




The Campaign for
College
Opportunity

February 2021

THE STATE OF HIGHER EDUCATION
for **Black Californians**

India Norwood, Graduation, 2019



The contributions of countless Black Californians have characterized the spirit of our state.



Kamala Harris
Vice President of the United States



Angela Davis
Civil rights advocate and author



Cassandra H.B. Jennings
President of Greater Sacramento Urban League



Christopher Edley
Co-Founder of the Opportunity Institute



Constance Rice
Civil rights attorney



Debbie Allen
Actress, dancer, director, and producer



Keith Curry
President & CEO of Compton College



Justice Martin J. Jenkins
Associate Justice of the CA Supreme Court



Dr. Melina Abdullah
Professor and civil rights activist



Michael Lawson
President and CEO of the Los Angeles Urban League



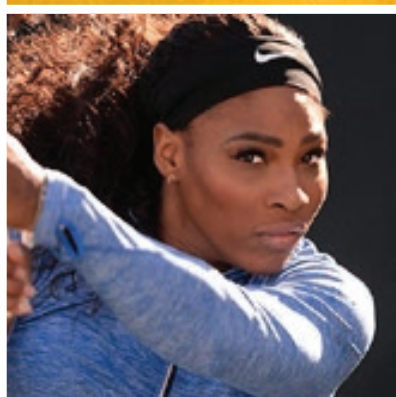
Dr. Pedro A. Noguera
Professor and education equity advocate



Ryan Coogler
Film director, producer, and screenwriter



Ryan Smith
Chief external officer at Partnership for Los Angeles Schools



Serena Williams
Professional tennis player



Angela Glover Blackwell
Founder and president
of PolicyLink



Ava DuVernay
Writer, producer,
and director



Bridget "Biddy" Mason
Former slave, nurse,
and philanthropist



Bobby Seale
Co-founding chairman and
national organizer of the
Black Panther Party



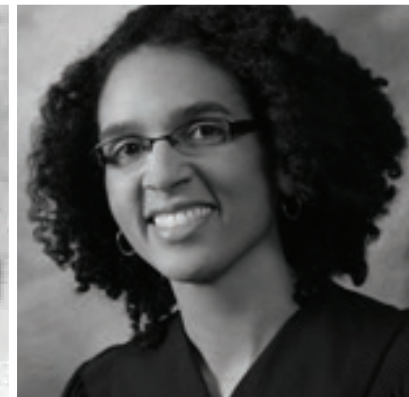
**Florence Griffith
Joyner "Flo-Jo"**
Track and field athlete



Dr. J. Luke Wood
Professor and education
equity advocate



Jackie Robinson
Major League
Baseball player



Justice Leondra R. Kruger
Associate Justice of the
CA Supreme Court



Misty Copeland
Ballet dancer and author



Octavia E. Butler
Author



Pamela Haynes
President of the California
Community Colleges Board of
Governors



Paul R. Williams
Architect



Dr. Shaun R. Harper
Professor and education
equity advocate



Dr. Shirley Weber
Secretary of State



Shonda Rhimes
Television producer,
screenwriter, and author



Tom Bradley
Los Angeles mayor

**BLACK
LIVES
MATTER**



FOREWORD

In the wake of the killings of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, Tony McDade, Rayshard Brooks, and too many others, many college and university leaders sought out options for thoughtful response. At first, leaders responded by releasing public statements to their campus communities. These statements ranged in quality from vague remarks on “racial challenges” to thought-provoking and personalized descriptions on the violence against Black communities. Of course, there were also some institutions that did not release any statement at all or waited far too long to do so.

But public statements, in and of themselves, are meaningless. Hearing circles, listening sessions, and townhalls, were helpful, but they failed to address the depth of anger, frustration, and exhaustion that was and is palpable—particularly within the Black community. And while all these approaches were positive steps forward, they represent mere first steps in a long journey. The racial inequities in our society today are the byproduct of hundreds of years of policies, systems, and culture. This is important to consider because the challenges facing Black people and students will not be resolved solely through statements and listening sessions. Instead, these tools must be intentionally adjoined with action steps.

Institutions must foster concrete change that better enable our colleges and universities to provide a dignified experience to our Black students. While this has always been important, its criticality has been exposed by today’s dual pandemics—the pandemic of COVID-19 that has disproportionately impacted Black communities and the pandemic of anti-Blackness that has a unique strain of undervaluing and criminalizing Black lives and minds.

This is why the data encapsulated within this report and resultant recommendations are so timely and critical. The report comes at a unique time where many educators are radically considering what higher education should look like in the future. The State of Higher Education for Black Californians demonstrates that Black students in California are “not okay.” While there are bright spots in certain areas, there is a long road to travel to achieve racial justice. The recommendations offered herein are clear, relevant, and achievable if we truly commit to advancing Black minds in education. Every educational leader and policymaker should take the recommendations to heart and set ambitious goals for Black student success.

J. Luke Wood, PhD

Campaign for College Opportunity Board Member
Vice President of Student Affairs & Campus Diversity,
Chief Diversity Officer, and Distinguished Professor of
Education San Diego State University



INTRODUCTION

California has long been a land of opportunity, a place where determination and hard work are rewarded. Through the birth of the silver screen, the explosion of Silicon Valley, and countless other revolutions, California is always at the forefront of innovation and economic success. As one of the most diverse states in the Union, California has also been a place of opportunity—and challenge—for Black Californians who migrated from the South and other parts of America seeking economic opportunity and an escape from Jim Crow discrimination. Black Californians were critical to building the California we know today through their talent in the workforce, including their contributions to the aerospace industry, their talent in Hollywood, and their leadership in public policy and civil rights.

But California also excluded Black Californians from full citizenship and freedom through racist policies that legalized discrimination in housing, education, the workplace, and policing. Our state provided less than adequate public funding to schools attended by predominantly Black Californians, ensuring that too many Black Californians lacked access to high-quality schools and college preparation, and contributing to generations of poverty, mass incarceration, and limited social mobility. Acknowledging the impact of our history and the discriminatory and unfair funding, policies, and practices that faced—and in too many instances continue to face—our fellow Black Californians is the first step. The next step is to recognize that California’s promise and potential can only be unlocked when access to economic and educational resources are enjoyed by all. Ensuring a strong future for our state cannot be fully realized without ensuring a strong future for Black Californians.

In this report, we briefly discuss the social and economic reality faced by Black Californians before analyzing measures of educational access and attainment, noting that Black Californians face higher than average rates of unemployment, housing insecurity, food insecurity, incarceration, and poverty. We then examine measures related to college access for California’s Black high school students and the rates at which Black students, once enrolled in college, are supported to complete their degrees. We include recommendations for California’s policymakers and education leaders to ensure that equity is at the heart of their work and to ensure a system of higher education in which **Black students matter**.

The good news. We have several reasons to celebrate the success of Black students in California:

- 88 percent of Black 19-year-olds in California have a high school diploma.
- 80 percent of Black high school graduates who meet the state’s A-G course requirements enroll in college within a year of finishing high school.
- 26 percent of Black Californians have a Bachelor’s degree and 10 percent have an Associate Degree. In addition, two-thirds of Black Californians between the ages of 25 and 64 have enrolled in college.

- Following California's bold reforms to community college course placement practices, access to transfer-level courses has dramatically increased for California's Black community college students.
 - 48 percent of Black students who enrolled in 2019 completed transfer-level English in their first term, compared to just 15 percent of Black students who enrolled in 2015.
 - 72 percent of Black students enrolled directly in transfer-level math in fall 2019, compared to just 12 percent in fall 2015. In fall 2019, 27 percent of Black students successfully completed transfer-level math—up from just seven percent in 2015.
- California State University (CSU) Executive Order 1110, signed in 2017, has enabled thousands of CSU students to access college-level coursework in their initial term of enrollment. This is an important change for Black students, more than half of whom are identified as students who would benefit from additional academic support upon enrollment.
- The four-year graduation rate for Black students at the CSU has doubled over the past decade and now stands at 20 percent.
- This year, applications from Black Californians to the University of California (UC) increased by over 20 percent, with 50 percent increases in applications to UCLA and UC Berkeley.
- 54 percent of Black UC students graduate in four years and 77 percent in six years, the highest graduation rate across any of the higher education sectors.

The bad news. Although we have eliminated substantial hurdles to Black student success, our K-12 schools must work to ensure that more Black students are college-prepared and enroll in college when they graduate. Our colleges and universities must enroll more Black students, and they must provide them with the supports they need to succeed and earn the degrees they seek.

- 60 percent of Black high school graduates are not prepared by their high schools to meet the A-G course requirements for admission to the UC and CSU.
- Only 60 percent of Black students are enrolling in college within a year of completing high school.
- Only one-third of Black community college students earn a certificate or degree, transfer to a four-year institution, or are transfer-prepared within six years.
- Black students make up only four percent of the CSU undergraduate student body, and only 2.5 percent of the UC's undergraduate population, despite accounting for six percent of the state's 18-to-24-year-old population.
- The gap in four-year graduation rates between Black students and white students at the CSU has increased from 21 to 25 percentage points.
- The four-year graduation rates at the UC are roughly 20 percentage points lower for Black UC students than their white peers.
- Black students are dramatically overrepresented in the state's for-profit colleges and universities, where 15 percent of students are Black. These institutions have higher costs, higher student debt, and student loan default rates, and some of the lowest completion rates across all colleges and universities.
- Among Black students who transferred in fall 2018, 38 percent enrolled in a for-profit university.

Based on the findings reported below, the Campaign for College Opportunity proposes the following recommendations for California’s policymakers and college leaders:



Federal Recommendations

- Limit access to federal financial aid (grants and loans) for for-profit colleges and universities that do not provide a quality education or value to the students that attend them.



State Recommendations

- Commit to the ambitious statewide goal of ensuring 60 percent of Black Californians in the workforce hold a degree or high-value credential by 2030.
- Reevaluate and update the enrollment caps established under the Master Plan for Higher Education and increase enrollment of Black students at the CSU and UC through proactive outreach and support.
- Recommit to a bold, new vision for strengthening transfer and ensuring equitable access to the Associate Degree for Transfer (ADT) for Black community college students by establishing a permanent intersegmental implementation workgroup.
- Develop a strong California Cradle-to-Career Data System to better enable policymakers and institutions to address gaps for Black students in college access and success.
- Reform California’s financial aid system to prioritize equity so that every talented Black Californian can go to college and stay enrolled, regardless of their income status.



Community College and University Recommendations

- Ensure strong implementation of CCC and CSU reforms that focus on improving placement of students into college-level English and math.
- Strengthen the CSU Graduation Initiative to improve graduation rates and close racial/ethnic gaps.
- College presidents, campus leaders, and governing bodies must commit to identifying, hiring, retaining, and promoting Black faculty at California’s public colleges and universities.



High School Recommendations

- Increase high school graduation rates for Black students to 90 percent and make the A-G coursework the default curriculum for all high school students in California.
- Mandate completion of the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) or California Dream Act Application (CADAA) for all high school students so that every talented Black Californian can pursue college, regardless of their income status.



November's election followed a year in which we witnessed more brutal and senseless killings of Black Americans at the hands of police. Californians across the state joined international movements to affirm that **Black Lives Matter**, but we can only live up to that basic truth when our public policies and practices consistently serve Black lives and students equitably. California is making some notable progress but has a long way to go to achieve the just goal of racial equity. This report was written to illuminate successes and sources of hope, but we also identify ways in which our systems continue to fail Black students on their journey to a college degree. Creating meaningful college opportunity for Black Californians will require us to commit to the design and implementation of anti-racist policies and practices. Whether you are an educator, policymaker, or advocate, the work of racial equity falls upon each of us to strengthen the state of higher education for Black Californians. We encourage you to use the data and recommendations in this report to inform your work—it will take all of us to support Black student success.

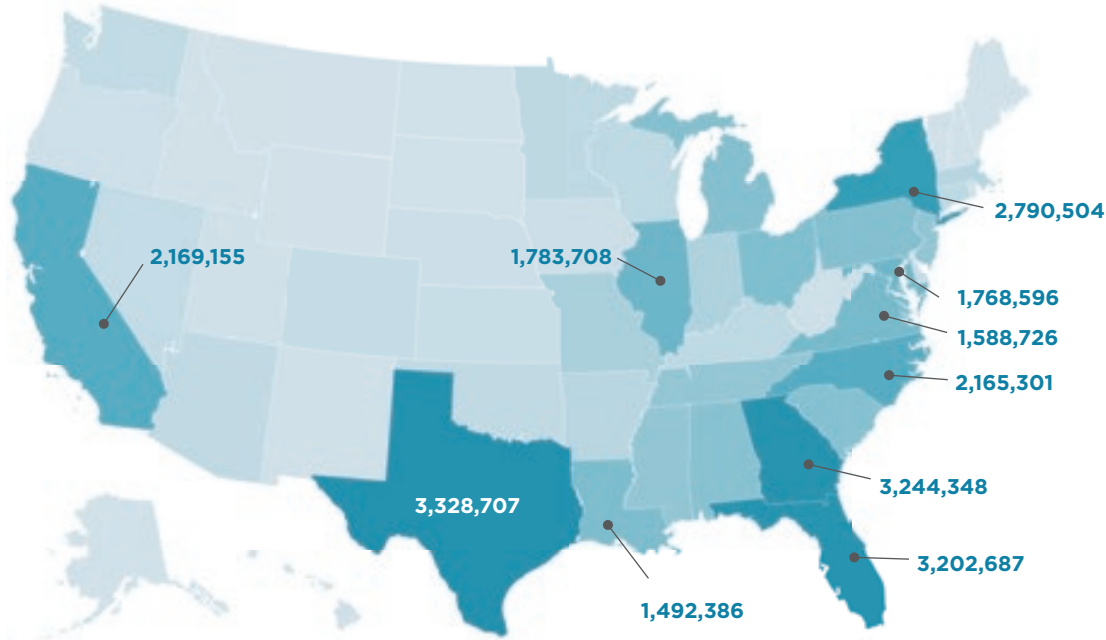


CALIFORNIA'S BLACK POPULATION

California is home to the fifth-largest Black population in the United States, with just over 2.1 million Black Californians and five percent of America's Black residents living within the state's borders. Only Texas, Florida, Georgia, and New York have larger Black populations than the state of California.

California is home to the fifth-largest Black population in the United States.

Figure 1. America's Black Population

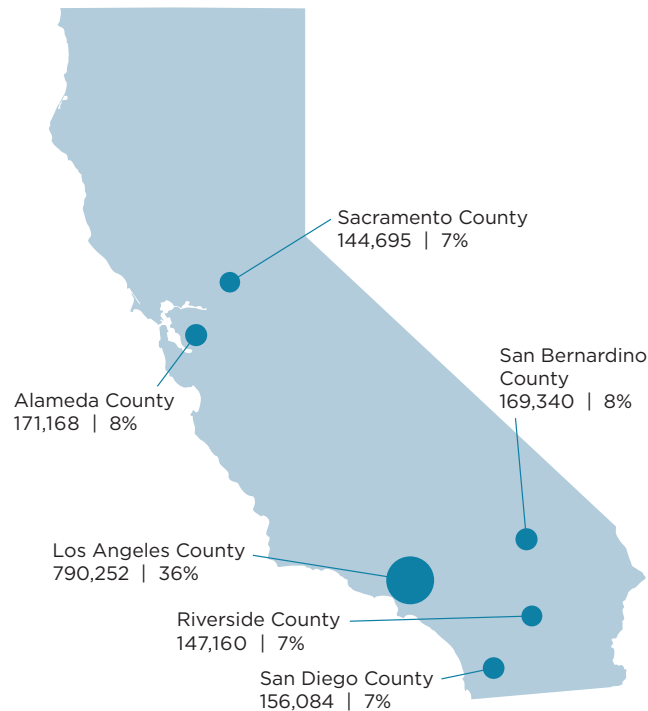


Source: U.S. Census Bureau (2020), *American Community Survey 2015-2019 Five-Year Estimates*, Table DP05 Demographic and Housing Estimates. Available from: data.census.gov

California's Black residents are highly concentrated in Los Angeles County—home to more than one out of every three Black Californians. Another 36 percent live in just five counties: San Bernardino, San Diego, and Riverside in Southern California; and Alameda and Sacramento in Northern California.

Over one-third of California's Black population lives in Los Angeles County.

Figure 2. California's Black Population by County



Source: U.S. Census Bureau (2020), *American Community Survey 2015-2019 Five-Year Estimates*, Table DP05 Demographic and Housing Estimates. Available from: data.census.gov

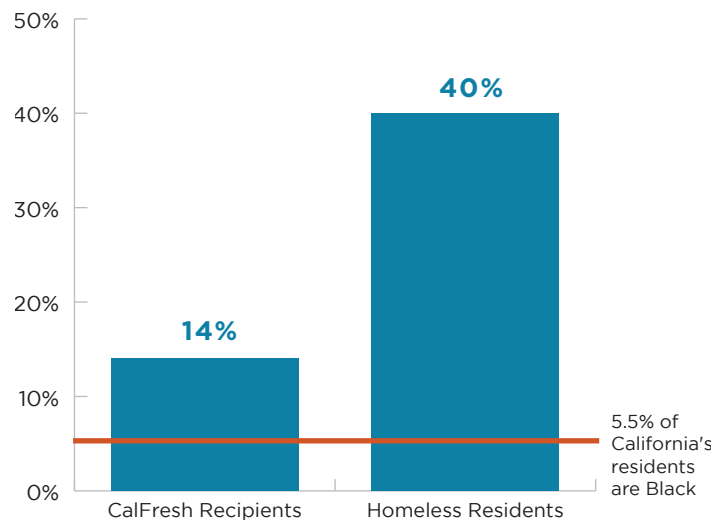
In March 2020, the COVID-19 global pandemic altered nearly every aspect of our way of life. The pandemic has taken a particularly harsh toll on Black Americans, killing more than one in every 735 across the country—the Black mortality rate is just over 155 deaths per 100,000 Black Americans, compared to 121 deaths per 100,000 white Americans.¹ From March 2020 through October 2020, Black Californians saw an increase in mortality of 28 percent compared to the same time period in 2019; among white Californians, mortality increased by six percent.² The pandemic has also impacted college opportunity. Nationwide, Black student college enrollment fell 7.5 percent from fall 2019 to fall 2020; enrollment in the nation's community colleges during that period fell 19.2 percent among Black men.³ In California, out of 60 community colleges that examined enrollment data specific to Black students, 43 colleges noted enrollment declines among Black students over the same time frame.⁴

In the first quarter of 2020, the nonprofit Washington, D.C.-based Economic Policy Institute estimated the unemployment rate among Black Californians at around 6.0 percent, compared to about 3.4 percent among white Californians.⁵ Between mid-March 2020—when the first of California’s state and local COVID-19-related stay-at-home orders were issued—and late November 2020, 85 percent of the state’s Black labor force filed an unemployment insurance claim, compared to a statewide average of 45 percent.⁶

Though Black people account for 5.5 percent of California’s residents, around 40 percent of homeless Californians are Black,⁷ and 14 percent of Californians issued CalFresh benefits (food assistance) are Black residents.⁸ Just over 28 percent of the population incarcerated in California’s prisons are Black individuals, as are 30 percent of the state’s juvenile justice system, and 25 percent of the Californians on parole.⁹ California’s Black households are 50 percent more likely to lack broadband Internet access (15.6 percent) than white households (10.5 percent).¹⁰ Amid the COVID-19 global pandemic, this is particularly troubling, as schools from K-12 to the state’s public colleges and universities are operating almost entirely online.

