

COLLEGE ACCESS & SUCCESS STATE RECOMMENDATIONS

What will it take to close opportunity and outcome gaps for Black students in higher education?



Create a State Commission on Black Education Transformation

As with TK-12 public schools, we believe a critical first step toward closing the gaps in access and success that California's educational systems create for Black students is to create the state Commission on Black Education Transformation described earlier in this report.

That commission would enable the state to break from its history of fragmented education governance and focus on creating the

conditions for Black students to flourish all the way from pre-kindergarten through postsecondary school. As in TK-12, the commission should have the authority to hold state agencies, colleges, and universities accountable for improving outcomes for Black students.

We urge the state to enact the following recommendations to urgently increase college access and success for Black Californians:

1 Require all high schools to make A-G their default curriculum.

Opportunity gap this recommendation addresses: Insufficient access to and support in completing college preparatory coursework

Making A-G the default curriculum is the best way to provide a guarantee that all Black students can access and benefit from rigorous coursework and graduate eligible to attend a UC or CSU. Schools and districts that have already made A-G the default curriculum have seen increases in A-G completion for students of color. The state should do the following:

- ▶ Make it mandatory that all high schools enroll students in the 15-course A-G sequence needed for UC and CSU eligibility starting when students enter high school in ninth grade.
- ▶ Accompany this mandate with funding to ensure schools and districts can take the steps necessary to swiftly enact this

shift, such as building master schedules that ensure access to courses based on students' needs.

With A-G as the default course sequence, emphasis would be placed on creating positive learning environments with necessary supports and students' ability to graduate high school would not be jeopardized if they do not successfully complete the sequence. As A-G access and supports improve because of this policy change, a future shift to align high school graduation requirements with A-G could further strengthen high-school-to-college connections for Black students.

2 Create a universal dual enrollment policy and shift to automatic acceleration.

Opportunity gap this recommendation addresses: Insufficient access to and support in completing college preparatory coursework

Both high schools and community colleges stand to benefit from universal dual enrollment, with high schools likely to see higher student engagement and better graduation rates and community colleges gaining increases in enrollment. Most importantly, this shift would be a win for Black students currently excluded from this opportunity. To make dual enrollment access universal, the state should do the following:

- ▶ Pass legislation requiring that all California school districts serving high school students establish College and Career Access Pathways (CCAP) partnerships with their local community college district to offer all students the chance to complete college-level coursework. This would align with the ambitious call from the California Community College chancellor for all incoming ninth graders to automatically be enrolled in at least one dual enrollment class. California would not be the first to do this. Right now, the state lags behind 23 other states that require all high schools to participate in dual enrollment programs to some degree.
- ▶ Provide grant funding to enable school districts to initiate partnerships and incentivize districts to prioritize supporting Black students, currently the most underrepresented in dual enrollment, to participate and succeed in dual enrollment coursework.
- ▶ Follow the lead of 47 other states that require high schools and colleges to grant dual credit for dual enrollment courses. Right now, policies for granting credit are set locally and some schools do not grant high school credit for community college coursework.
- ▶ Remove arbitrary red tape and requirements that impede Black students' access to advanced coursework, like the requirement that students receive a recommendation from their principal to participate in CCAP.

3 Fund free college that covers the full cost of attendance.

Opportunity gaps this recommendation addresses: High college costs and lack of support for financial aid application completion

Eliminating the prohibitive cost of college is critical to ensuring Black students can afford to attend and graduate without assuming debt that would limit their post-college opportunities. State leaders can make meaningful progress by taking these steps:

- ▶ Improve the existing Cal Grant program by increasing award amounts to keep pace with inflation and ensure students can afford nontuition costs of attendance.
- ▶ Provide funding for institutions across all three public California systems to replicate and scale a program for Black students modeled after the UC's existing policy of waiving tuition and fees for Native American students who are state residents and members of federally recognized tribes.
- ▶ Protect higher education appropriations in the state's annual budget and increase funding to provide adequate resources for public colleges and universities to tackle college affordability in the long term.

4 Enact a statewide direct admissions policy

Opportunity gaps this recommendation addresses: Declining college-going rates and low rates of enrollment in public four-year colleges and universities

The state can take a simple but revolutionary step to increase college access for Black students by introducing a statewide direct admissions policy. Already being implemented successfully in several states including Minnesota, Idaho, and Hawaii, this approach would benefit both students, by removing complex application processes, and colleges impacted by declining enrollment. The CSU system is piloting direct admissions in Riverside County starting with the fall 2025 term, mailing brochures notifying all eligible high school seniors (those on-track to meet A-G requirements) of their conditional

admission to 10 CSU campuses and inviting them to complete the process by simply selecting the colleges of their choice online. This effort should prompt state leaders to:

- ▶ Create and develop a timeline for enacting a statewide direct admissions policy, using data from the CSU pilot to inform policy design.
- ▶ Intentionally weave together direct admissions policy with A-G equity and financial aid expansion to increase students' likelihoods of enrolling and completing a degree.

5 Use California's Black Serving Institution designation to secure funding and raise the bar for colleges' responsibilities for Black student success

Opportunity gaps this recommendation addresses: Lack of basic needs supports and declining college-going rates and low rates of enrollment in public four-year colleges and universities

California lawmakers passed SB 1348 in 2024, establishing the Black Serving Institutions (BSI) Program to designate campuses that excel in providing academic resources to Black students. To be eligible, a college or university must have a headcount of at least 1,500 Black students or Black students must comprise at least 10% of the student body. Schools that meet one of these thresholds can submit an application describing their institutional initiatives dedicated to Black student success as well as share baseline data on key performance indicators that would be tracked during the first five years of their designation as a BSI. The BSI designation can be a valuable tool for amplifying Black student success if the state builds upon the designation itself by:

- ▶ Maximize funding allocation by targeting state and federal funding to colleges and universities designated as BSIs to support evidence-based programs and practices.
- ▶ Require that key performance indicators for BSI designation prioritize evidence-based practices that have proven effective in supporting Black student success and cultivating a positive, antiracist campus climate.
- ▶ Strengthening data transparency and reporting by requiring each BSI to create a committee that includes Black students, staff, faculty, and community members to assess progress toward the institution's goals for Black student success and adjust plans and budgets accordingly.



To read the full Black Minds Matter 2025 report, access data sources, and for more advocacy resources to support Black students in California, scan the QR code.