritization of college/university support to Center.
 - 3. Centrality of Center to institution's environmental culture.
- C. Center should be an integral part of institution's support services (retention).
 - 1. Institution's insistence that all support services be responsible for ongoing communication with Center.
 - 2. Center's authority to serve as liaison to all support services and to bring its perspectives to those services.
- D. Center should demonstrate clear commitment to liaisons with larger community.
 - 1. Center's receiving adequate resources to develop/maintain viable ties to larger community.
 - 2. Institution's in-kind support of Center's initiatives to develop/maintain viable ties to larger community.
- E. Center should demonstrate clear commitment to enabling vital ties with institution's academic programs.
 - 1. Institution's insistence that all academic departments and programs develop and sustain clear working relationships with the Center.
 - 2. Center's authority to develop and maintain outreach efforts with all academic departments and programs, and to bring its perspectives to such efforts.

II. Center's Conditions of Eligibility

- A. Center must be institutional member of ABCC.
- B. Center must successfully complete Preliminary Information Form, self-study and peer review processes.
 - 1. Completion of Preliminary Information form and acceptance by the Council.
 - 2. Completion of self-study process and acceptance by the Council.
 - 3. Successful peer-review process of the Council's visiting team.

- C. Center must meet minimal standards outlined in the ABCC handbook, including III and IV of this Accreditation Outline.

III. Initial Membership

- A. Center must be institutional member of ABCC.
- B. Center must successfully complete the ABCC accreditation process.
- C. Center has probationary membership of one year.
- D. Center's institution must demonstrate ability to meet guidelines of institutional commitment and responsibilities.
- E. Center must demonstrate evidence of meeting conditions of eligibility.

IV. Center's Missions and Purpose

- A. Center should demonstrate clear evidence of meeting the following related missions identified in the ABCC Constitution:
 - 1. Reclamation of the ethnic culture(s)
 - 2. Critique of the ethnic culture(s)
 - 3. Promulgation of the ethnic culture(s)
- B. Center should demonstrate clear evidence of connecting with its institution's academic and environmental diversity purposes:
 - 1. Center as part of the institution's curricular initiatives toward diversity.
 - 2. Center as part of the institution's initiatives in developing/maintaining the institution's overall environment of diversity, including co-curricular initiatives and ongoing education of the entire college/university and larger community regarding an authentic pluralistic environment.

V. Center's Effectiveness

- A. Center must demonstrate effectiveness in the following areas:
 - 1. Administrative staff and support services
 - 2. Educational programs and support services
 - 3. Overall student services
 - 4. Overall community involvement
- B. Center must demonstrate effectiveness in programmatic activities and resources.
 - 1. Clear relationship between Center's activities and students' documented interests.
 - 2. Coordination of Center's publicity efforts with other components of institution and the community.
 - 3. Clear relationship between Center's activities and larger community's documented interests.
 - 4. Clear relationship between Center's activities and goals of Black and Ethnic Studies departments and programs.

5. Adequate, discrete space for programmatic activities and to house resources.
6. Adequate budget to sponsor and co-sponsor programmatic activities and to develop/maintain viable levels of print, electronic, and other resources.

VI. Staff Qualifications and Performance

- A. Qualifications of Director(s) and other professional staff, must be met.
 1. Director(s) steeped in the histories and cultures of the primary clients served.
 2. Other professional staff having appropriate educational background and experience related to job expectations.
- B. Evaluation of staff performance must be done.
 1. Ongoing external review by the Center Board or Advisory Council.
 2. Ongoing internal review by appropriate staff members

APPENDIX III

Letters of Support

1. Associated Students Board of Directors
2. Association of Black Psychologists (Bay Area Chapter)
3. Dean, College of Business, SF State
4. Dean, College of Ethnic Studies, SF State
5. Department of Africana Studies, SF State

A LETTER OF SUPPORT OF RECOMMENDATION TO CREATE A
BLACK UNITY CENTER AT SF STATE
ASSOCIATED STUDENTS

This letter serves to support the proposal presented by the Center for the Advancement of Black Student Life Work Group.

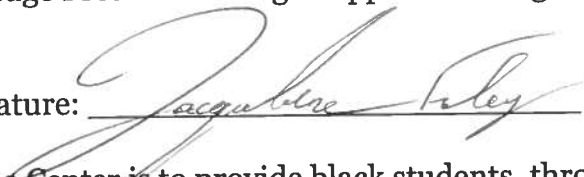
In May 2016, students of SFSU participated in a ten day hunger strike in order to uphold the principles of inclusion, equal access to education and financial support of the College of Ethnic Studies, at a time when budget cuts were proposed which would compromise this important institution at SF State.

Students leading the hunger strike made several demands, to which the campus administration agreed. One of those was a creation of the Center for the Advancement of Black Life on Campus, a department funded by the Student Affairs, with full time staff whose time would be dedicated to “recruitment, retention, and successful matriculation of Black Students (undergraduate and graduate), Staff and Faculty.”