Though Black residents account for 5.5 percent of the state’s population, they make up 14 percent of CalFresh recipients and 40 percent of California’s homeless population.

Figure 3. Black share of CalFresh Recipients and California Homeless Residents



Source: *CalFresh (Food Stamp) Participation, by Race/Ethnicity*. (n.d.). Kidsdata.Org. Retrieved from Kidsdata.Org website: <http://www.kidsdata.org>; Cimini, K. (2019, October 5). *Black People Disproportionately Homeless in California*. Retrieved from CalMatters Website: <https://calmatters.org/california-divide/2019/10/black-people-disproportionately-homeless-in-california/>





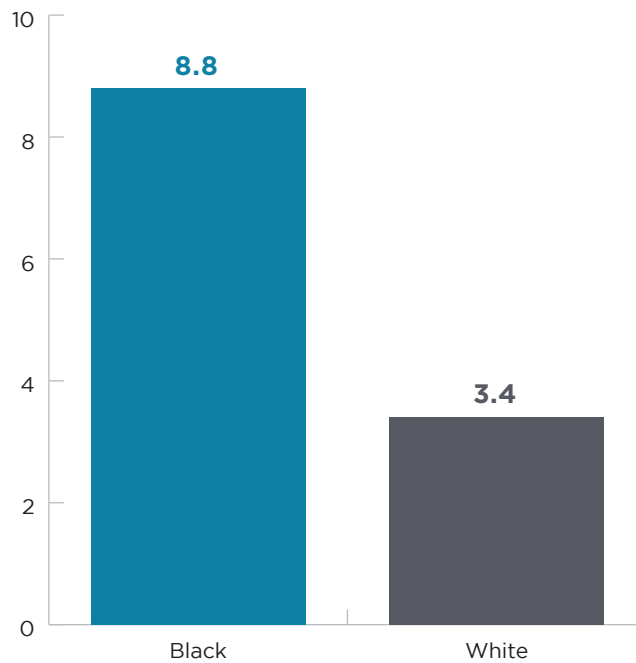
Black Children in California

Serious inequality and equity gaps emerge early between Black and white children. Out of every 1,000 Black children born in California from 2014 to 2018, 8.8 died before their first birthday; infant mortality among white Californians over the same period stood at 3.4 deaths per 1,000 births.¹¹ More than one in four Black children in California lives in a household making less than the federal poverty threshold,¹² which is defined as \$26,200 annually for a family of four.¹³ Furthermore, Black children constitute 22 percent of children in foster care, despite accounting for six percent of California's children.

In school, Black students are more likely than their peers to be identified as having learning disabilities and needing special education.¹⁴ Black students in California's K-12 schools also face disciplinary measures including suspensions and expulsions at rates far exceeding those of white students. Black students are suspended at more than twice the rate (eight percent vs three percent) and expelled at three times the rate (0.24 percent vs. 0.07 percent) of white students.¹⁵

Infant mortality for Black Californians is more than double that for white Californians.

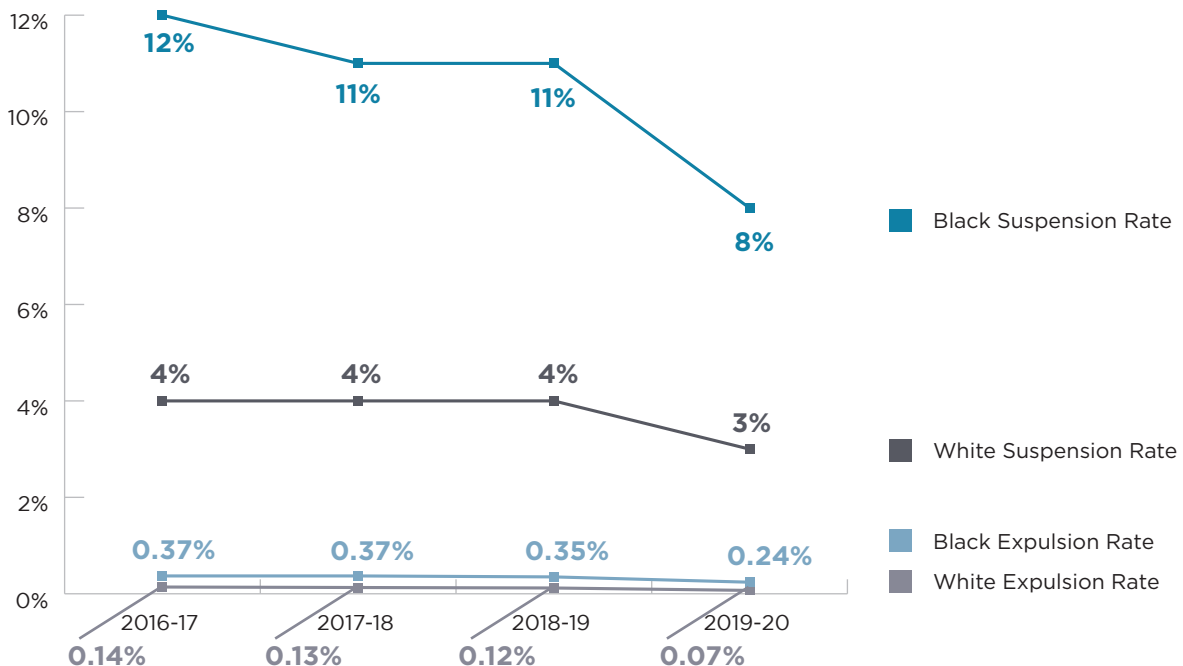
Figure 4. California Infant Mortality—Deaths by Age One per 1,000 Live Births, 2014-2018



Source: United States Department of Health and Human Services (US DHHS), Centers of Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), National Center for Health Statistics (NCHS), Division of Vital Statistics (DVS). Linked Birth / Infant Death Records 2007-2018, as compiled from data provided by the 57 vital statistics jurisdictions through the Vital Statistics Cooperative Program, on CDC WONDER On-line Database. Accessed at <http://wonder.cdc.gov/lbd-current.html>

California’s K-12 public schools suspended and expelled Black students at three times the rates of their white peers.

Figure 5. K-12 Suspension and Expulsion Rates, 2019-2020



Sources: California Department of Education (2020). *DataQuest — Expulsion Rate*. Retrieved from <https://dq.cde.ca.gov/dataquest/>; California Department of Education (2020). *DataQuest — Suspension Rate*. Retrieved from <https://dq.cde.ca.gov/dataquest/>

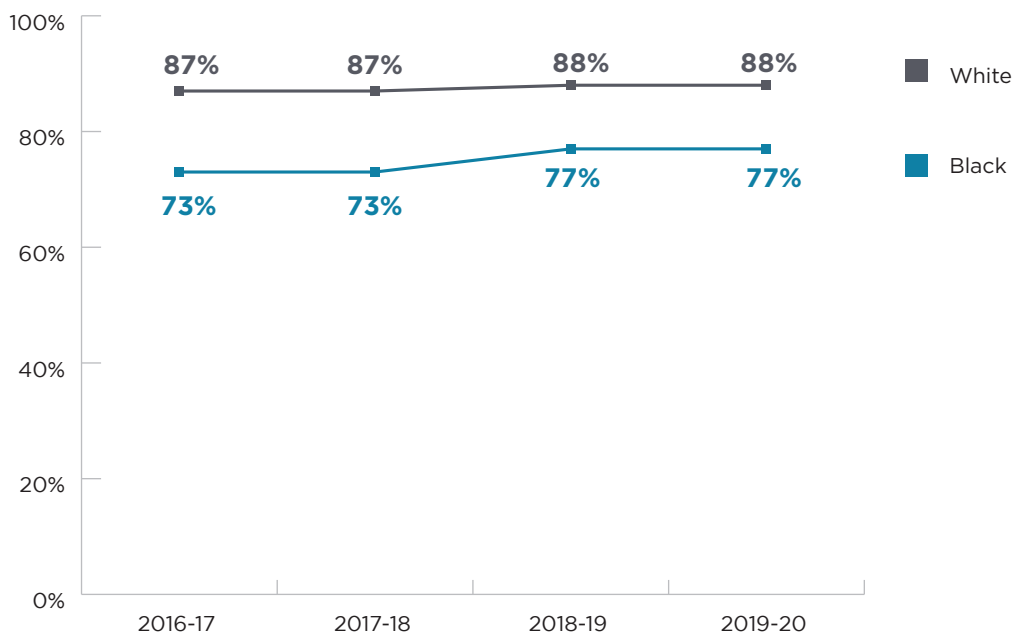


COLLEGE PREPARATION

By the time California's students arrive at the threshold of college, their inequitable experiences translate into significant disparities in the rates of college readiness and attendance by race/ethnicity. Although 88 percent of Black 19-year-olds in California have a high school diploma,¹⁶ California's high schools are not supporting all Black students to graduation. In the latest cohort of students in California's high schools, 77 percent of Black students earned a high school diploma within four years of starting high school. If California is to maintain its economic dominance over the coming decade, this must grow to 90 percent. This level of success is necessary to support a goal of ensuring 60 percent of Californians across racial/ethnic subgroups have a college credential.

California's high schools do not support Black students to graduation at the same rates as their white peers.

Figure 6. Four-Year Adjusted Cohort Graduation Rates



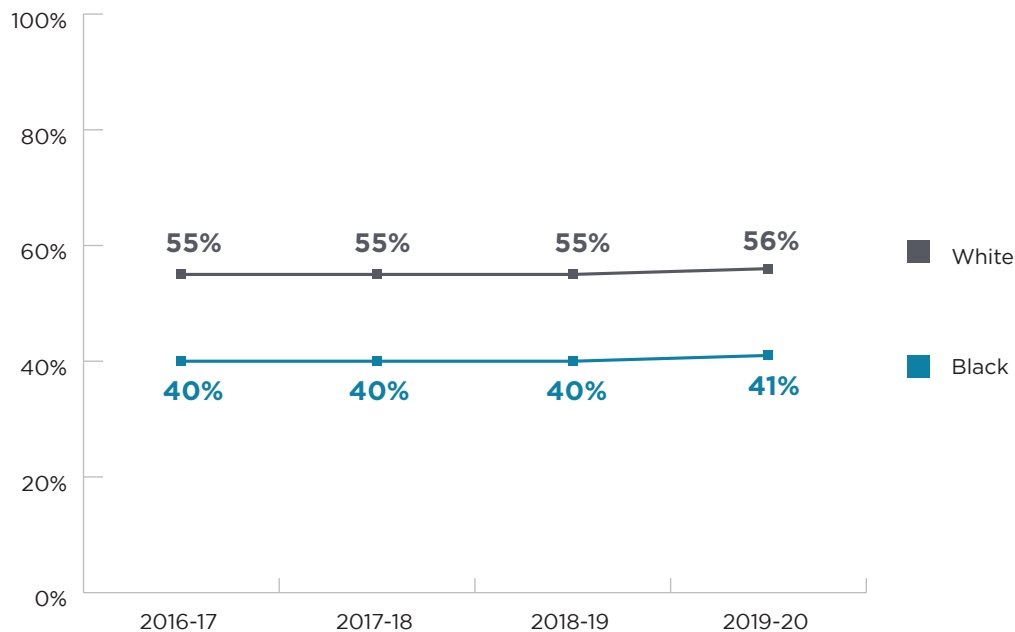
Source: California Department of Education (2020). *DataQuest — Four-Year Adjusted Cohort Graduation Rate*. Retrieved from: <https://dq.cde.ca.gov/dataquest/>

A-G Completion

The high school diploma by itself is not enough for college-bound students. California's high school students wishing to enroll directly in a four-year institution, be it a UC, CSU, or independent college in the state, must make sure they are offered and able to take courses that satisfy the UC and CSU systems' A-G course eligibility requirements and earn grades of C or better.

Only two of five Black high school graduates are eligible for admission to the UC or CSU.

Figure 7. California High School Graduates Meeting A-G Course Requirements



Source: California Department of Education (2020). *DataQuest — Four-Year Adjusted Cohort Graduation Rate*. Retrieved from: <https://dq.cde.ca.gov/dataquest/>

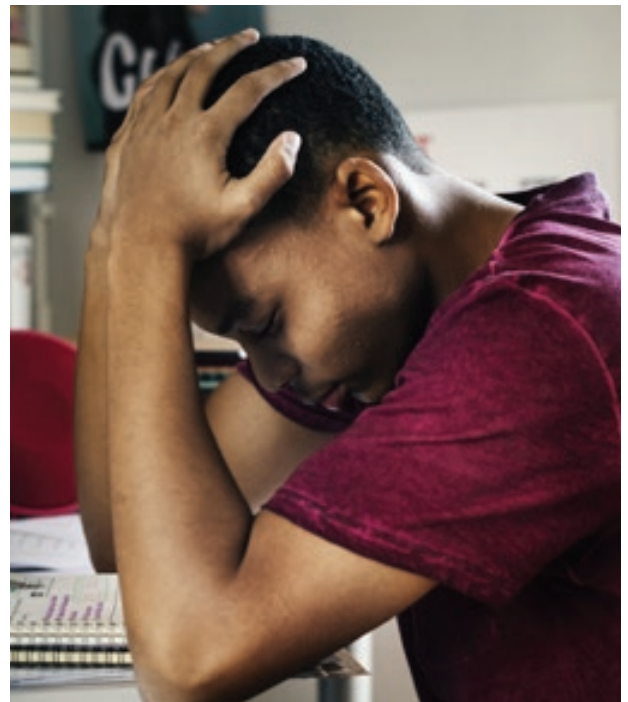
Traditionally, A-G completion rates represent the percentage of graduates who meet the A-G course requirements. By this definition, 41 percent of Black graduates meet the A-G requirements, shown in Figure 6, above. This leaves almost **13,000 Black Californians with high school diplomas, but without access to the state's public four-year colleges and universities**. Figure 7 also makes clear that there has been little movement in the A-G completion rates over the period for which adjusted cohort graduation rates are available.



“Equity isn’t just a slogan. It should transform the way we educate kids.”

*Dr. Pedro Noguera,
The Holdsworth Center blog*

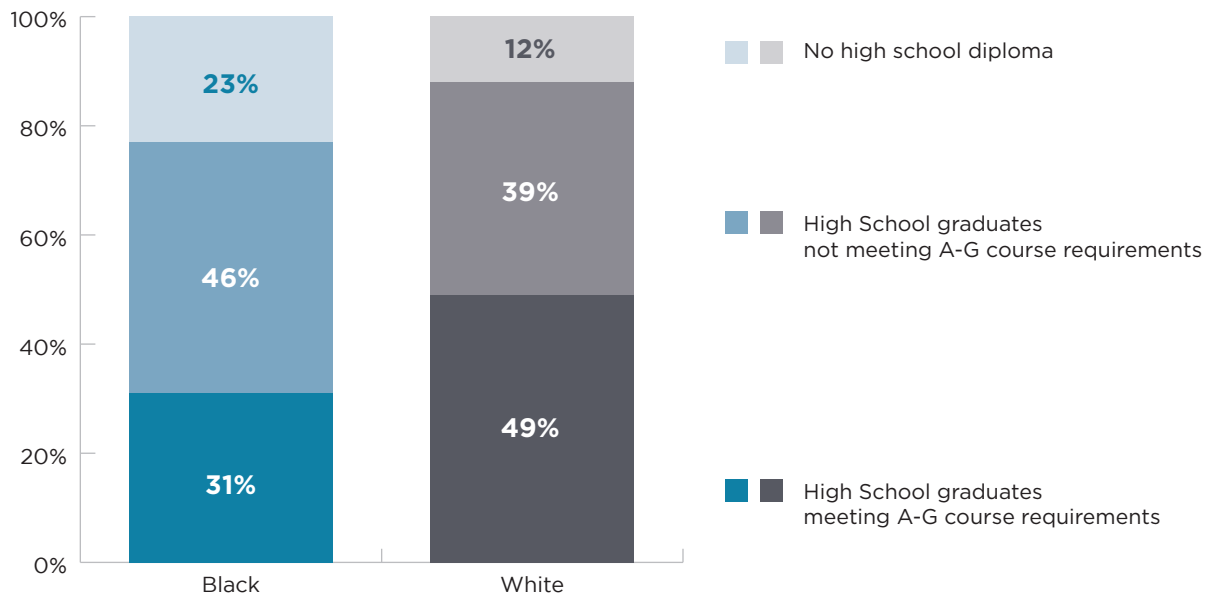
The standard method for calculating the A-G graduation rate does not include all students that started high school, focusing only on students in the cohort who graduate from high school. Figure 8, below, more clearly shows the graduation outcomes for the entire cohort of students. Almost a quarter (23 percent) of Black students did not receive a high school diploma within four years of starting high school.



When analyzing the entire cohort of students over the traditional four years of high school, fewer than one in three Black high school students met the state’s A-G course requirements, compared to just under half of their white peers. Of the Black members of this student cohort, 46 percent graduated without meeting the A-G standards. Of the 27,879 Black students in the Class of 2020, 21,431 (77 percent) graduated with a high school diploma, but only 8,695 (31 percent) met the eligibility requirements for California’s public four-year colleges and universities.

Over two-thirds of Black students are **not** supported by their high schools to complete the A-G course requirements for eligibility to the state’s public four-year universities.

Figure 8. Four-Year Adjusted Cohort Graduation Outcomes, 2019-20



Source: California Department of Education (2020). *DataQuest — Four-Year Adjusted Cohort Graduation Rate*. Retrieved from: <https://dq.cde.ca.gov/dataquest/>

California’s high schools must ensure that Black students have equitable access to courses that satisfy the A-G requirements. Therefore, we support A-G courses as the default high school curriculum required for graduation to ensure not just access, but completion of A-G courses for all California students, regardless of their race/ethnicity, zip code, or income.

