African American Scholars Project
Strategy Group Report

August 2017

Summary

In March 2016 the African American Scholars Project (AASP) Strategy Group was formed, due in part to demands made by the Black Student Union, and in part to the need to streamline and strengthen the existent efforts to dismantle barriers to access, achievement and inclusion for black students at USF. Over the course of the 2016-2017 academic year, the twenty-member AASP Strategy Group investigated the obstacles to success for black students, as well as the most effective ways for the University to build a more equitable and inclusive campus environment and increase their engagement in and achievement at the University.

The AASP Strategy Group gathered extensive qualitative and quantitative data on the past and present experiences of black students, best practices for recruitment and retention at other universities, and existent campus resources and programming that target black students. Overall, the group found that while some black students are satisfied with their social and academic lives at USF, the majority of black students reported feeling ambivalent about their experiences at USF. In addition, a marked number continue to experience feelings of marginalization stemming from their numerical underrepresentation, isolation, and the lack of visible and accessible role models and support systems. These factors, coupled with financial strain, likely play a significant role in the persistent graduation rate gap between black students and their peers, a gap which serves as the most visible evidence that black students continue to face significant barriers to achievement at USF.

Based on the research findings, the AASP Strategy Group thus recommends the creation of a three-pronged Black Student Development and Achievement Program. As envisioned, the Program seeks to be a dynamic, comprehensive initiative that builds on the University of San Francisco's commitment to diversity and excellence by creating a supportive, empowering and inclusive educational experience for black students. Through the creation of a Black Resource Center, a Living Learning Community, and a competitive Scholars community, the Program will aim to provide all students of African descent with a critical sense of belonging, new opportunities for engagement in the Bay Area community and in university life, innovative strategies for achieving academic excellence, and pathways to pursue rich and rewarding careers after graduation.

Project Background

Since the mid-1990s, the University of San Francisco, like many California public and private institutions of higher education, has struggled to recruit, retain and graduate African American/Black students, thus making them one of the most vulnerable campus populations. Driven by a shared commitment to inclusive excellence and USF's core Jesuit value of service to the most vulnerable, many different University offices, departments and individuals recognized these barriers to achievement and had long been working to increase black students' access, inclusion and success. Yet in Fall 2015, it became clear that their efforts were not meeting the students' needs when the Black Student Union (BSU) presented a list of demands to the University Leadership. These demands included mandates for USF to address the dismantling of support systems that facilitate black student retention and access,

the lack of funding for programs that serve black students, and the failure to recruit more than small numbers of black students. In addition, the BSU also demanded the creation of more inclusive spaces and new targeted support services, the hiring of additional black administrators and faculty, and the creation of a residential community for black students.

In response to the particular demand of a residential community for black students, the President thus tasked the Vice Provost of Student Life with developing a residence hall floor for students interested in strengthening their understanding and engagement with African American culture. Recognizing the existent work already under way to support black students, the Vice Provost of Student Life thus enlisted a group of over twenty staff, student, administrative and faculty representatives from across the University to form the African American Scholars Project (AASP) strategy group in March 2016 (See Appendix I). Considering the broad skillset of the members of the strategy group, the President and Provost then expanded the charge of the group beyond the creation of a residential community. In Fall 2016, the new charge of the AASP became to investigate, discuss, and recommend the most effective ways to build a more equitable and inclusive campus environment for African American students and to increase their engagement in and achievement at the University. Led by a small group of co-leads, the larger strategy group was tasked with identifying new and existing institutional resources to alleviate the marginalization and isolation experienced by black students and ensure their academic and co-curricular success, as well as with developing new opportunities to more closely and meaningfully tie USF to the broader Bay Area African American community.

Research Process

Over the course of the 2016-2017 academic year, the co-leads of the African American Scholars Project first gathered both quantitative and qualitative data to evaluate the current and historical experiences of black students at USF and to investigate whether and how a residential community for black students would alleviate the barriers to success and inclusion articulated by the Black Student Union's demands. To this end, the Interim Assistant Dean of Students conducted three separate focus groups with students, alumni, and faculty and staff. During each focus group, similar questions were posed to all participants that covered topics ranging from the campus climate for black students, to their engagement levels in University life, to the potential design of and participation in a living learning or themed community (Available Upon Request). In addition, during February 2017, the AASP co-leads collaborated with the Interim Assistant Dean of Students to create and administer a thirty-question survey to current black students, which garnered 138 respondents. Secondly, the AASP co-leads gathered statistical data provided by the University's Center for Institutional Planning and Effectiveness to evaluate admissions, retention and persistence rates for black students from the mid-1990s to the present day. Finally, the AASP co-leads gathered statistical data on state and national admissions, retention and persistence rates in order to evaluate USF's trends in a broader context. Collectively, these varied data sets then provided the grounding for the research analysis, project development and recommendations that follow.