AS believes strongly, that in order to fulfill our public mission, SF State has to be a campus where every member of our community is respected, included, welcomed and safe.

We hereby thank the Center for the Advancement of Black Student Life Work Group for all of its efforts to bring to fruition the creation of this important center, and encourage President Wong to approve its ongoing funding.

AS President Signature:



“The mission of the Center is to provide black students, through cross-campus community collaborations and an intersectional, Afro-centric environment, with transformative, impactful and socially conscious programs that allow them to grow academically, interpersonally, culturally and professionally, in order to advance their recruitment, matriculation, retention and graduation.”





BAY AREA The ASSOCIATION OF BLACK PSYCHOLOGISTS

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Dr. Luo Luo Hong
Vice President for Student Affairs & Enrollment Management

Dear Vice President Hong,

We are pleased to write this letter in support of the proposed Black Unity Center at San Francisco State University.

We applaud the university's support and structuring of such a student-driven effort and process. The research and analysis leading to this proposed center for student unity appears to be second to none and certainly worthy of the proud legacy of San Francisco State University. The movement for Black Studies served as the vanguard movement for Ethnic Studies all over the country.

We are proud that members of our association have played a seminal role in that initial movement and so SFSU has a special place in our hearts and minds. A Black Student Center represents a natural progression for the campus and would represent an ongoing commitment to recruitment and retention of students and faculty of African ancestry as well as acknowledgment of an evolving need to engage the campus in critical inquiry and action relative to racism and its debilitating effects.

Members of the Association of Black Psychologists, Bay Area Chapter stand ready to assist you, the faculty and students in this effort.

Sincerely,

Dr. Theopia Jackson, President: ABPsi-Bay Area Chapter

Dr. Tony Jackson, Vice-President: ABPsi-Bay Area Chapter



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June 19, 2017

President's Cabinet Members
San Francisco State University

I am honored to provide my strong support for a Black Unity Center at San Francisco State University. As a dean of an academic college, and the highest ranking African American woman leader at SF State, I am convinced that a Black Unity Center is needed on campus to address the challenge of closing the attainment gap for under-represented students of color on campus and in the College of Business.

Research on equity in higher education confirms that under-represented students of color continue to face challenges that block their ability to graduate on time. In their 2016 book, *Advancing Black Male Student Success from Preschool to Ph.D.*, Shaun Harper and J. Luke Wood examine common factors that can foster or impede success for one under-represented group many consider to be an "endangered species," Black male four-year college students. Specific, intentional programs need to be advanced in order to address barriers to success for these groups because centuries of systemic discrimination are institutionalized, even at universities as diverse as SF State and the CSU. Harper and Wood found that when it comes to Black men, academic achievement in college is highly dependent on the student's relationships with their faculty and peers, engagement in campus activities outside the classroom, and the institutional environment. Investing in an on-campus home base for under-represented students is key to fostering engagement and student success.

Further, in her book *Mentoring At-Risk Students Through the Hidden Curriculum of Higher Education* (2013), Buffy Smith discusses the barriers to success for under-served students, including students of color. Often, under-represented students of color simply do not come to college equipped with the tool set that will help them navigate the social, cultural, and academic roadmap of a large, complex, university. This "hidden curriculum" or "institutional social capital" is the "information and knowledge that individuals use to decode, interpret, understand, and navigate the culture of the school." Specialty programs, such as targeted mentoring, must be implemented to address the problems of the hidden curriculum.

As a first-generation college graduate, I can emphasize with the experience of many of our students. As an undergraduate at UCLA, it was the mentorship of Olympian/Student Government representative Willie Banks and the support provided to me by the Black Student Union and UCLA's Black MBA Association that led to my academic and extracurricular success. Later, as an MBA student at the Harvard Business School, an institution that when I attended in the early 1980's had a student body of only 3% African Americans, 18% women, and where half of the Black students failed out every year, it



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was the formal mentoring and academic support provided by the African American Student Union that resulted in my graduation in the top 20% of my class. Even in my doctoral program at Penn, my classmates and I encountered several instances of racial bias from our faculty. It was the availability of faculty who “look like me,” the appointment of a formal advocate for students, and formal processes that supported my ability to finish on time and graduate as the top student in our doctoral program. In all of these instances, I had a “place” to turn to: I knew where to go, who to talk to, and when to ask for help because there were formal structures that helped me navigate both the explicit and hidden curriculums.

As is clearly detailed in the Black Unity Center Work Group’s proposal, we all have a difficult challenge to erase the 10% campus attainment gap between our under-represented students of color and all students. What is not detailed in the proposal is the fact that based on the “Last Major” approach, **the College of Business needs to erase a 20% attainment gap for under-represented students of color.** This is a goal that my leadership team, the college faculty, and I have taken on with enthusiasm and resolve. It will not be easy, but we are up to the challenge.