College Attendance within 12 Months of High School Completion

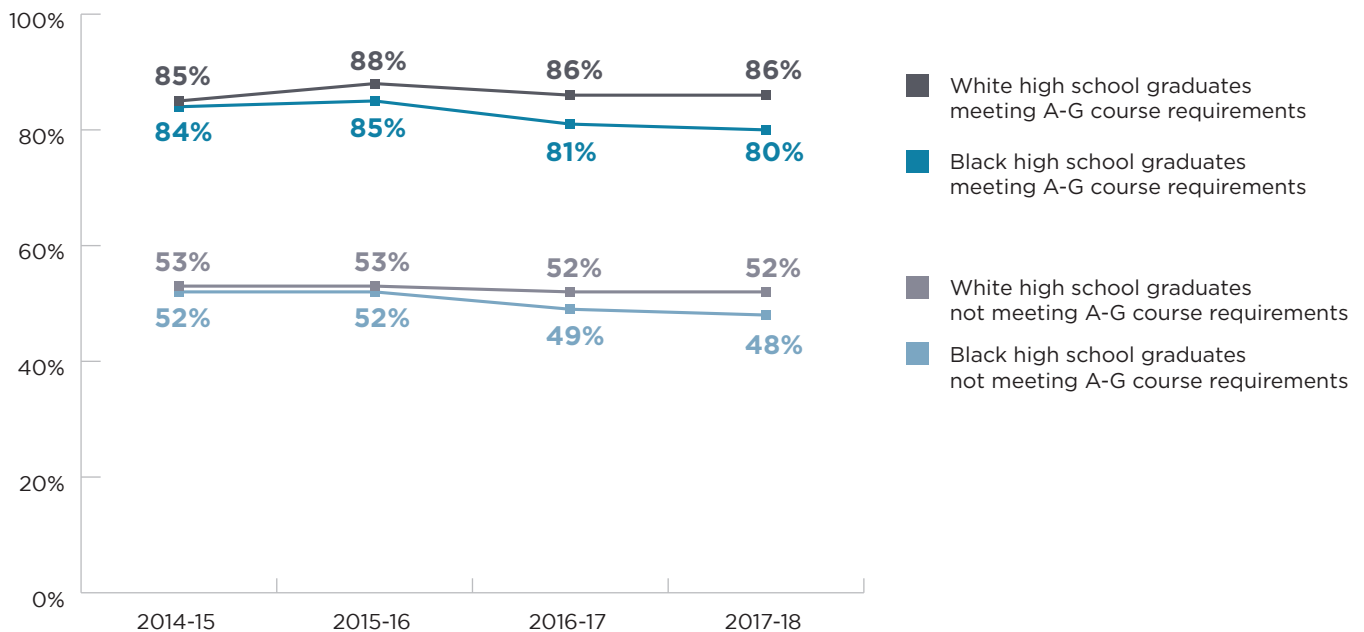
While seven in 10 white students who graduated in the 2017-18 academic year enrolled in college within 12 months, only six in 10 Black students did so. This gap has widened in recent years, as a lower share of Black graduates in 2017-18 enrolled in college within a year of graduating than Black graduates from 2015-16.

California must raise the rate at which Black students enroll in college within a year of their high school graduation to ensure that 60 percent of Black Californians hold a college degree or high-value credential by 2030.¹⁷

The importance of supporting students to complete the A-G requirements becomes even clearer when examining enrollment patterns by A-G completion. As shown in Figure 9, 80 percent of Black students who graduated meeting the A-G requirement enrolled in college within 12 months, compared to only 48 percent of Black graduates who did not meet the A-G course requirements.

80 percent of Black students who graduate meeting the A-G course requirements for UC and CSU eligibility enroll in college within 12 months of graduating, but this number has fallen in recent years.

Figure 9. Enrollment in College within 12 Months of High School Graduation



Source: California Department of Education (2020). *DataQuest — College-Going Rate for California High School Students*. Retrieved from <https://dq.cde.ca.gov/dataquest/>

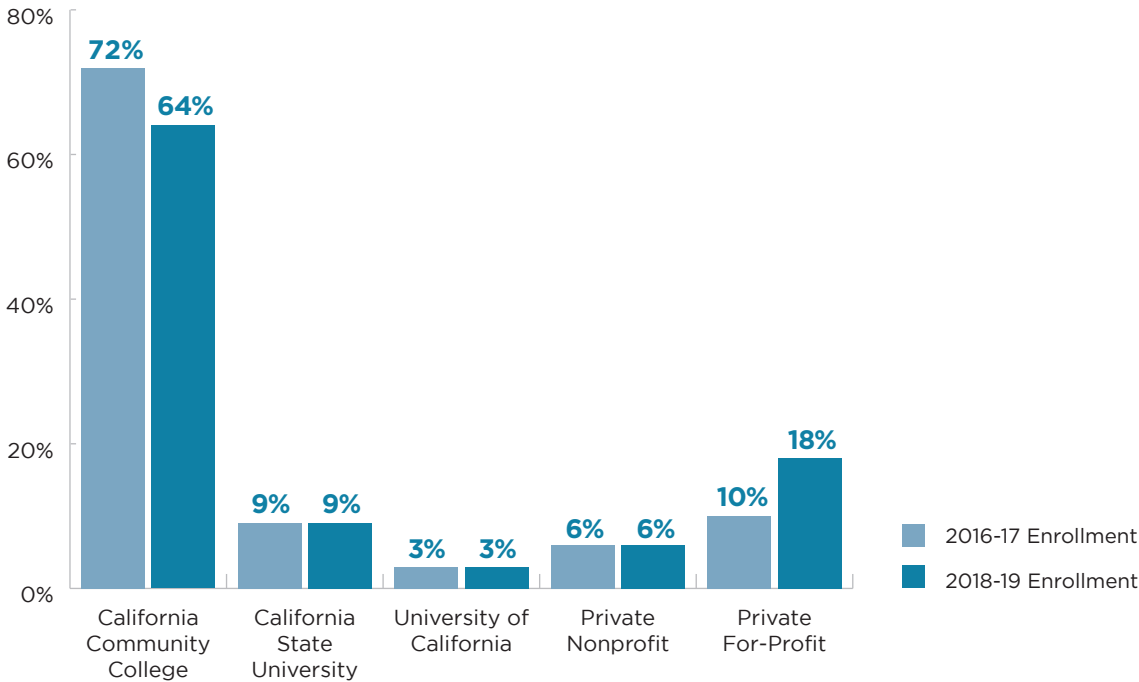


COLLEGE ACCESS

The vast majority, 76 percent, of Black undergraduates who go to college attend a public college or university. Among the 24 percent of Black students who enroll in private institutions, over three-quarters of them (75 percent) enroll in for-profit institutions. **This rate almost doubled in just two years—an increase seemingly driven by a downward shift in Black student enrollment at the state’s community colleges, which enrolled 72 percent of Black undergraduates when we examined these data two years ago, but only enroll 64 percent today.**¹⁸

About two of every three Black undergraduates in California are enrolled in a California community college in the 2018-19 academic year.

Figure 10. Black Undergraduate Enrollment by System, 2016-17 and 2018-19



Source: National Center for Education Statistics, Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (2020), *12-month Enrollment Component (2016-2017), Table EFFY2017: Undergraduate*. Available from: <https://nces.ed.gov/ipeds/use-the-data>; National Center for Education Statistics, Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (2020), *12-month Enrollment Component (2018-2019), Table EFFY2019: Undergraduate*. Available from: <https://nces.ed.gov/ipeds/use-the-data>

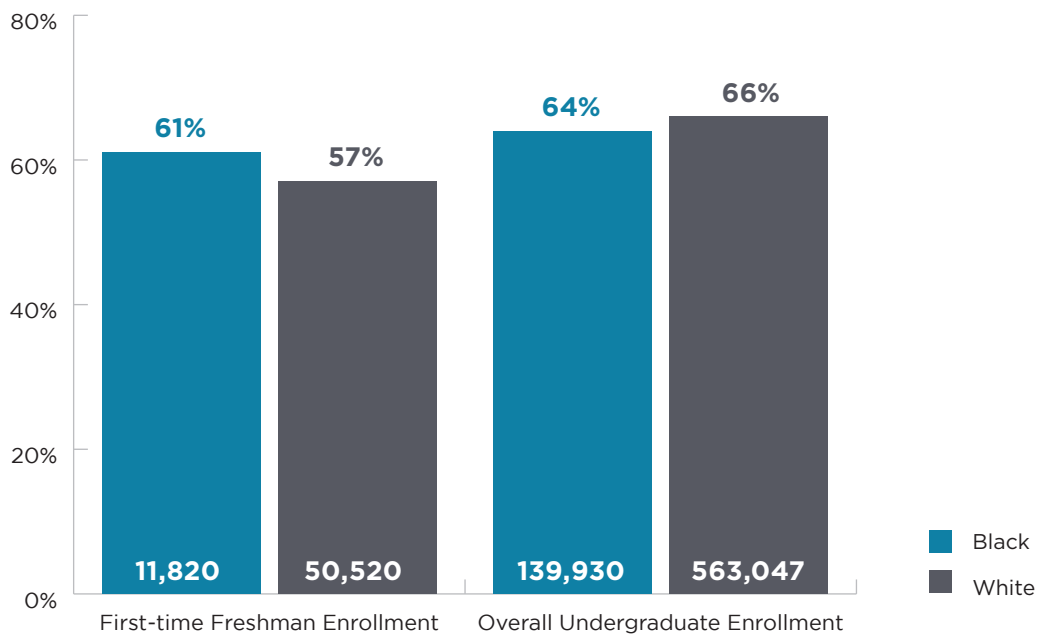
California Community Colleges

As the largest higher education system in the state, the California Community Colleges serve the majority of undergraduate students across all racial and ethnic groups. In the 2018–2019 academic year, California Community Colleges served 2,089,209 students, of whom 121,836 were Black.¹⁹ 64 percent of Black undergraduates in 2018–2019 attended a community college. Among Black students enrolling in college for the first time, 61 percent enrolled at a community college compared to 57 percent of white first-time students. However, while there is little disparity in enrollment by race/ethnicity, it is important to note that California community colleges retain Black students at lower rates than these students' peers. In the 2018–2019 academic year, 70 percent of Black degree/transfer-seeking students were retained from fall to spring, compared to 77 percent of white degree/transfer-seeking students.²⁰



California community colleges enroll a greater percentage of Black first-time students than white first-time students. Overall, however, 66 percent of white students in the state attend a community college, while 64 percent of Black students do.

Figure 11. California Community Colleges—Share of Black and White Student Enrollment, First-Time and Overall, 2018-19



Note: Each bar represents the students of that particular race/ethnicity who are enrolled at the CCC. For example, 61 percent of Black first-time freshmen enrolled at a CCC campus.

Source: National Center for Education Statistics, Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (2020), *12-month Enrollment Component (2018-2019), Fall Enrollment Component (2018)*, Tables: EFFY2019, EF2018A. Available from: <https://nces.ed.gov/ipeds/use-the-data>

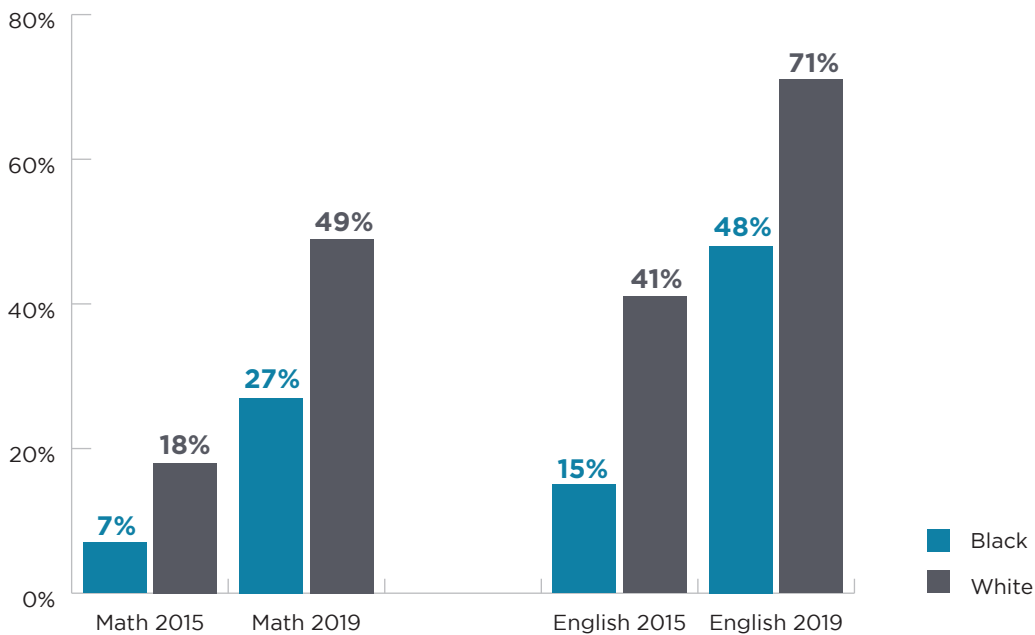
Reforms to Placement and Remedial Education (AB 705) at the California Community Colleges System

In 2017, the California legislature dramatically overhauled the way in which California community colleges place incoming students. It required colleges to use multiple measures of student readiness, prohibited the use of placement tests as the sole metric of student readiness, and mandated that colleges place students in the level of coursework that gives them the greatest chance of completing transfer-level coursework.²¹

The Public Policy Institute of California examined data on the number of students taking and passing transfer-level coursework with a C or better in their first term. They found that, in fall 2015, prior to transfer reform taking effect, only 24 percent of Black students took a transfer-level English course in their first semester, and only 15 percent of entering students passed a transfer-level English course in their first semester. In fall 2019—the first semester for which the placement reforms were mandatory at all California community colleges—93 percent of first-time Black students enrolled in transfer-level English in their first semester, and 48 percent of Black students successfully completed a transfer-level English course in their first semester.

The percentage of Black students completing transfer-level coursework in their first term more than tripled after community college placement reforms (AB 705) in both English and math were enacted.

Figure 12. California Community Colleges—Percentage of First-Time Students Completing Transfer-Level Coursework in First Semester, Fall 2019



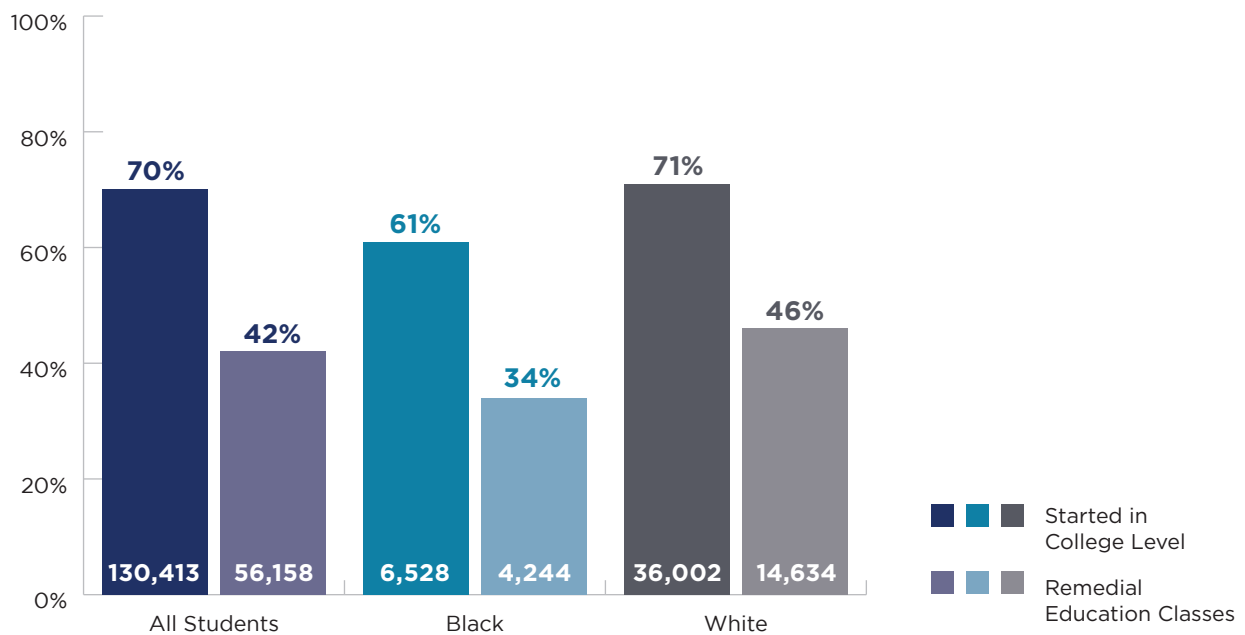
Source: Mejia, M.C., Rodriguez, O., & Johnson, H. (2020). *A New Era of Student Access at California's Community Colleges*. San Francisco, CA: Public Policy Institute of California

The Importance of Placement Reform

Community college placement reforms have opened the door for transfer-level work for a significant number of Black students. Maintaining these reforms and ensuring that colleges continue to make transfer-level coursework available is critical to the success of our state's Black students. Why is this reform so important? While the overall six-year completion rate for Black students was 38 percent, it jumped to 61 percent for those who started in college-level coursework.

Students who start in remedial coursework are significantly less likely to graduate than their peers who start in college-level courses. Only one in three Black students who started in remedial coursework completed their community college studies.