Research Findings

Overall, the co-leads of the AAASP found that while the University of San Francisco's strong commitment to inclusive excellence has translated into national recognition in recent years for the diversity of its student body, the University has yet to fully dismantle the environmental, social and institutional barriers to access and achievement for students of African descent. As at other predominantly white institutions in California and across the nation, USF continues to struggle with attracting new black students and retaining and graduating existing students. In addition, while recent efforts to build a more inclusive climate and strengthen student engagement, retention and achievement have likely played a significant role in creating opportunities for minority students to become better integrated into the culture of the University, the efforts have not been significant enough to remedy the particular problems faced by black students. Based upon our survey and focus group data, Cultural Centers programming, for example, along with the work of CASA and SLE staff have provided important avenues for black students to be socially and academically integrated into University life. Yet, our research reveals that a sizeable number of black students are still experiencing feelings of isolation, marginality, and/or ambivalence about their overall satisfaction with USF.

Specifically, the data gathered during the research process revealed five persistent problems for black students, which are discussed in full below:

- Numerical Underrepresentation
- Racial Isolation
- Diffuse Support Systems
- Lack of Financial Resources
- Persistence to Graduation

*Numerical Underrepresentation*

Based upon the available data collected from CIPE, the strategy group found that African Americans are severely underrepresented among the USF student population when compared to national averages. While black students made up 11.4% of all students enrolled in private four-year institutions in the United States in 2015 (Ginder, Kelly-Reid, & Mann, 2017), for example, they only made up 6.1% of the total enrolled student population at USF that year (Fig. 1).

Fig. 1. Black Student Enrollment

African American Graduate and Undergraduate Students as Percentage of Total Student Enrollment
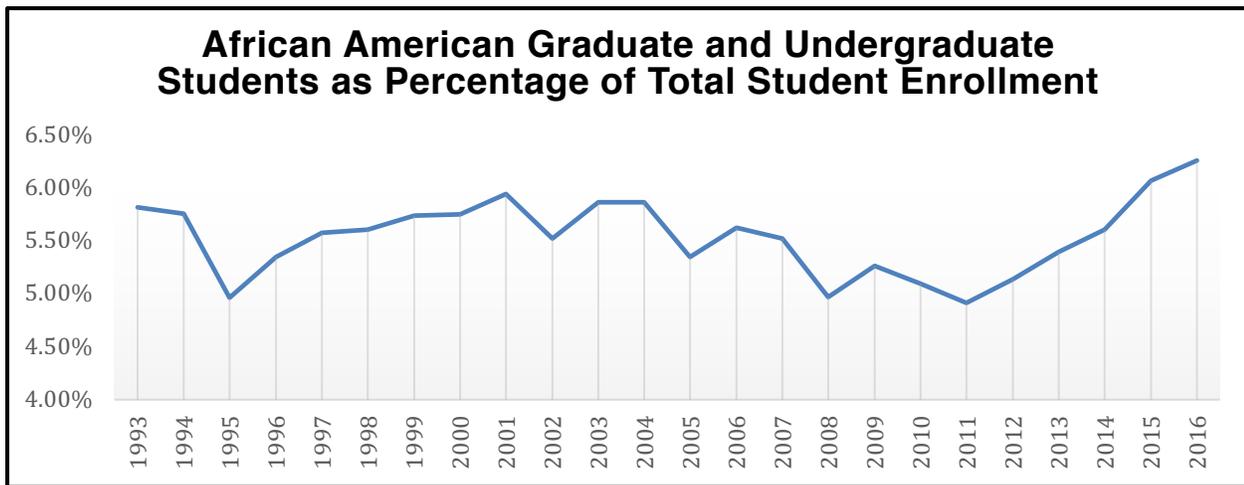
The underrepresentation is even more prominent when looking exclusively at USF's black undergraduate enrollment, which totals only 4.6% and has declined overall since 1993 when it totaled 6.4% of the undergraduate student body (Fig. 2). Data on black student enrollments in California's institutions of higher education confirms that this disparity between the national averages and those at USF is a statewide trend, although USF's enrollment still lags behind. At private four-year institutions in California, African American undergraduates make up approximately 5.5% of the student body (Valliani, 2015). The actual size of USF's black student body makes this problem more acute. When looking specifically at first-time entering freshman who enrolled in fall 2016, for example, 3.3% were African American. When looked at numerically, that means that only 53 African American freshmen entered the University, out of a first-year student population of 1597 students.