The COB has taken on this challenge at all levels. Last year, I charged our college Strategic Initiatives Committee, our Undergraduate Curriculum Committee, and Associate Dean Yim-Yu Wong with the development and implementation of college-level goals and actions as part of the CSU Student Success and Graduation Initiative. The work of these teams included extensive focus groups and surveys of students, faculty, alumni, staff, and employers. Our findings mirror the work of the Black Unity Center Work Group. In fact, the top recommendation from the work in the college is the appointment of an advocate for under-represented students of color and the establishment of a “place” for these students to go. The establishment of such a place is also an initiative that other public institutions in California have implemented that resulted in significant improvement in attainment rates for under-represented students of color.

Our work in the college confirms that we cannot take our diversity for granted. Formalized organizational structures must be put in place in order to make explicit the support and opportunities for all students, in particular for under-represented students of color. But, the COB cannot do this alone!

In summary, I believe that the establishment of a Black Unity Center at San Francisco State is an important step in truly living our campus value of inclusion and equity. I look forward to being a part of implementing this important initiative.

With kind regards,

Linda S. Oubre, Dean, College of Business



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June 12, 2017

To: Luoluo Hong, Vice President, Student Affairs and Enrollment Management

From: Kenneth P. Monteiro, Dean, College of Ethnic Studies and Professor of Psychology

Subject: African/Black Cultural Center

I was excited to hear of the plans that your office has for creating an African/Black Cultural Center and the collaboration you are doing with Africana Studies through its chair Professor Serie McDougal. I write as both the Dean of the College of Ethnic Studies and Professor of Psychology. I also write as a former board member of the national and local Association of Black Psychologists, Immediate Past President of the American Association of Blacks in Higher Education, a current board member of the National Association for Ethnic Studies and the coordinator/chair of the California State University system-wide Ethnic Studies council.

Researchers, generally, have found that centers similar to that proposed are welcome additions to the educational experience of African American students, providing safe spaces for interpersonal and cultural fellowship, which also support the academic achievement for African Americans. Some stereotype such centers as places to self segregate, but students of color, particularly African American students based on published research as well as human relations surveys conducted at SFState tend to be significantly more likely to interact across ethnic and racial groups than White students, and cultural centers support rather than hinder this behavior. The organizations with which I am associated support such centers as a best practices for supporting the emotional health, well-being and achievement of African American students.

I offer my strongest and unequivocal support for the creation of this center and applaud all who are working for its completion.

Luoluo Hong

From: Dawn-Elissa Fischer
Sent: Sunday, June 11, 2017 4:34 PM
To: Luoluo Hong
Subject: Department support of the Black Unity Center

Dear Dr. Hong,

I am writing to communicate the unbowed commitment of the Department of Africana Studies for the establishment and opening of the Black Unity Center in Fall 2017. The demand of this Center is urgent and overdue. Many of us have witnessed the long-term efforts of the BSU and their many allies to establish this Center. I particularly remember the distinct actions for the Black Unity Center that began in November of 2015 and became part national interest in May 2016.

The faculty in the Department of Africana Studies send collective gratitude to your committee and the collaborative leadership that culminated in this important addition to our University. While we do not know the status of who might become the director of this effort, we note the request of current students and alumni for Dr. Serie McDougal, III to direct the Black Unity Center. We concur with the student statements observing McDougal's distinguished and significant experience at the nexus of student affairs and academic affairs. His service as faculty adviser to the historic organization, the Black Student Union over the past decade--in addition to advising numerous other academic, service and social organizations with missions specific to the holistic success of Black, African and Africana students--situate Dr. McDougal as uniquely prepared to direct the Black Unity Center's establishment and success. Therefore, in addition to stating our Department's support of the Black Unity Center launching as soon as possible, we also recommend Dr. McDougal as a key leader in this effort. Our Department is open to sending more letters of support in addition to both qualitative and quantitative data concerning our longitudinal support of campus-wide requests and statements from students, their families, staff, faculty, alumni and community partners, if necessary. We look forward to the opening of the Black Unity Center on the occasion of the fifty-year anniversary of when such a Center was originally requested. We congratulate your committee in advance for what is sure to be a widely celebrated and supported action toward holistic student success, degree completion, career development and genuine happiness for our campus community.

The faculty and staff in the Department of Africana Studies recognize that while the details of the Black Unity Center may still be "in committee" and/or "under review" --we wish to emphasize our strong support and commitment to its establishment and further development beginning in Fall 2017. We are present and ready to support the longitudinal efforts of the students, staff, faculty and administrative leaders. The Department of Africana Studies stands with you and our President as you lead way, along with our brave and committed student community.

Thank you.

Sincerely,

Dawn-Elissa Fischer
m. 415-203-1869
def@sfsu.edu
afrs@sfsu.edu

Associate Professor, Chair-elect

{Letter of support on behalf of the faculty and staff in Africana studies; letter reflects data collected from students' statements and surveys concerning the Black Unity Center and campus life}

<http://africana.sfsu.edu>