Figure 13. California Community Colleges—Six-Year Completion by Level of Initial Coursework, 2012-13 Cohort



Source: California Community Colleges Chancellor's Office Student Success Scorecard, 2019. Available from: <https://scorecard.cccco.edu/>

Removing the unnecessary and unfair remedial education requirements imposed on community college students will help thousands of Black students move along the educational pathway until they are ready to transfer to a four-year institution. And Black students, once they have completed the requirements to transfer to a four-year institution, are more likely to transfer than members of any other racial or ethnic group.²²

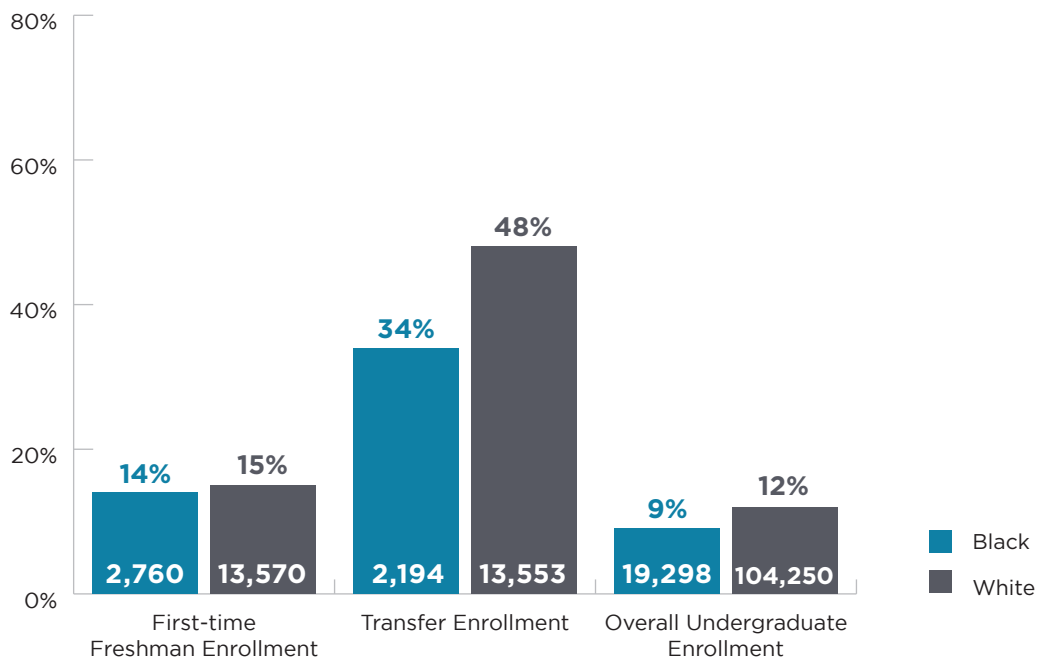
These initial results are promising, so we must ensure that colleges across the state are implementing these placement reforms faithfully. A recent report from the California Acceleration Project (CAP) found that California's Black students disproportionately attend colleges that have maintained a large number of remedial math sections, in spite of the evidence that students are better off taking transfer-level coursework with appropriate supports.²³ In particular, CAP found that community colleges enrolling more than 2,000 Black students were more than twice as likely to have limited transfer-level math availability than colleges without large Black populations; indeed, the majority of these institutions had more remedial math sections than transfer-level math sections.²⁴

California State University

The CSU enrolled 481,210 students in the fall of 2018.²⁵ Across its 23 campuses, the CSU system enrolls just shy of 20,000 Black students—roughly nine percent of all Black undergraduates in California. Among first-time freshmen, 14 percent of Black students began their higher education journey at a CSU campus in fall 2018.

Only one-third of Black transfer students transferred to a CSU campus in fall 2018.

Figure 14. California State University—Share of Black and White Student Enrollment, First-Time, Transfer, and Overall, 2018-19



Note: Each bar represents the students of that particular race/ethnicity who are enrolled at the CSU. For example, 14 percent of Black first-time freshmen enrolled at a CSU campus.

Source: National Center for Education Statistics, Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS), *12-month Enrollment Component (2018-2019)*, *Fall Enrollment Component (2018)*, Tables: EFFY2019, EF2018A. Available from: <https://nces.ed.gov/ipeds/use-the-data>

The California Master Plan for Higher Education clearly envisioned a system in which many students would begin their college education at a community college before transferring to an institution that grants bachelor's degrees.²⁶ **The CSU is the state's primary recipient of transfer students from the California Community Colleges, but only one-third of Black transfer students enrolled at a CSU in fall 2018, compared to almost half two years prior.** There is a significantly lower number of Black students transferring to the CSU today than students of other races/ethnicities.

Despite admission being guaranteed to all qualified transfer students, the CSU does not have the capacity to offer a seat to all qualified applicants. Several campuses are "impacted"—meaning they have more eligible students than they can serve across all campuses and programs, and many of the remaining campuses face capacity shortages in high-demand degree programs.²⁷ Increasing the CSU's capacity to accommodate both first-time and transfer students is critical to ensuring that the university is serving California's students equitably.

In 2010, California created the Associate Degree for Transfer (ADT) to strengthen the transfer pathway and decrease time to degree. A student on the ADT pathways earns 60 units at the California community colleges, then transfers to a CSU with guaranteed admission and junior standing where they earn their B.A. after 60 upper-division units. Importantly, the ADT also guarantees the student a place at a CSU campus, even when there is a capacity shortage. During the Great Recession of 2007-2009, this guarantee ensured that ADT students were not turned away. Among Black transfer students enrolling at the CSU, however, only 18 percent did so on a guaranteed ADT pathway in fall 2019; the system average among all students was 23 percent. Another 19 percent of Black transfer students enrolled with an ADT at a CSU campus, but not on their guaranteed academic path, indicating they may need to earn more than 60 units at the CSU to earn their bachelor's degrees.



Executive Order 1110

In 2017, then-CSU Chancellor Tim White signed Executive Order 1110, eliminating the CSU's use of placement exams and phasing out remedial coursework. This reform has the potential to help large numbers of Black students—in fall 2017, more than half of Black first-time freshmen were placed into remedial coursework.²⁸

Initial evidence presented by the Chancellor's Office to the CSU Board of Trustees showed promising signs. Among students identified as needing additional support in college-level math, just five percent were able to pass a lower-division math course in fall 2017; that number jumped to 46 percent after implementation of the reform.²⁹ The results presented for the initial year of implementation did not include outcomes by race/ethnicity. Given the large numbers of Black students previously referred to remedial coursework before the reform, however, we anticipate disaggregated data will show consequential gains for Black students at the CSU.

Quantitative Reasoning

Though Executive Order 1110 increased access to college-level coursework for thousands of students, in 2019 the CSU Chancellor's Office proposed changing admission requirements for incoming freshman applicants by adding an additional quantitative reasoning course requirement on top of the existing A-G course requirements already required. Courses satisfying the requirement would include math and science courses, as well as an undefined set of elective courses that would include a computer science or quantitative reasoning component.

This proposal, which is still under consideration by the CSU Board of Trustees, would have a disparate impact on Black high school students aspiring to a CSU education. As noted above, fewer than one in three Black high school students in California are currently supported by their high schools to meet the existing A-G course requirements. **If this requirement is adopted, Black students' eligibility for admission to the CSU would fall from 31 percent to 24 percent.**³⁰ Black students attend high schools with fewer rigorous math and science courses, have limited access to high-quality science labs, and enjoy fewer extracurricular opportunities for enrichment in the fields of science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM).³¹ **Until these issues are addressed, additional course requirements will leave fewer Black Californians with access to the CSU and exacerbate the racial inequalities that exist.**



JAMAAL'S JOURNEY

My name is Jamaal Muwwakkil, and I grew up in Compton, CA as the third of four children. While I always dreamed of going to college, the concept was very abstract for me. I didn't know anyone who had attended college, and really didn't understand the logistics of college attendance. So, when I was accepted to college out of high school, I was at a complete loss as to what to do. I didn't understand the next steps: How does tuition get paid? What does housing look like? Who pays for the plane ticket to even visit the campus? While I know the answers to these questions now, at the time, these questions established a huge knowledge gap that seemed unbridgeable. I reasoned, if I was going to stumble my way through college, I might as well do so in as safe an environment possible. Therefore, I decided to go to a local community college (Cerritos College) and work towards transferring.

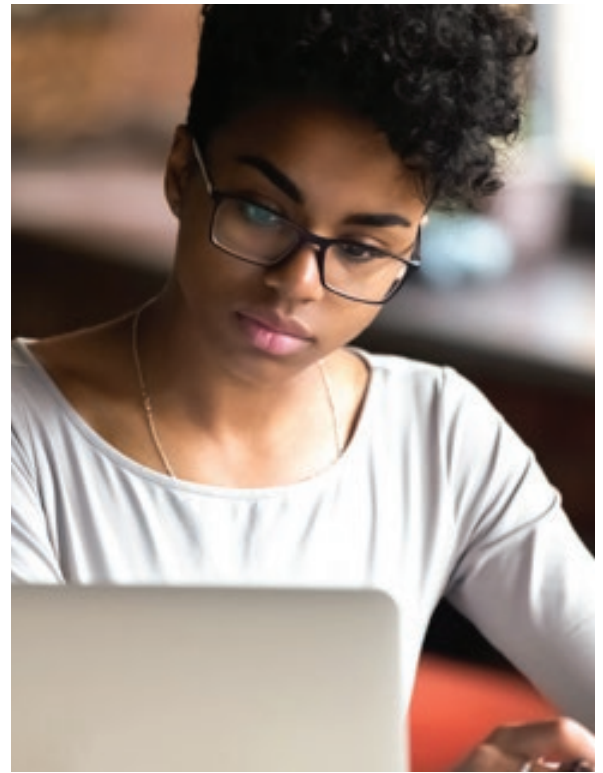
My time in the community college system was tumultuous. I still had personal and family obligations, so I continued to work jobs throughout my college journey. I worked at places like Footlocker and Disneyland, as well as call centers and banks, all the while "taking classes," doing the best I could with what I knew. I ended up transferring from Los Angeles City College after ten years in the community college system and after enrolling in multiple different community colleges. **For me, this ten-year period represents how long it took, through guessing and failure, for me to find my way through the transfer process.**

Upon transferring to UCLA, I found the university environment similar and different at the same time. While there were many more resources at the university compared to the community college, there was still little guidance for first-gen and Black students. Through engagement with programs overtly, I found my way to resources that helped me accomplish my goals. I also advocated for community college students by serving as a peer mentor for students applying for transfer. I became a Mellon Mays Undergraduate Research, and subsequently graduated with honors with a degree in Linguistics. There were few, if any, Black students in my major, no Black professors, and I had to work through issues related to imposter syndrome and solo status. From my perspective, getting through was tougher than it needed to be, and the issues were not related to academics.

I continued my studies at the University of California, Santa Barbara (UCSB), where I am currently enrolled as a Ph.D. candidate in the Linguistics department. I continued my advocacy for Black students through serving as the President of the Black Graduate Student Association of UCSB, my research highlighting Black students' experience in public higher education, and my work as UC Student Regent. **While I have been able to attain some degree of success in public higher ed, my good fortune should not be viewed through a "I did it and so can you" framework. There exist many structural barriers to successful engagement with higher education from a first-gen and Black positionality.** I am committed to addressing these issues in all my spheres of influence, so that public higher education can gain more legitimacy and truly fulfilling the promise of a public mission.

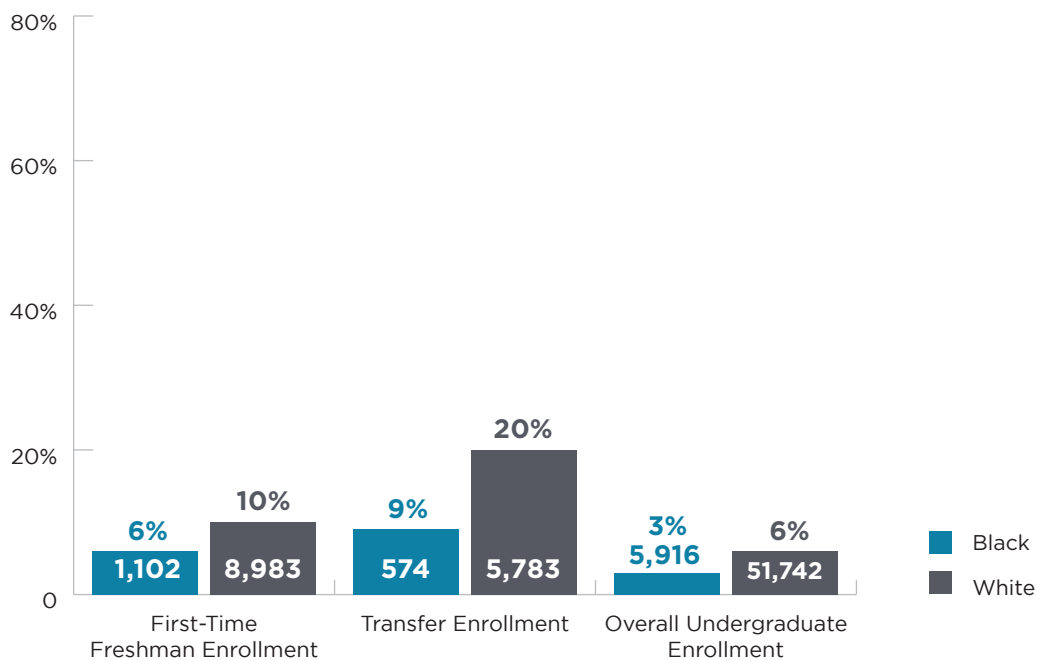
University of California

The UC is a world-renowned research university, currently employing 68 winners of the Nobel Prize.³² The system comprises 10 campuses—nine of them enroll undergraduate students. The UC enrolls just over 225,000 undergraduate students annually. Of the 226,125 undergraduates enrolled in fall 2019, however, only 9,371 were Black students—including those who identified as Black in combination with another race/ethnicity.³³ **This means that each year, fewer than 10,000 Black undergraduates in California have access to their state’s flagship university system, the Nobel laureates and former cabinet secretaries who teach at its campuses, and the educational opportunities the UC affords.** UC campuses are also better-funded than the CSU or the California Community Colleges, with greater per-student revenues and expenditures. The underrepresentation of Black students at the state’s four-year public universities, when combined with the disparate levels of funding received by the various segments, creates a context in which the state systematically underinvests in its Black students.³⁴



Just three percent of Black students in California attend a UC campus.

Figure 15. University of California—Share of Black and White Student Enrollment, First-Time, Transfer, and Overall, 2018-19



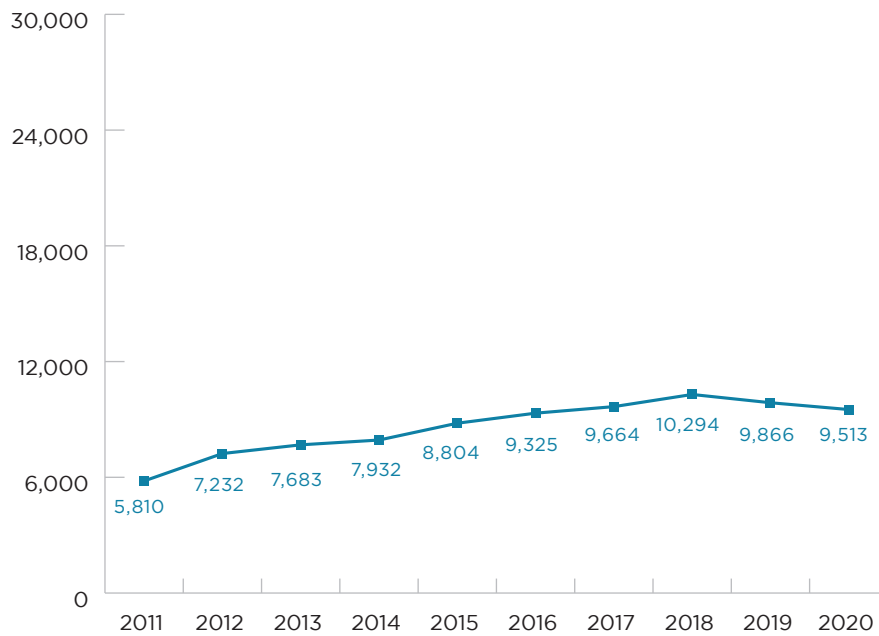
Note: Each bar represents the students of that particular race/ethnicity who are enrolled at the UC. For example, six percent of Black first-time freshmen enrolled at a UC campus.

Source: National Center for Education Statistics, Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS), *12-month Enrollment Component (2018-2019), Fall Enrollment Component (2018), Tables: EFFY2019, EF2018A*. Available from: <https://nces.ed.gov/ipeds/use-the-data>

As noted earlier, to be eligible for admission to the UC, a California high school student must complete the A-G curriculum with a C or better, but California’s high schools are not supporting Black students to A-G attainment at the same rate as their white peers. **Only six percent of Black undergraduates enrolling in college for the first time began their college careers as freshmen at UC campuses.** When looking at the entire undergraduate population—from freshmen to seniors, including transfer students, as well as those who enrolled as freshmen—Black students account for just three percent of the UC population.

While the number of Black students applying to the UC has grown over the course of the past decade, too few Black students in California are eligible to apply to the UC as freshmen.

Figure 16. Black Applicants to the University of California, 2010-2019



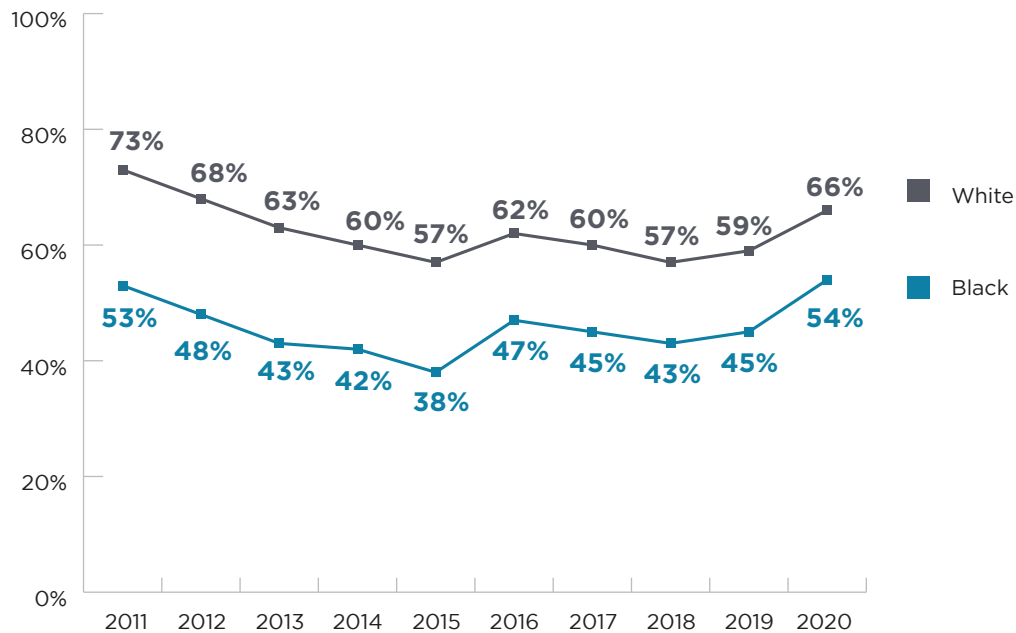
Source: University of California Office of the President, Institutional Research and Academic Planning. Available from: <https://www.universityofcalifornia.edu/infocenter/admissions-residency-and-ethnicity>



Among applicants, Black students are accepted at rates below those of their white peers, though the gap narrowed from 26 percentage points in 2010 to 14 percentage points in 2019.