Fig. 2. Black Undergraduate Enrollment

African American Undergraduate Enrollment as Percentage of Total Undergraduate Enrollment Fall 1993 to Fall 2016
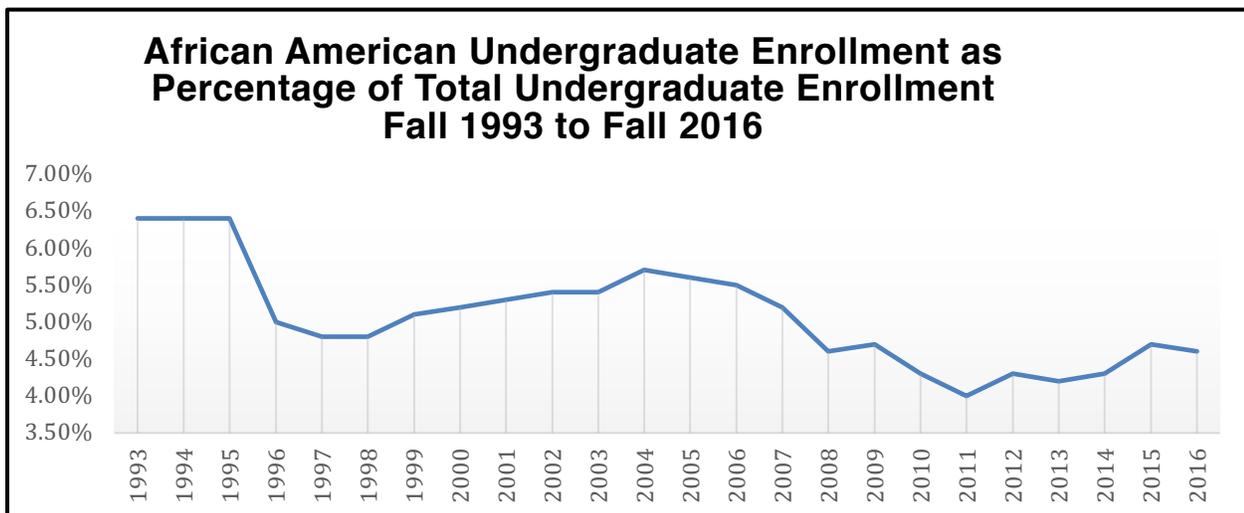
As research has demonstrated, when institutions of higher education do not increase their enrollments of racial minority students to reach a critical mass that triggers the educational benefits of diversity, a broad range of harmful effects for minority students can result (Hurtado & Ruiz, 2012; Garces & Jayakumar, 2014). In general, at predominantly white institutions (PWIs), black students often emphasize feelings of alienation, hostility, and racial discrimination (Allen, 1992; Schwitzer, Griffin, Ancis & Thomas, 1999; Rankin & Reason, 2005). The more underrepresented black students are at a PWI, however, the more likely they are to report feeling tokenized and facing microaggressions, bias and discrimination (Kidder, 2013). These negative experiences in turn foster an unwelcoming campus climate, which can lead to decreased academic and social integration, decreased academic achievement and career aspirations, and low retention and persistence rates (Allen, 1992; Nora & Cabrera, 1996; Hurtado, 2005).

While the qualitative data gathered by the AASP strategy group revealed that black students at USF are acutely aware of their underrepresentation, more institutional data and analysis are necessary to understand the complex academic, psychological and social effects of this underrepresentation. What is clear from existing data is that the majority of black students perceive their racial underrepresentation as a pressing institutional problem that needs to be immediately remedied. This perception in turn, is likely related to the high levels of ambivalence students reported about their experiences as black students, their feelings of belonging, and their perception of whether or not they feel their racial identity is valued by the University.

Racial Isolation

Both the qualitative and quantitative data gathered during the AASP strategy group's research process revealed another significant and potentially harmful effect of the underrepresentation of black students—their isolation from each other and from black faculty and staff. 47% of the survey respondents noted that they interacted with students from their racial group less than once per week and a considerable number of students reported often being the only black student in their classes and/or their cohort. In addition, when asked to characterize their relationships with African American faculty and staff, 38% of survey respondents stated they had no existent relationships.