The UC accepts less than half of its Black applicants each year, a 12 percentage point decline in admissions rate since 2010.

Figure 17. University of California Admissions Rates (admits/applicants), 2010-2019



Source: University of California Office of the President, Institutional Research and Academic Planning. Available from: <https://www.universityofcalifornia.edu/infocenter/admissions-residency-and-ethnicity>

Elimination of the SAT and ACT for Admissions

In May 2020, the UC Board of Regents made a historic and unanimous decision to eliminate the use of the SAT and ACT for eligibility and admissions, and in November, the UC also noted the SAT and ACT would not be used in awarding Regents and Chancellor’s Scholarships.³⁵ Standardized tests such as the SAT and ACT, marketed as “objective” measures of student performance, were originally introduced by the UC as a “means of reducing the size of the pool [of eligible students, as required by the California Master Plan for Higher Education].”³⁶ Despite these standardized tests’ claims of objectivity, performance on them is strongly related to students’ racial and ethnic backgrounds, demographic characteristics of their high schools, and their families’ wealth.³⁷ Black students are less likely to attend schools with robust test preparation programs, and their families are less likely to have the resources for expensive test preparation courses.³⁸ Furthermore, research has clearly shown that a student’s high school grade point average is a better predictor of college success.³⁹

At the end of January 2021, the UC reported a large increase in the number of applications received from students of all racial and ethnic backgrounds in fall 2020, but overall growth (16 percent) was outpaced by growth among Black students (21 percent).⁴⁰ The number of Black applicants to UC Berkeley and UCLA rose by 48 percent after the UC eliminated the SAT/ACT requirement.⁴¹

While we await data on the impact of the policy change on admissions and eventual enrollment, the application numbers are a positive sign in the right direction.

Independent Nonprofit Colleges and Universities

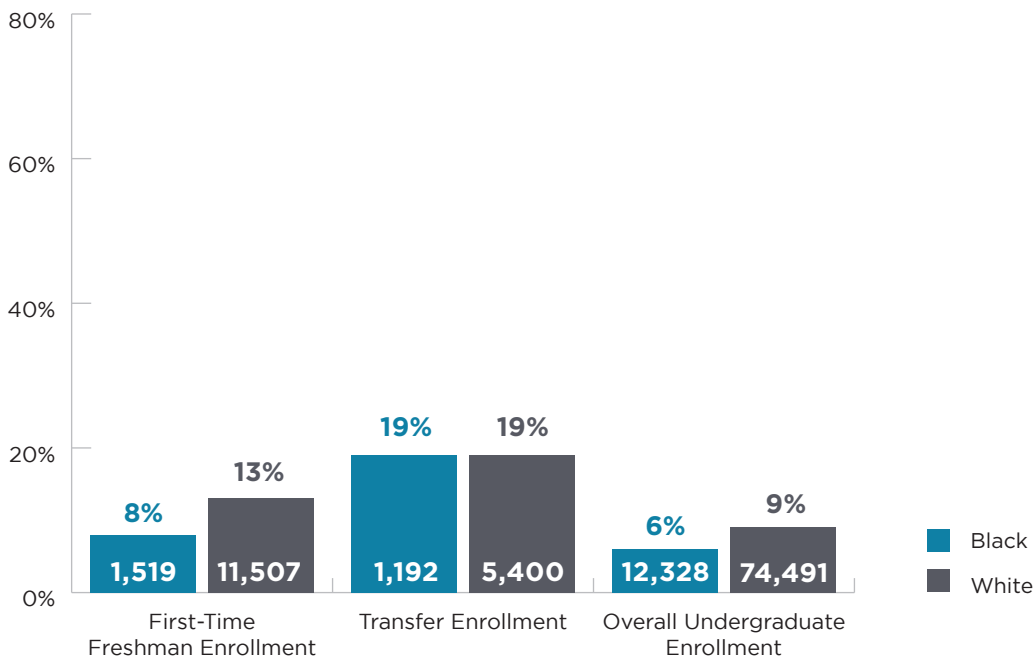
California is home to a host of world-renowned nonprofit colleges and universities, such as Stanford University, the University of Southern California, the Claremont Colleges, California Institute for Technology, and many more. All funds at nonprofit institutions must be used to cover costs or institutional improvements, and school officers and leaders are accountable to boards of trustees, rather than to shareholders interested in profits. Independent nonprofit colleges and universities are a critical component of California's higher education landscape and serve **225,000** additional students who might not find a spot at a UC or CSU or simply prefer an independent liberal arts education.⁴² The state cannot grow its educated workforce without a robust independent postsecondary sector that continues to serve as many undergraduate students as the UC serves.

Only six percent (12,328) of California's Black undergraduate population enrolled in the state's independent nonprofit colleges and universities in 2018-19. In fall 2018, fewer than one in 10 Black students started on a higher education path at an independent nonprofit college or university.

Previously, one in four Black transfer students enrolled in a nonprofit university,⁴³ but that number has fallen to just one in five.

Independent nonprofit colleges and universities educate about six percent of California's Black students.

Figure 18. Independent Nonprofit Colleges and Universities—Share of Black and White Student Enrollment, First-Time, Transfer, and Overall, 2018-19



Note: Each bar represents the students of that particular race/ethnicity who are enrolled at independent nonprofit colleges and universities. For example, eight percent of Black first-time freshmen enrolled at an independent nonprofit campus.

Source: National Center for Education Statistics, Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS), *12-month Enrollment Component (2018-2019)*, *Fall Enrollment Component (2018)*, Tables: EFFY2019, EF2018A. Available from: <https://nces.ed.gov/ipeds/use-the-data>



Independent For-Profit Colleges and Universities

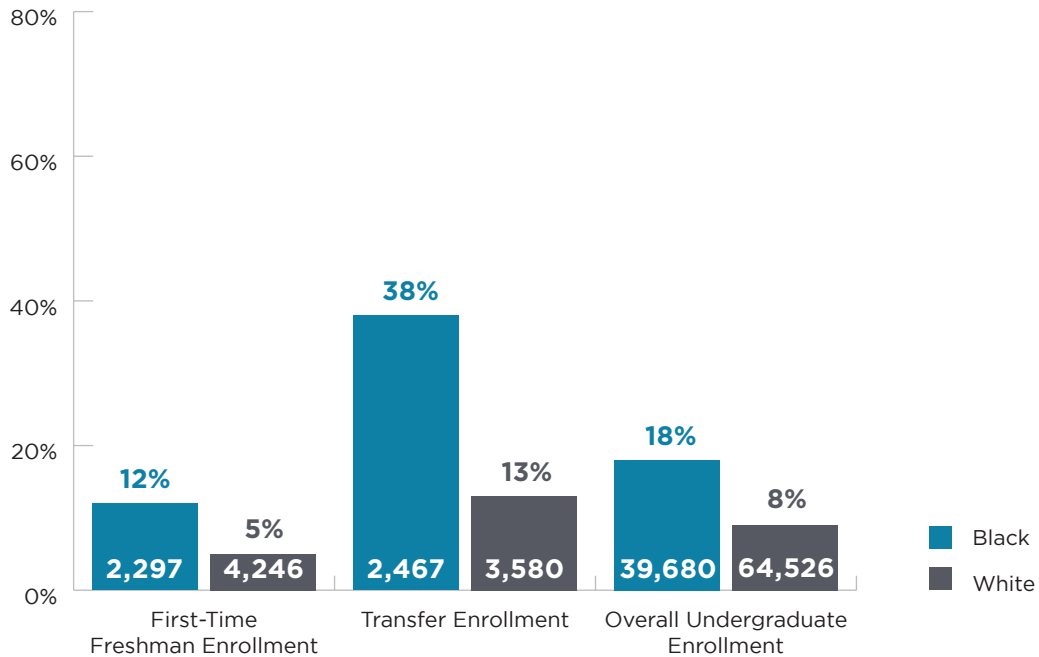
Eighteen percent of Black undergraduate students in California were enrolled in a private for-profit college or university in the 2018-19 academic year. Altogether, California's for-profit colleges and universities educate just shy of 260,000 students. Of these students, 39,680 are Black.⁴⁴ This figure is nearly double the percentage (10 percent) of just two years prior,⁴⁵ and it is double the percentage of white students who are enrolled in these institutions. **In fall 2018, 38 percent of Black transfer students enrolled in a private for-profit institution, compared to 15 percent in fall 2016.**

In contrast to nonprofit institutions, for-profit colleges and universities are accountable to investors or shareholders and are expected to make a profit. Many of these institutions have a history of deceptive or questionable advertising practices, and California has shut down several for-profit colleges for defrauding students.⁴⁶ Recently, it shuttered Corinthian Colleges Inc. for deceptive, predatory, and fraudulent practices that targeted low-income students and students of color, leaving them with considerable debt and limited job prospects.⁴⁷ Nationally, for-profit institutions are spending \$400 per enrolled student on advertising and marketing, compared to \$14 per enrolled student spent by public colleges and universities.⁴⁸

This marketing might be considered particularly pernicious, considering that graduates from for-profit institutions are more likely to borrow money to finance their education, borrow more money than their peers who attend public institutions, fare worse in the labor market than graduates from public colleges and universities, and are more likely to default on their loans as a result.⁴⁹ When looking at the student debt crisis, non-traditional students attending for-profit institutions and other non-selective institutions were among those with the greatest difficulty paying off their student loans.⁵⁰ Among those entering college in 1996, 23 percent of students at for-profit institutions defaulted on their loans within 12 years; for the cohort entering in 2004, that rate rose to 43 percent.⁵¹ Among students who never attended a for-profit institution, the rate rose from eight percent to 11 percent over the same time period.⁵²

Over one-third of Black transfer students are enrolling in for-profit colleges and universities, and almost one in five Black undergraduates in California attends a for-profit institution.

Figure 19. Independent For-Profit Colleges and Universities—Share of Black and White Student Enrollment, First-Time, Transfer, and Overall, 2018-19



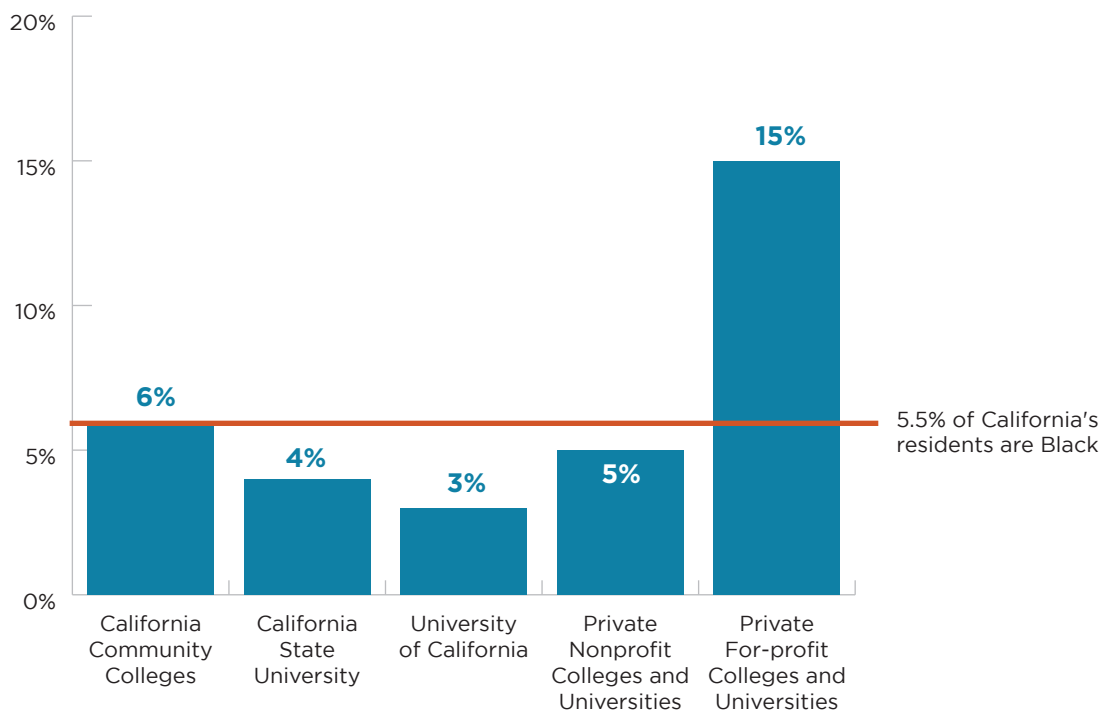
Note: Each bar represents the students of that particular race/ethnicity who are enrolled at independent for-profit colleges and universities. For example, 12 percent of Black first-time freshmen enrolled at an independent for-profit campus.

Source: National Center for Education Statistics, Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS), *12-month Enrollment Component (2018-2019)*, *Fall Enrollment Component (2018)*, Tables: *EFFY2019*, *EF2018A*. Available from: <https://nces.ed.gov/ipeds/use-the-data>

**Among those entering college in 2004,
43 percent of students at for-profit
institutions defaulted on their loans
within 12 years.**

Black students are underrepresented at the state's public and nonprofit universities and dramatically overrepresented at the state's for-profit institutions.

Figure 20. Black Student Share of Enrollment in California's Higher Education Systems, 2018-19



Source: National Center for Education Statistics, Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS), *12-month Enrollment Component (2018-2019)*, Tables: *EFFY2019*. Available from: <https://nces.ed.gov/ipeds/use-the-data>

Despite accounting for around six percent of California's population, Black students comprise over 15 percent of for-profit institutions' students. **The overrepresentation of Black students at for-profit institutions is particularly troubling, given the for-profit sector's higher costs, lower completion rates (noted below), and the for-profit sector's generally lower return on investment for students.**⁵³



COLLEGE COMPLETION

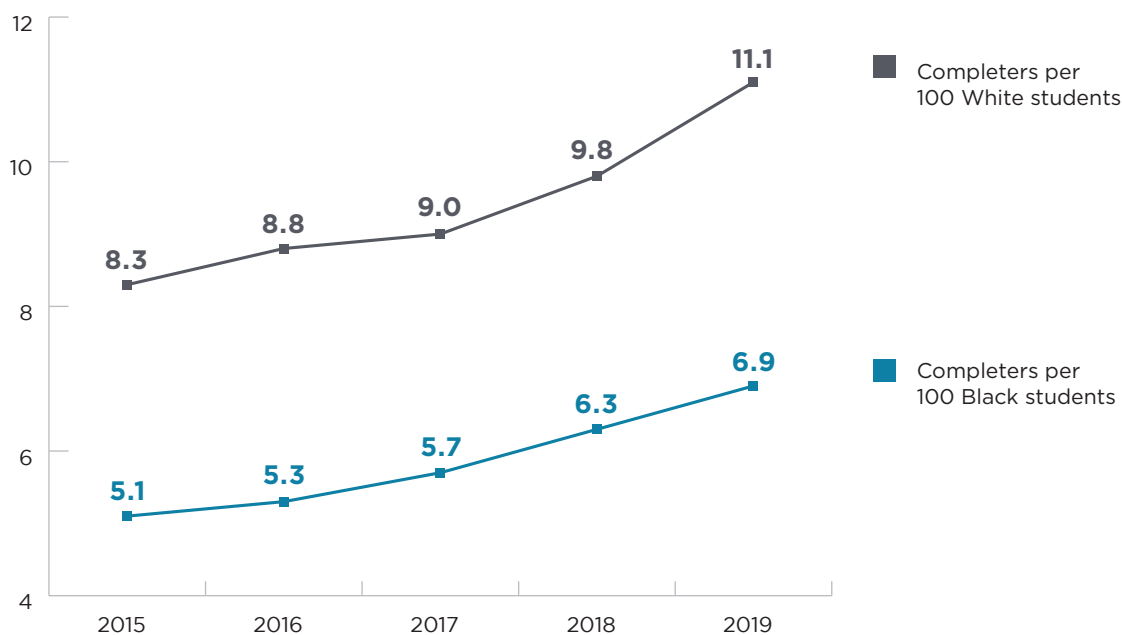
California’s economic future depends on ensuring that 60 percent of its residents—including 60 percent of its Black residents—hold a degree or high-value certificate. Completion rates must rise to at least 60 percent, if not higher, for Black California undergraduates.

California Community Colleges

Perhaps in no other system of higher education is college completion more critical than in California’s community colleges, which enroll the vast majority of the state’s undergraduate students. The number of Black students who are earning an Associate Degree, transferring to a four-year institution, or earning 60 transferable units has grown over the past five years, as shown in Figure 21.

California’s community colleges have increased the number of Black students earning a degree or transfer-related outcome in recent years, but equity gaps persist.

Figure 21. California Community Colleges Students Achieving Vision for Success Definition of Completion

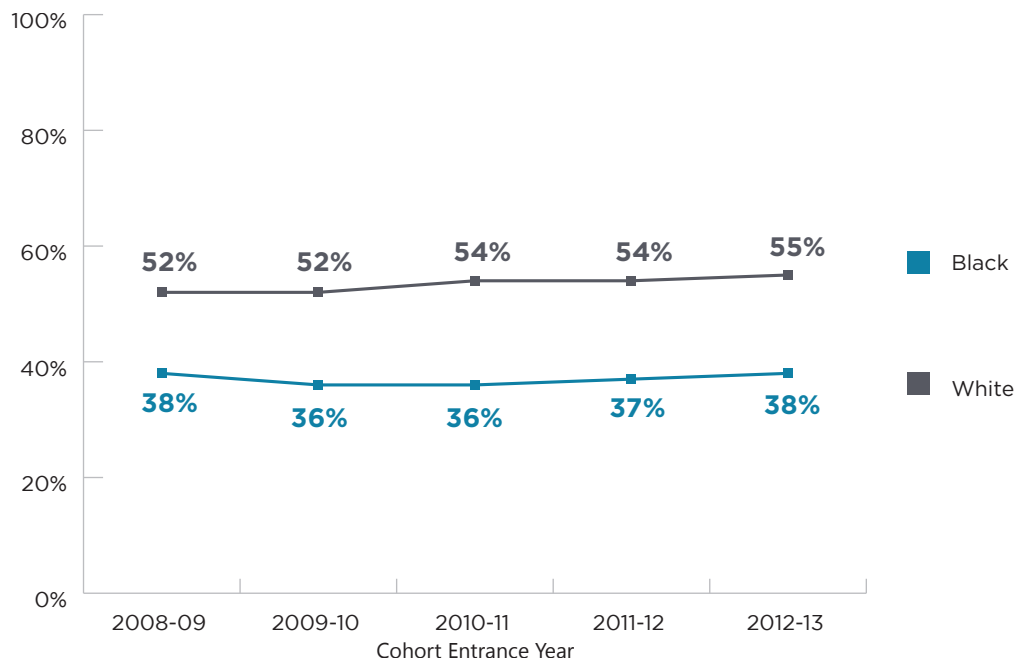


Source: Cal-PASS Plus. (2020). Student Success Metrics [Data Dashboard] retrieved from: <https://www.calpassplus.org/LaunchBoard/Student-Success-Metrics>

This number does not tell us how long students are taking to earn their degree or transfer to a four-year institution. In analyzing six-year completion rates at California’s community colleges over the past five years, little has changed for Black students. Though completion rates derived from California’s Student Success Scorecard are not the basis of the state’s accountability system, the data are instructive. As shown in Figure 21, barely one-third of Black students meet the *Vision for Success* definition of completion within six years of their initial enrollment: earning an associate degree, transferring to a four-year institution, or successfully completing 60 credits that can transfer to a UC or CSU campus with a GPA of 2.0 or higher. Not only is this percentage far too low, but the rate itself has remained flat for the past five cohorts of Black community college students. White students are graduating at a rate almost 20 percentage points higher than Black students, and that gap has not narrowed in five years.