This isolation is particularly problematic because researchers have shown that without positive support groups and contact with black staff and faculty role models, black students at PWIs are susceptible to stereotype threat, feelings of inadequacy in relation to their non-black peers, and thus, lowered academic achievement and aspirations (Steele, 1997; Spencer et al., 1999; Purdie-Vaughns et. al, 2008). Racial in-group association, on the other hand, has been shown to be positively associated with African American students' social integration, academic achievement, and openness to diversity (Pascarella et al, 1996; Allen, 1992; Sellers et al, 1998). Kuh and Love (2000) for example, noted that ethnic enclaves such as African American campus organizations create subcultures of a campus culture that offer positive support

systems, encourage a stronger sense of belonging, and encourage greater social involvement in the larger university. Researchers have also found informal and formal contact with black staff and faculty members to be a significant factor in black students' persistence, achievement and integration (Nettles et al., 1986; Allen, 1992). As role models and mentors, faculty and staff enable the development of a secure Black self, or internalized racial identity, which Pope found to be strong factor in student success (2000). Her study on racial identity and developmental tasks determined that students who had gained an internalized racial identity through academic coursework and social organizations were better able to establish a purpose in college, and develop mature relationships and academic autonomy than students who did not.

Researchers have further asserted that black peer and faculty interactions lead to the development of bicultural competence, defined as the extent to which black students are able to maintain an identity with their ethnic group while also developing an identity as a member of a larger, predominately white campus culture (Rodgers & Summers, 2008; Anglin & Wade, 2007). The development of this dual identity in turn, first articulated by Dubois (1903) as "double-consciousness," has been suggested to be a particularly significant factor in retaining African American students at PWIs. While Tinto, for example, created a model of retention that called for students to be fully assimilated into the dominant culture of a university, he later revised his theory and posited that black students are best socially and academically integrated in the campus community when they are able to demonstrate bicultural competence (1993).

Overall then, our findings suggest that USF is providing adequate means of developing opportunities for black students to interact with diverse peers and develop an identity as part of the larger campus culture. The majority of students surveyed, for example, expressed satisfaction with their social lives and academic advising. Our findings also suggest, however, that USF has not provided adequate avenues for students to connect with other members of the black community. Indeed, the overwhelming majority of students surveyed expressed a desire for more interaction with black faculty and staff, and many discussed the hiring of additional black faculty, staff and administrators, along with increasing the number of enrolled black students as keys to improving their experiences at the University.

Diffuse Support Systems

Although increasing the number of black students enrolled at an institution may reduce their sense of isolation, research has shown that institutions must still take additional steps to reduce feelings of marginality among black students and increase their sense of mattering (Garces & Jayakumar, 2014). As Schlossberg noted, the transition to college life can lead to feelings of marginality, and thus, the building of a supportive campus community, in which students feel welcome, important, and appreciated, is necessary to student satisfaction, development and retention (1989). Perceptions of marginality and not mattering, as research has shown, are often more acute for black students than their white peers at PWIs, however (Gossett, Cuyjex & Cockriel, 1996). This, in turn, produces a psychological strain that can negatively affect students' sense of belonging, along with their academic performance (Walton & Cohen, 2007).

Qualitative and quantitative data collected by the AASP strategy group confirmed that a significant portion of students of African descent at USF are indeed experiencing feelings of marginality. When prompted to quantify their sense of belonging on campus, 39% indicated they felt either a sense or a strong sense of belonging. 41% expressed neither a sense of belonging nor estrangement, and 20% indicated they felt a sense or a strong sense of not belonging. In a related question, 42% of survey respondents indicated they felt their ethnic identity was sometimes valued/appreciated by USF, while 40% claimed it was rarely or not at all valued.

While more analysis is needed to pinpoint the causes of this sense of marginality and not mattering at USF, it has likely been compounded by the compartmentalized nature of the work undertaken by different departments, offices and programs across the University. Research suggests that successful programs geared towards facilitating black students' achievement are visible programs and/or offices that are staffed, funded and well-integrated into the institutional structure of the university (Swail, Redd & Perna, 2003**).** At USF, however, individual staff, administrators and faculty have sought to develop strong relationships with black students and created compartmentalized programs to increase their recruitment and retention. No cohesive program or office exists that specifically supports black students' adjustment to and success at USF. Because of this lack of integration, often the work of dedicated individuals and offices remains invisible to the larger black student body and accordingly, has been read as a lack of institutional commitment to their achievement and inclusion in the broader community. AASP survey and focus group data confirmed this perception, which was also expressed by the BSU demands. While some students noted the significance of the Cultural Centers and specific staff and faculty in fostering a more positive campus climate, for example, other students pointed to the dismantling of the Office of Multicultural Recruitment as a factor in decreasing their sense of belonging. Indeed, the former Office of Multicultural Recruitment was mentioned by faculty and alumni focus group participants as well, due largely to the Office's institutional history of not only recruiting, but providing space and support for black students throughout their college careers.