Six-year completion rates for Black students have remained flat for the past five years.

Figure 22. California Community Colleges Six-Year Completion Rates, 2008-2013



Source: California Community Colleges Chancellor's Office Student Success Scorecard, 2019. Available from: <https://scorecard.cccco.edu/>



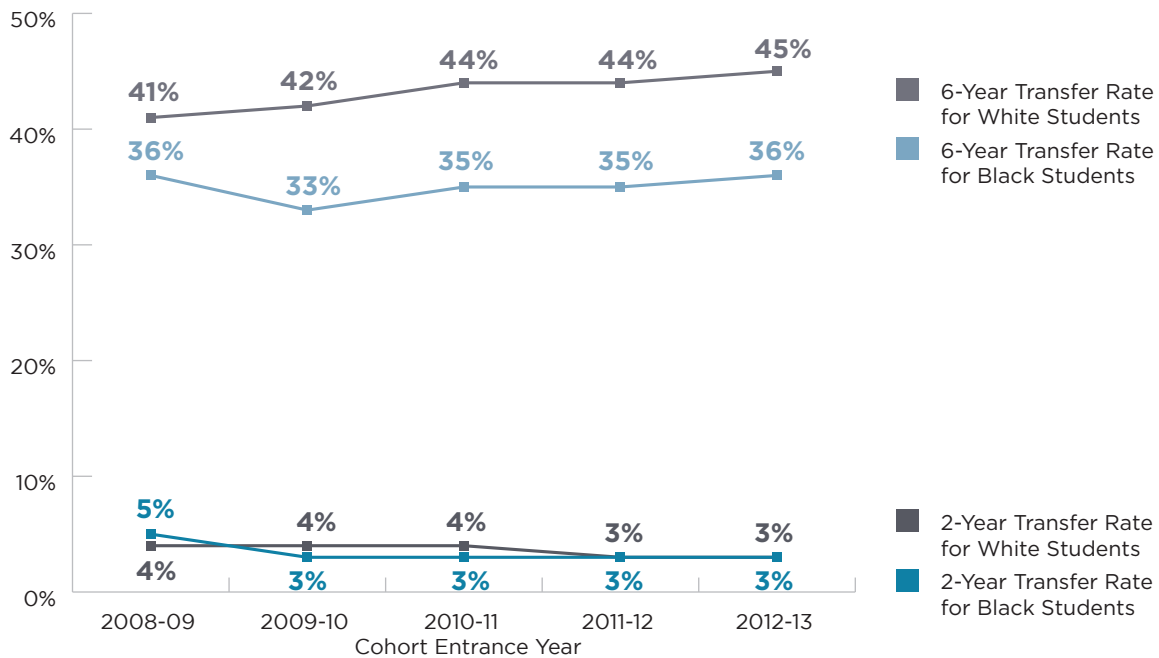


Transfer

An associate degree, by itself, is valuable, providing the holder with an advantage in the workforce. The returns for a bachelor’s degree, however, are much higher—earnings of around \$40,000 more per year than for a high school degree and \$14,000 more for an associate degree.⁵⁴ If roughly two-thirds of Black students are beginning their higher education pathway at a community college, then the state must ensure that there are robust transfer pathways to institutions that grant bachelor’s degrees. When looking at the cohort of students who enrolled in 2012-13, however, we see that only 36 percent of Black students transferred to a four-year college or university within six years. That is nine percentage points lower than the six-year transfer rate for white students. Furthermore, the rates at which Black students are transferring have not changed over the past five years.

Only one-third of Black students are transferring to a four-year college or university within six years.

Figure 23. California Community Colleges Transfer Rates—Two- and Six-Year Cohort Transfer Rates

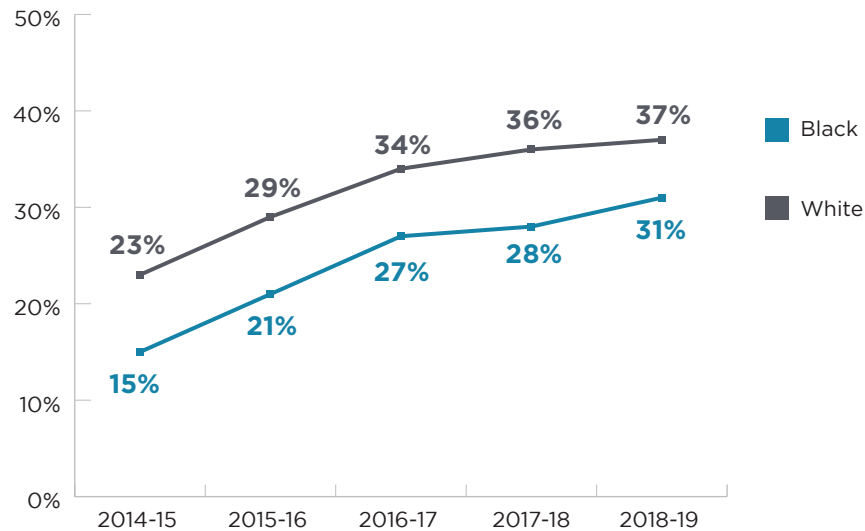


California Community Colleges Chancellor’s Office, DataMart, Outcomes, Transfer Velocity, 2019. Available from: https://datamart.cccco.edu/Outcomes/Transfer_Velocity.aspx

Associate Degree for Transfer

Among associate degree-earners, Black students are awarded ADTs at a lower rate than their peers.

Figure 24. California Community Colleges—ADTs as a Share of Associate Degrees



Data source: Cal-PASS Plus. (2020). Student Success Metrics. [Data Dashboard]. Retrieved from: <https://www.calpassplus.org/LaunchBoard/Student-Success-Metrics>



Not enough Black students are earning and transferring with ADTs, and among Black students who do transfer with an ADT, too many are not on a path that guarantees them junior standing and a two-year route to completing their degrees. This must be addressed if California's Black students are to fully benefit from this pathway and its potential to reduce the time and money required to earn a four-year degree. Earlier, we noted that, in fall 2019, only 18 percent of Black transfer students at the CSU had enrolled on a guaranteed ADT pathway. At the community college level, when looking specifically at students who earn an associate degree, we see inequitable patterns amongst ADT earners. Only three out of every 10 Black associate degree recipients earned an ADT in 2018-19. Meanwhile, over 40 percent of Latinx associate degree earners earned an ADT in 2018-19.⁵⁵ At most community college campuses, Black students are underrepresented among ADT earners, compared to the population of degree- or transfer-seeking students.⁵⁶ In 2018, 58 community colleges awarded ADTs to more than 10 Black students, and Black students were underrepresented among ADT earners at 55 of those colleges.

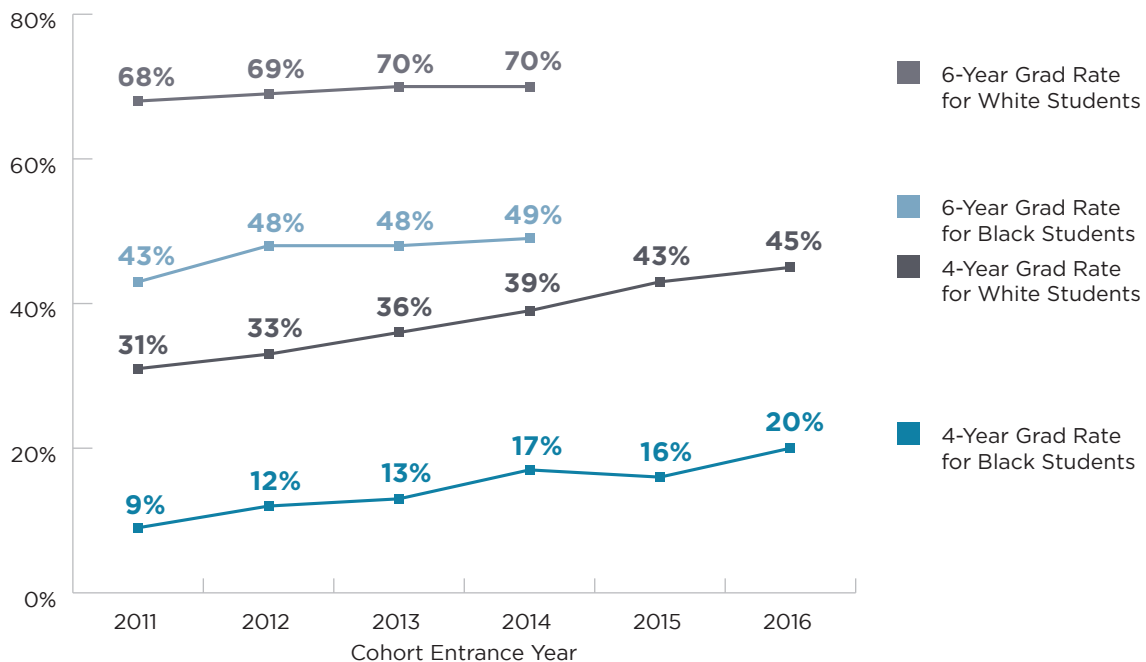


California State University

Over the past five years, the four-year graduation rates for first-time Black freshmen in the CSU system have risen from just 12 percent to 20 percent for the cohort of students who entered in 2016. While this progress is commendable, **it is still too low. In addition, the gap in four-year graduation rates between Black students and white students has grown over the past five years, from 21 percentage points for the class entering in 2012 to 25 percentage points for the 2016 cohort.** Six-year graduation rates for Black students have improved in recent years, but even with these improvements, **fewer than half of Black students entering the CSU are graduating within six years.**

Four-year graduation rates for Black freshman have almost doubled in five years, but the CSU graduates only one out of five Black students in four years—less than half the rate for white students.

Figure 25. California State University Four- and Six-Year Completion Rates for First-Time Freshmen by Cohort

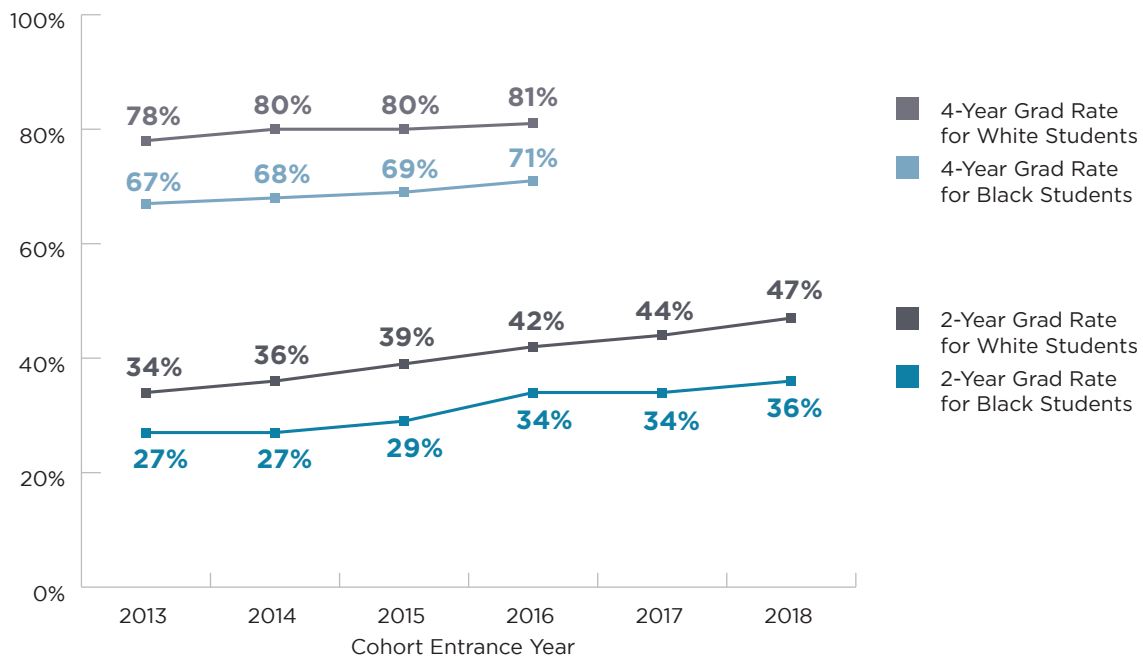


Source: California State University Office of the Chancellor, Division of Institutional Research and Analyses, 2020, Graduation Dashboard

Graduation rates for transfer students at the CSU have also been rising. Again, however, **too few Black students are supported to graduate in the traditional four-year time frame, and gaps between Black transfer students and their white peers are stubbornly persistent, even widening at the two-year level, indicating that more can and should be done to support Black students at the CSU as they work toward degree completion.** Among transfer students entering the CSU in 2018, only 36 percent of Black students graduated in two years, compared to 47 percent of white students. Among transfer students who enrolled in the CSU in 2016, 71 percent of Black students graduated in four years, compared to 81 percent of white students.

Graduation rates for Black transfer students at the CSU have increased, but they are still far too low, at 36 percent in two years and 71 percent in four years. The gap between Black students and their white peers has grown instead of closed.

Figure 26. California State University Two- and Four-Year Completion Rates for Transfer Students by Cohort



Source: California State University Office of the Chancellor, Division of Institutional Research and Analyses, 2020, Graduation Dashboard

“In a racist society it is not enough to be non-racist, we must be anti-racist.”

Angela Y. Davis



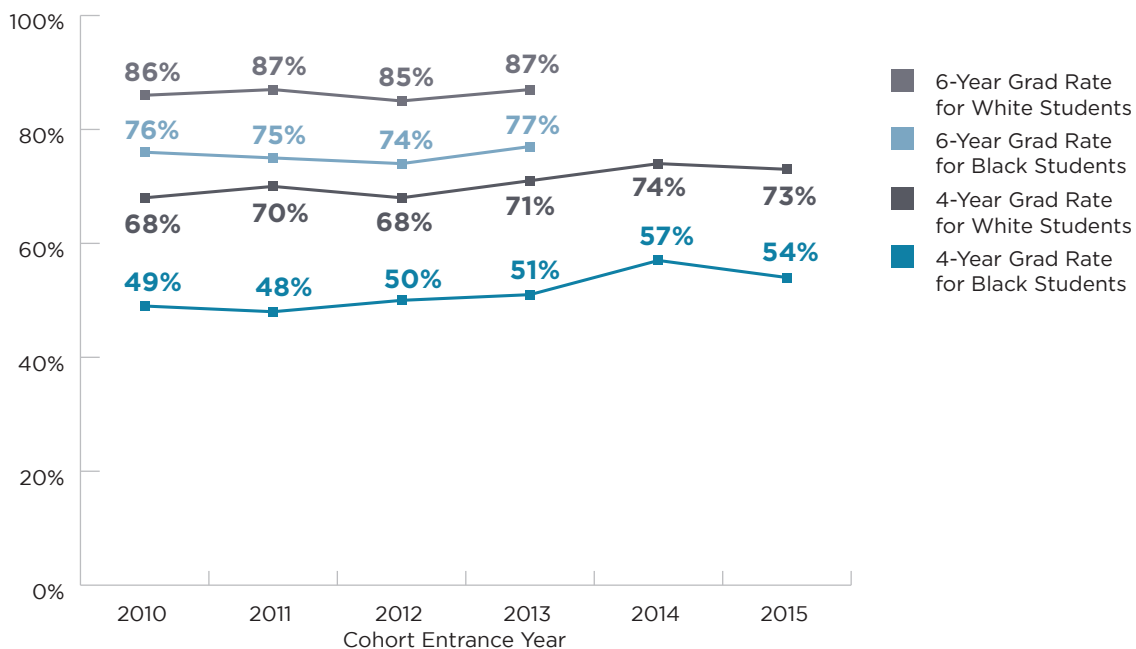


University of California

The UC has the best college completion rates across our public higher education systems. Its four-year graduation rates show a modest upward trend over the past few cohorts of Black undergraduates, and the gap between Black freshmen and their white peers has narrowed from 14 percentage points to 10 percentage points over the past several cohorts of students. However, **the UC is still only supporting half of its Black students to complete their degrees in four years, compared to supporting three-quarters of white students. On a six-year horizon, 77 percent of Black students earn their bachelor’s degrees at a UC, but that is still 10 percentage points lower than the rate among white students.**

The UC has the highest completion rates for Black students of any system in the state, 77 percent in six years, but that leaves close to a quarter of Black students are not supported to complete their Bachelor’s Degrees within six years.

Figure 27. University of California Four- and Six-Year Completion Rates for First-Time Freshmen by Cohort

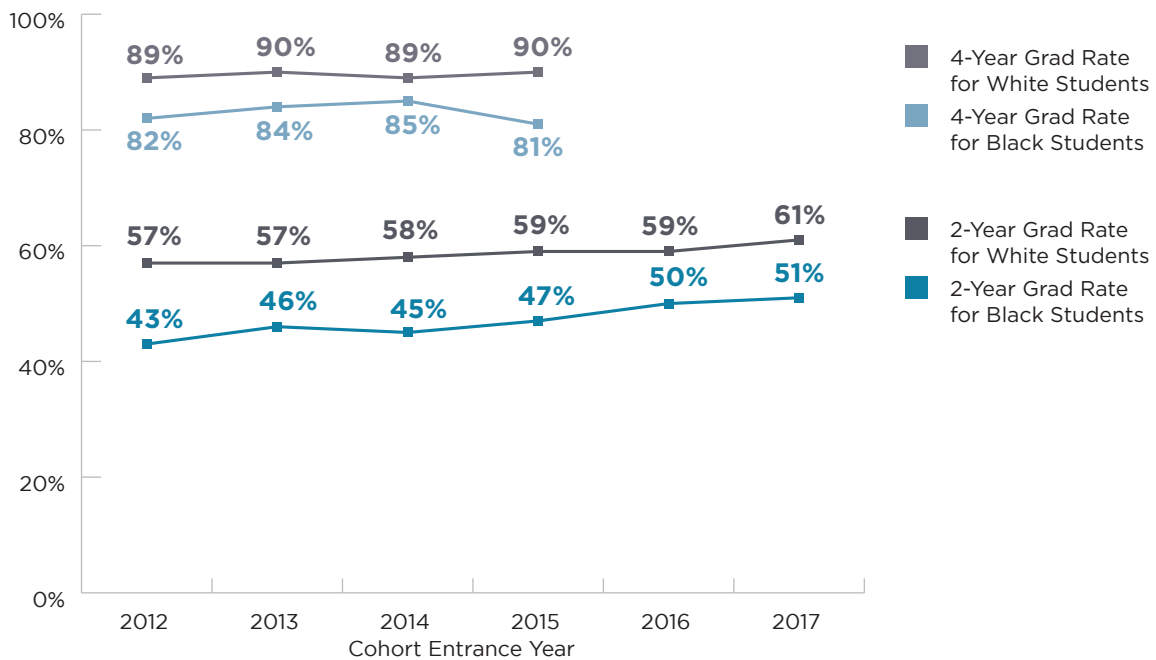


University of California Office of the President, Department of Institutional Research and Academic Planning. Available from: <https://www.universityofcalifornia.edu/infocenter/ug-outcomes>

Four-year graduation rates for transfer students have also improved for the past several cohorts, and half the cohort of Black transfer students entering the UC in fall 2017 graduated within two years. As such, Black students who start their college journey at a UC are the most likely to complete their degrees in four years, and Black students who transfer to a UC are more likely to finish in two years than their Black peers at other university systems. Though four-year graduation rates for Black transfer students are above 80 percent, they remain below those for white UC transfer students and have not improved in recent years.

Two-year graduation rates for Black transfer students to the University of California have improved, with half of Black transfer students graduating in two years and over 80 percent earning their degrees in four years or less.

Figure 28. University of California Two- and Four-Year Completion Rates for Transfer Students by Cohort



Source: University of California Office of the President, Department of Institutional Research and Academic Planning. Available from: <https://www.universityofcalifornia.edu/infocenter/ug-outcomes>



“When we’re talking about diversity, it’s not a box to check. It is a reality that should be deeply felt and held and valued by all of us.”

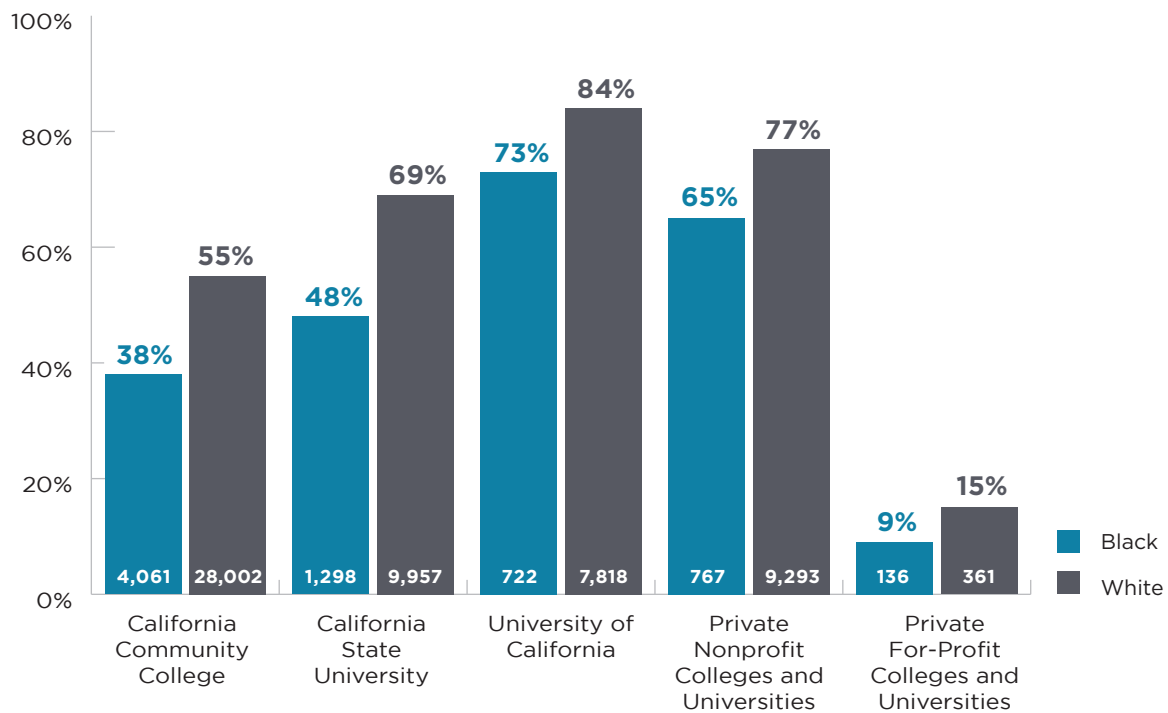
*Ava DuVernay,
Interview with Fast Company*

Independent Nonprofit Colleges and Universities

Private nonprofit colleges and universities support Black students to degree completion at rates somewhere between those of the UC and the CSU, with roughly two-thirds of Black undergraduates in this sector earning their degrees within six years. Here, too, however, we see that private nonprofit colleges and universities in the state are not supporting Black students to completion at the same rates as their white peers.

California's colleges and universities do not support their Black students to degree completion at the same rate they support white students, with the state's for-profit colleges and universities having the worst completion rates.

Figure 29. Six-Year Graduation Rates for California Colleges and Universities by Higher Education Sector



Source: California Community Colleges Chancellor's Office Student Success Scorecard, 2019. Available from: <https://scorecard.cccco.edu/scorecardrates.aspx?CollegeID=000#home>; National Center for Education Statistics, Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS), Fall component, 2018; Table: GR2018_RV. Available from: <https://nces.ed.gov/ipeds/use-the-data>

Independent For-Profit Colleges and Universities

The private for-profit sector has the second-largest share of Black students in California, after community colleges, but it has, by far, the lowest completion rates of any higher education sector in the state. In an analysis of the number of years it would take to recoup the net price of earning a degree or certificate at a California college or university, about **42 percent of for-profits showed that their average student did not earn more than a Californian with only a high school diploma.**⁵⁷ Even among degree-earners over the course of a lifetime, the payoff for a bachelor's degree from a public college or university is approximately 50 percent higher than the payoff for a bachelor's degree from a for-profit institution—meaning that a graduate with a degree from a public college or university can expect to earn about 50 percent more than a peer who graduated from a for-profit institution.⁵⁸



EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT

California's position as an economic powerhouse depends on both enrolling more students in higher education and ensuring they are supported to earn a credential or degree.

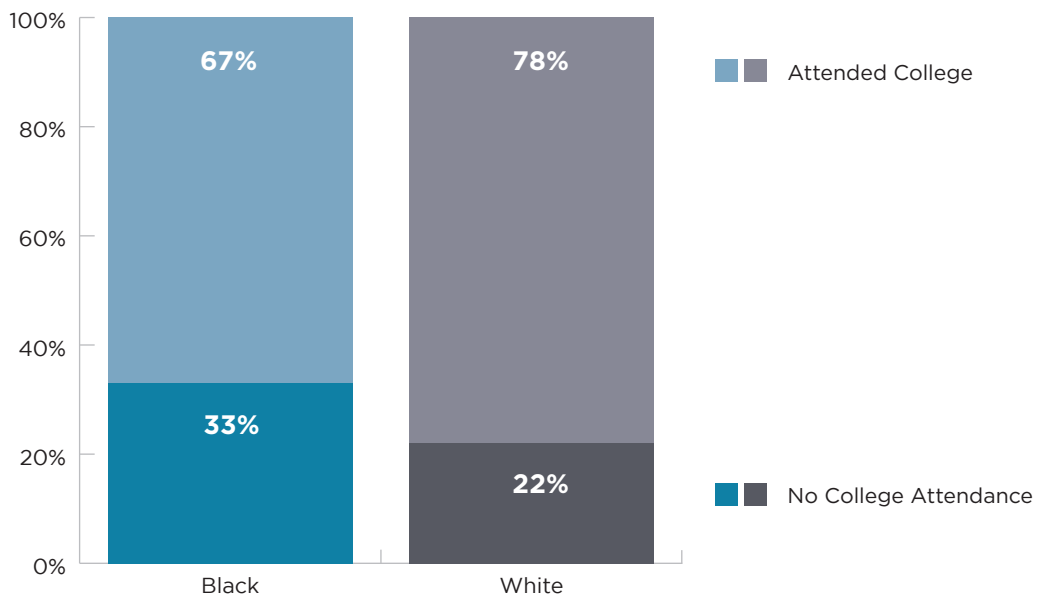
A California educational attainment goal must go beyond a statewide average to ensure that 60 percent of Californians within each racial and ethnic subgroup hold a degree or high-value credential. Black Californians enroll in college at promising rates—**two-thirds of Black Californians ages 25 to 64 have attended college**. Strategies to enhance educational attainment by Black students must include Black adults enrolling in college for the first time and the reenrollment of Black Californians who have some college education but no degree.



Though Black Californians are enrolling in college, these institutions are not supporting Black students to the completion of their degrees. Among Black Californians who have enrolled in college, almost half (46.8 percent) do not have a degree.

Black college attendance is strong at 67 percent.

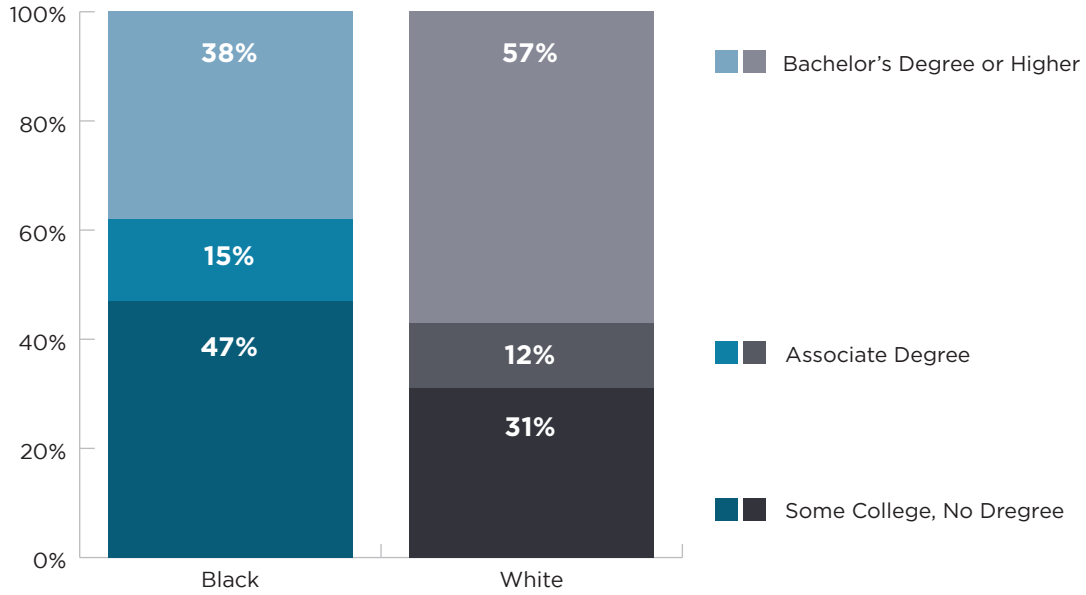
Figure 30. College Attendance, CA 25-to-64-Year-Olds



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, *American Community Survey Five-Year Estimates 2014-2018*, Public Use Microdata Sample

47 percent of Black Californians who attend college do not earn a degree.

Figure 31. Educational Attainment Among College Going Adults, CA 25-to-64-Year-Olds

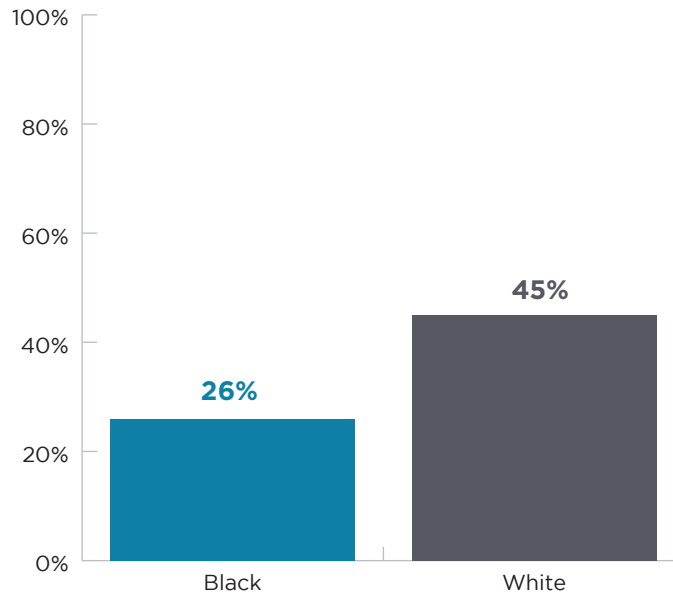


Source: U.S. Census Bureau, *American Community Survey Five-Year Estimates 2014-2018*, Public Use Microdata Sample

Though the percentage of Black adults with bachelor's degrees has grown almost two percentage points since we last examined these data in 2019, the gap in degree attainment between Black adults and white adults remains high.

There is a 20 percentage point gap in BA attainment for Black Californians compared to white Californians.

Figure 32. Bachelor's Degree Attainment, CA 25-to-64-Year-Olds



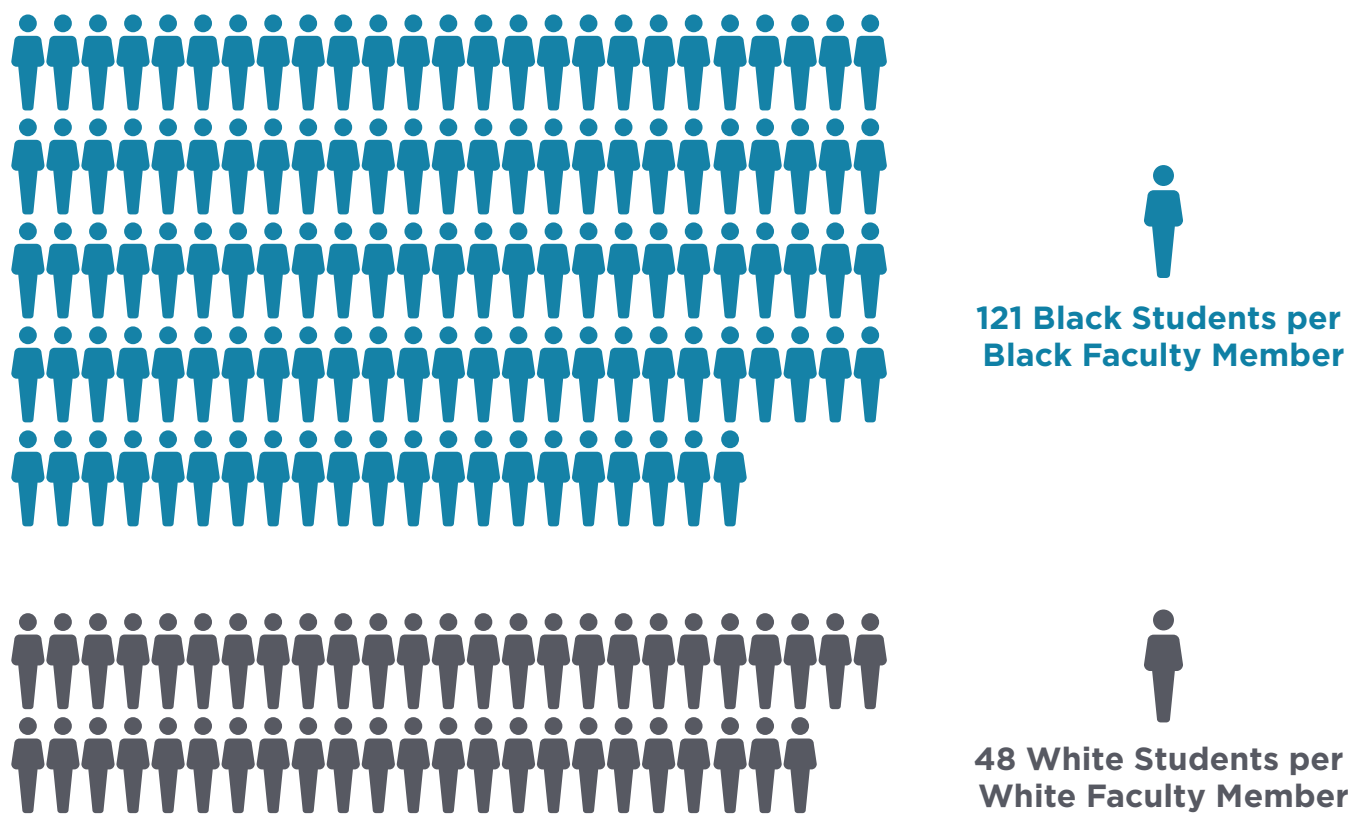
Source: U.S. Census Bureau, *American Community Survey Five-Year Estimates 2018*, Public Use Microdata Sample

FACULTY DIVERSITY

California's educational leadership comprises a diverse set of leaders. At the time of this report's publication, California's superintendent of public instruction, Community College chancellor, CSU chancellor, UC president, and Student Aid Commission executive director are all people of color.

While this is historic, representation also matters beyond our system leadership, and students need role models on their campuses and in their classrooms. At all three public systems of higher education, Black faculty are significantly underrepresented, resulting in high Black student-to-Black faculty ratios. Exposure to diverse faculty is beneficial to all students, given the diversity of our state and the global reality of our economy. Students benefit from a campus climate that fosters a sense of belonging. Black faculty and leaders who have personal experiences that Black students can relate to, who can serve as role models, and who help them to flourish will be a major benefit not only to California's Black students, but to students of other races/ethnicities as well.⁵⁹

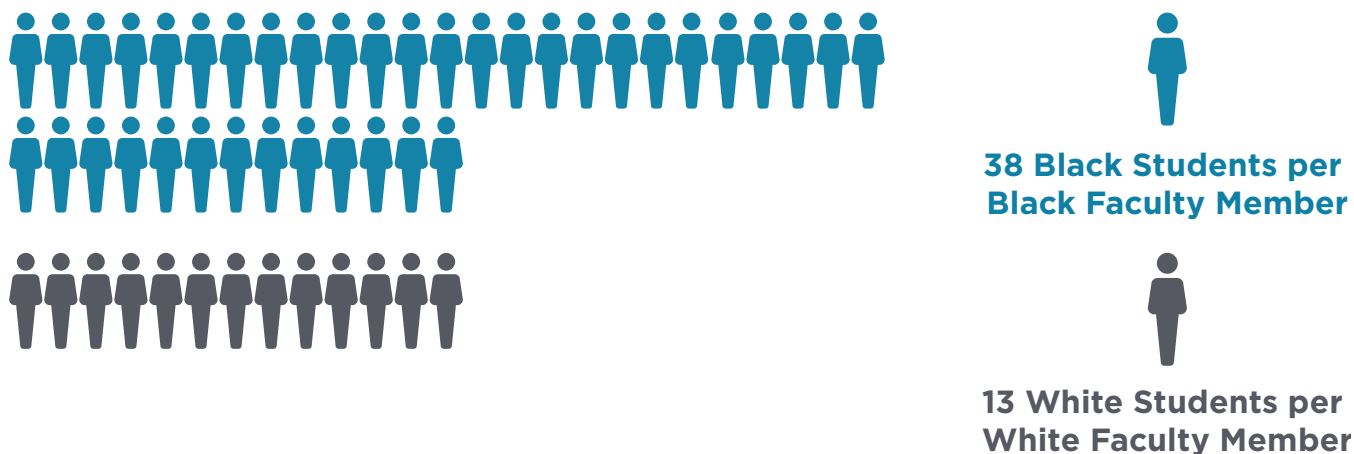
Figure 33. California Community Colleges, Students per Faculty Member of Same Race



Source: National Center for Education Statistics; Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS); Full-time instructional staff by academic rank, faculty and tenure status, race/ethnicity, and gender (Fall 2018) and 12-month unduplicated head count by race/ethnicity, gender, and level of student (2018-2019). Available from: <https://nces.ed.gov/ipeds/use-the-data>

Overall, there are 121 Black students for every Black faculty member in the California Community Colleges, compared to 48 white students for every white faculty member. **At 10 California community colleges, there was only one Black faculty member at the college. Six California community colleges had zero Black faculty members in 2018-19.**⁶⁰

Figure 34. California State University, Students per Faculty Member of Same Race



Source: National Center for Education Statistics; Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS); Full-time instructional staff by academic rank, faculty and tenure status, race/ethnicity, and gender (Fall 2018) and 12-month unduplicated head count by race/ethnicity, gender, and level of student (2018-2019). Available from: <https://nces.ed.gov/ipeds/use-the-data>

There are only 396 Black faculty in the CSU system, and they make up only four percent of the total faculty population. The overall faculty-to-student ratio is lower at the CSU than at the California Community Colleges, and at CSU campuses, there are far fewer Black students for each Black faculty-member than there are at the community colleges. Systemwide, the ratio of 38 Black students per Black professor is almost three times higher than the ratio of 13 white students per white professor.

Figure 35. University of California, Students per Faculty Member of Same Race



Source: National Center for Education Statistics; Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS); Full-time instructional staff by academic rank, faculty and tenure status, race/ethnicity, and gender (Fall 2018) and 12-month unduplicated headcount by race/ethnicity, gender, and level of student (2018-2019). Available from: <https://nces.ed.gov/ipeds/use-the-data>

There are 286 Black faculty members in the UC system, and they make up three percent of the total faculty population. The UC system has the lowest overall student-to-faculty ratio of California's public higher education systems, and it also has the lowest population of Black students. Here, too, however, ratios are higher for Black students, with 14 Black students for every Black professor, compared to only five white students for each white professor.



MICHAEL WIAFE'S HIGHER EDUCATION EXPERIENCE

Freshman year

My first year at San Diego State University (SDSU) was a transformative one. The youngest of an immigrant family and the first to leave home permanently, nobody around me had any idea what kind of journey I was to embark on. I was coming in as a Presidential Scholar (PS), a common program at institutions for students with promise, diverse backgrounds, and financial need. Luckily for me, PS program at SDSU was not just financial support; it was social and community support as well. We had to take a one-unit seminar upon entry on college success, taught by a white woman who would eventually

become one of my greatest mentors and life supporter. Associate Vice President of Enrollment Management Dr. Sandra Cook took on the PS group of freshmen every fall to show us the ropes and have us build community with each other, with upperclassmen, and with key people on the University Campus. I personally believe that she knew that she couldn't teach me the way that someone who understood my experience would. She made it a point to introduce me to people on campus while ensuring that I had all the resources that I needed to be successful.

Each year, she selected an outstanding freshman to mentor the next class of PS students. Our mentor was Christian Onwuka, a local Black advocate from San Diego who previously served as President of the NAACP high school chapter in the area. Just over a year from when we met, we would be on the ballot together on the executive slate for Associated Students (AS).

Our seminar met weekly, and biweekly would have guest speakers come in to teach us about another resource or opportunity available on campus. One day, we were to tour the Associated Students office by one of the AS Executives, who would soon become the next Black AS President. Just three days later we met, he approached me in the union and asked if I was busy. After saying that I was not, he basically dragged me to my first AS meeting, which I then attended regularly and eventually got invited to attend the California Higher Education Student Summit (CHESS) in Sacramento, which opened my eyes to the power that students have in creating change for ourselves on campus. We were not the change-makers of tomorrow; we were the change-makers of today. Just a year later, I ran for the position that leads the group in the capitol and represents students on the board for the Cal State Student Association. Later, I would eventually become President of the Cal State Student Association. My pathway to student leadership was paved by the Black men who came before me. I wouldn't have been involved if it was not for them.

It does not end there. Along my way at SDSU, I got more involved with the community and have been mentored by incredible Black men like Dr. Luke Wood, who introduced himself to me randomly in a hallway. We then met regularly for inspiration and motivation while making moves on campus.

I also had a deeper experience; I found where I am within my community. I took my first Africana Studies class during my first semester, where I was beyond challenged by my professor, Dr. Bonnie Reddick to think outside of my bubble and to think of the greater benefit of my action to the Black community. Dr. Reddick continued to mentor me throughout all my years. I can count on one hand the number of Black professors that I had in my life, and at SDSU, out of the over 20 members of faculty within political science there was not a single one that looked like me, which means that I never became very invested in my academics outside of the few classes that truly piqued my interest.



CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

If California is to meet the workforce demands of the future and ensure a more equitable and just society, policymakers must commit to ensuring that not only 60 percent of the state’s workforce, but 60 percent of each racial/ethnic subgroup, including 60 percent of Black Californians, holds a degree or high-value certificate.

We celebrate the contributions that Black Californians have made to our state and our nation every single day, not just during Black History Month. We remain hopeful that a true commitment to supporting Black student success is possible, and we are committed to advocating for nothing less. We are heartened by the improvements in high school graduation and college preparation, even if they continue to fall short of what is equitable in a society that is truly just for all. We celebrate the historic and equitable reforms to college admissions and placement practices that have helped open the doors to college and college-level coursework for thousands of Black students. We are proud to see that graduation rates among Black students at the state’s four-year colleges and universities have improved, but these improvements need to increase significantly, especially at the CSU. We know that a powerful opportunity exists when two-thirds of Black Californians in the workforce have attended college, half of whom could benefit from returning to earn a college degree. We also know that Black students who attend a community college or university deserve to feel welcomed and supported. They deserve to see faculty, staff, and leaders who look like them, understand their experiences, and, most importantly, believe in their success. Ensuring that Black students are supported to reach their college dreams will not only improve their personal economic opportunity and workforce choices, but also be an investment that pays dividends to our state economy.

We offer the recommendations below to help achieve a stronger and more equitable higher education system that supports Black students. Considering the sobering data in this report, we recommend intentional commitments by our policymakers and college leaders that build on expanding opportunities for Black students to graduate from high school prepared for college and supported to earn a college degree or certificate or to transfer.



Federal Recommendations

- **Limit access to federal financial aid (grants and loans) for for-profit colleges and universities that do not provide a quality education or value to the students that attend them.** Though most public colleges and universities offer a relatively quick payoff for their students, too many for-profit institutions offer no payoff whatsoever, and Black students are over-represented at these institutions.



State Recommendations

- **Commit to the ambitious statewide goal of ensuring that 60 percent of Black Californians in the workforce hold a degree or high-value credential by 2030.** California’s economic future depends on ensuring that 60 percent of its residents—including 60 percent of its Black residents—hold a degree or high-value certificate. The state should formally establish a statewide goal for degree attainment and closing racial/ethnic gaps to ensure this goal is met and that guides policy and budget investments to support Black student’s college access and success.
- **Reevaluate and update the enrollment caps established under the California Master Plan for Higher Education and increase enrollment of Black students at the CSU and UC through proactive outreach and support.** The state’s outdated 58-year-old Master Plan establishes strict enrollment caps at the state’s public four-year universities, which severely constrains access. Policymakers should update the enrollment caps to align with statewide goals and workforce needs to increase the number of California students who are able to enroll directly at a UC or CSU campus. In 2015 when state funding was allocated to expand capacity at the UC coupled with targeted outreach, the enrollment of Black students increased.
- **Recommit to a bold new vision for strengthening transfer and ensuring equitable access to the Associate Degree for Transfer (ADT) for Black community college students by establishing a permanent intersegmental implementation work group.** Implementation and growth of the ADT varies widely by racial group. As of 2020, the proportion of associate degrees that are ADTs is lower for Black students than for other groups. The permanent work group would provide missing implementation review and oversight that would strengthen ADT opportunities and address implementation inequities.
- **Develop a strong California Cradle-to-Career Data System to better enable policymakers and institutions to address gaps for Black students in college access and success.** Policymakers, campus and system leaders, and faculty could do a better job of serving Black students if they could see more information about the individuals and families they are serving. However, California currently lacks a comprehensive statewide database that can easily provide this information. For instance, high schools do not currently know how many of their high school graduates meet eligibility requirements for admission to the UC or CSU but do not apply, and what happens to them. The state does not know what happens to students who drop out of a postsecondary institution. To answer these important questions, policymakers must remain committed to implementation of the Cradle-to-Career Data System Act of 2019, and college leaders must use this data to improve how they serve Black students.
- **Reform California’s financial aid system to prioritize equity so that every talented Black Californian can go to college and stay enrolled, regardless of income status.** Since California already offers robust need-based aid for tuition and fees, non-tuition costs are the most significant drivers of unmet need for low-income students, especially at the community colleges. The failure to adequately support community college students in meeting the affordability challenge has real implications for Black students who are predominantly enrolled in the California Community Colleges system. Policymakers must reform its outdated financial aid system that does not meet the needs of its significant low-income and increasingly diverse population of college students. It can do this by ensuring that with each new investment in financial aid, the needs of the lowest-income Californians are prioritized first, and aid is distributed more equitably across community college, CSU, and UC students.



Community College and University Recommendations

- **Ensure strong implementation of CCC and CSU reforms that focus on improving placement of students into college-level English and math.** Recent reforms to broaden access to the courses that students need to obtain a degree or transfer are beginning to close equity gaps for our Black students. However, California community colleges and CSU campuses must do more to monitor implementation progress and ensure that every single community college and university is providing equitable access to college-level courses for Black students with the supports they need to succeed.
- **Strengthen the CSU Graduation Initiative to improve graduation rates and close racial/ethnic gaps.** The CSU's Graduation Initiative 2025 aims to increase two- and four-year graduation rates and eliminate equity gaps. While graduation rates have improved significantly since the initiative was launched, the gap in the four-year graduation rates for Black students and white students at the CSU has increased instead of narrowed. The CSU should identify new strategies for meeting the goal of closing gaps for Black students and provide disaggregated data by race/ethnicity as it progresses towards these goals. The state should also double-down on its investments for this effort by establishing progress metrics for annual evaluation and ensuring that reporting is disaggregated by race/ethnicity.
- **College presidents, campus leaders, and governing bodies must commit to identifying, hiring, retaining, and promoting Black faculty at California's public colleges and universities.** Campus leaders must systemize the annual collection of comprehensive data, disaggregated by race/ethnicity for campus faculty and leadership positions and use this data in the development of plans to reach diversity goals to which campuses should be held accountable. Campus leadership should also provide unambiguous guidance to hiring committees in support of identifying, recruiting, and hiring a diverse faculty. Campuses should commit to the promotion and retention of diverse faculty through development of supports, such as mentorship, professional development, and clear pathways to leadership. Campuses should foster a culture of support of diverse faculty through the establishment of protocols whereby faculty, staff and administrators can report instances of microaggression, harassment or discrimination.



High School Recommendations

- **Increase high school graduation rates for Black students to 90 percent and make the A-G coursework the default curriculum for all high school students in California.** Schools must work with urgency to close the gap in graduation rates for Black students. They should also make the A-G course requirement for UC and CSU eligibility the default curriculum for all students to ensure that Black students graduate with the maximum opportunities to continue their postsecondary education.
- **Mandate completion of the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) or California Dream Act Application (CADAA) for all high school students so that every talented Black Californian can pursue college, regardless of income status.** Submitting a FAFSA or CADAA is often one of the first steps in the college-going process, but many students do not complete the application and therefore may not understand the grant aid that is available to them. Completion of the FAFSA or CADAA for every high school student enables Black students to afford college, and importantly, builds a college-going culture that supports Black students to see themselves in college.



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

A special thank you to The Ballmer Group, The Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, The College Futures Foundation, The Kresge Foundation, Lumina Foundation, The Mayer and Morris Kaplan Family Foundation, The Rosalinde and Arthur Gilbert Foundation, The Sand Hill Foundation, and The Yellow Chair Foundation for funding our research to identify systemic barriers to college access and success for Black, Latinx, Asian American, Native Hawaiian, and Pacific Islander students and to promote reforms to remove barriers in California higher education. We extend our gratitude to the many additional funders who make our work possible: The Angell Foundation, The Art for Justice Fund, The California Community Foundation, The California Wellness Foundation, The ECMC Foundation, The Evelyn and Walter Haas Jr. Fund, The James Irvine Foundation, The Marin Community Foundation, The Michelson 20MM Foundation, The Sierra Health Foundation, Southern California Edison, and The Stuart Foundation. Their commitment and dedication to increasing opportunity for all students in higher education is to be admired.

We are especially grateful to Dr. Ed Bush (Cosumnes River College), Lena Carew (The Justice Collective), Dr. Darla Cooper (the RP Group), Dr. Keith Curry (Compton College), Dr. Shawn Harper (University of Southern California), Dr. Frank Harris III (San Diego State University), Pam Haynes (Los Rios Community College), Dr. Orville Jackson (GreatSchools), Cassandra Jennings (Greater Sacramento Urban League), Michael Lawson (Los Angeles Urban League), Youlanda Copeland-Morgan (University of California Los Angeles), Dr. Dawn Person (California State University Fullerton), Myeisha Phillips (Partnership for Los Angeles Schools), Ryan Smith (Partnership for Los Angeles Schools), and Dr. Valerie Lundy-Wagner (California Community College Chancellors Office) for their early guidance and feedback as we developed this publication. We were fortunate to have Estela Bensimon, Darla Cooper, Orville Jackson, and Luke Wood provide insightful feedback, counsel, and edits to this report, and we appreciate the careful reviews from Nathan Evans, Chief of Staff & Senior Advisor for Academic and Student Affairs at the CSU Office of the Chancellor, and Valerie Lundy-Wagner, Assistant Vice Chancellor of Research and Data at the California Community Colleges.

Vikash Reddy, Ph.D., was the principal analyst and along with Michele Siqueiros co-authored this report. Sara Arce provided additional contributions with Tylar Campbell leading the data collection and, together with Alma Orozco, providing excellent research assistance.

DATA AND METHODS

Data for this report were obtained from a variety of sources. The primary source of data for this report was the National Center for Education Statistics' Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS). Twelve-month enrollment figures for the 2018-19 academic year were taken from the IPEDS 2019 survey year. First-time student and transfer student enrollment data for fall 2018 were taken from the 2018 survey year. IPEDS data excludes public less-than-two-year institutions.

Additional data were collected from the California Department of Education, California Community Colleges Chancellor's Office, the California State University Institutional Research and Analysis Office, and the University of California Office of the President. We include outcomes data through 2018-19 for all systems. We include more recent data for systems where such data are publicly available.

The data available give us valuable information on whether we are supporting Black students at various points along their educational paths, but the lack of a system that incorporates data from across California's educational and economic agencies prevents us from fully understanding our students' trajectories. A "cradle-to-career" data system would allow us to better understand students' educational pathways. It would give us more detailed information that would allow us to know more about the enrollment decisions of students who graduate without meeting the state's A-G course requirements; tell us more about the differences in outcomes for students who transfer with an ADT vs those who transfer with a local associate degree; and allow us to measure longer-term outcomes associated with policy interventions or specific programs among many other uses.

Demographic data were taken from the American Community Survey (ACS), which is conducted by the U.S. Census Bureau. Where appropriate, this report employs data from tables produced by the U.S. Census Bureau. These tables draw from the ACS 2015-2019 five-year estimates. In instances where pre-defined census tables omitted comparisons of interest, authors instead created estimates from Public Use Microdata Samples (PUMS), which allow for more nuanced analyses. Due to the census data release schedule, it was not possible to include 2019 PUMS data in this report. As such, we relied on 2014-2018 PUMS files for these estimates.

When using IPEDS and census data, counts of Black students and Black residents include those who identified as not Hispanic or Latinx.⁶¹ Data retrieved from the University of California follows a different classification system than data retrieved from IPEDS. UC data includes students who indicate they are Black, regardless of whether they select an additional primary race/ethnicity.⁶²

A-G rates reported here are not directly comparable to those presented in prior reports. Previous A-G rates were calculated using all graduates in a given year, regardless of when they started high school. In 2016-17, the CDE began reporting the percentage of graduates within a particular cohort who met the A-G course requirements.⁶³



PHOTO ATTRIBUTIONS

Cover Art

A special thanks to India Norwood, the talented artist who allowed us use of “Graduation” for this report. You can find her at <https://www.artpal.com/indianorwood27>

Pages 2-3

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