Lack of Financial Resources

A great deal of research has detailed the effects of varying types and amounts of financial aid on students of color in higher education. Rising costs of tuition and shifting trends in need and merit-based aid packages in recent years, seem to have added to students' financial burdens and affected their college-selection decisions (Swail, Redd & Perna, 2003), in addition to increasing their psychological stress (Peters, et. al, 2011). While more data and analysis are needed to discern the extent of this strain on black students at USF, as compared to the general population of students, our research found that a significant portion of black students are affected by a lack of financial resources. 89% of students who completed the AASP survey indicated that they received some form of financial aid, yet other data suggest that their aid packages may not be meeting their full needs. Of the 60% of survey respondents who answered affirmatively to whether or not considered leaving USF, for example, respondents cited a number of factors, including the high cost of tuition and housing.

Persistence to Graduation

The persistent graduation rate gap between black students at USF and the rest of the undergraduate student population provides the clearest indicator that social, economic, and academic barriers are still in place that impede black students' success and achievement at the University. USF averaged a 70% 6-year graduation rate for first-time bachelor's degree-seeking students who entered in Fall 2007-2010, yet it averaged only 56% for African American students ("Graduation Rate," 2017). Furthermore, when compared to other private four-year institutions across the state, USF graduation rates also lag behind. According to data reported by the Chronicle of Higher Education, the 2013 6-year rate of graduation for African American students at other private four-year institutions in California was 63.2% ("College Completion").

Low rates of black students' persistence to graduation is part of a larger historic and national trend at PWIs that has been well-documented and researched (Allen, 1992). The obstacles discussed previously in this report (underrepresentation, racial isolation, diffuse support systems, lack of financial resources) and their effects, have all been cited as factors that increase black student attrition (Flowers, 2004; Swail, Redd & Pena, 2003). In addition, researchers have debated the significance of pre-college characteristics on student retention, with some arguing that inadequate academic preparation plays a role in black students' attrition (Schwartz & Washington, 2002), and others positing that institutional commitment and on-campus social and academic support are stronger indicators of persistence (Voigt & Hundrieser, 2008; Baker & Robnett, 2012).

While existent institutional data do not reveal why black students leave USF, they do provide an indication of when students leave. Retention reports from the mid-1990s to the present show no marked difference between black students' and other undergraduate students' persistence from their first to second years or from their second to third years. Yet, the graduation rate over the same time period has consistently been lower for black students than the average undergraduate population, suggesting that attrition occurs gradually over time and may be most marked following their third year.

Although USF has designed a number of significant programs and practices to increase the retention of its students, the persistent racial gap in graduation rates reveals a significant failure on the part of the institution to ensure that black students achieve the most critical indicator of success—graduation. The collection of exit data would enable the University to more pointedly remedy the particular problems that lead to the graduation rate gap between black students and their peers at USF. In the meantime, the data gathered by the AASP strategy group, along with a cumulative review of relevant literature suggest the need for an intervention strategy that intentionally counters the historical legacy of racial oppression and factors the specific race-based identities of black students into the creation of new modes of institutional support (Allen, 1992; Kuh & Love, 2000).

Project Development

Based upon the research findings and clear indicators of the problem, the AASP Strategy Group worked to develop a comprehensive strategy to increase the participation of African American students in the USF experience and their rates of persistence at the university. During Spring 2017, the group worked to identify new and existing institutional resources to alleviate the social marginalization and isolation experienced by African American students, and gathered feedback on new and existing programs and resources that would work to ensure the academic and co-curricular success of African American students. Strategy group members also worked to identify opportunities to more closely and meaningfully tie USF to the broader Bay Area African American community and for all members of the University community to increase their awareness of the rich cultural history of the African American community and its contributions to USF, the broader Bay Area and the nation.

In order to develop a comprehensive program strategy, the AASP co-leads held individual and small group meetings with strategy group members, and other staff, faculty and administrators across the University whose expertise focused on diversity, academic success and community engagement. During these meetings, the co-leads collected information on existing resources and successful strategies, developed opportunities for future collaboration, and discussed innovative methods to support black students' access, inclusion and achievement at USF, as well as their engagement in the Bay Area black community.

The AASP co-leads also collected a range of information on the best practices in the areas of black student recruitment, retention and persistence discussed in academic journals and established at other universities. Examples of African American living learning communities and themed housing were explored, as well as successful targeted recruitment and retention programs, and race-specific and general honors/scholars programs. Lastly, the AASP co-leads also researched Jesuit and other universities with high graduation rates for black students and worked backwards, tracing the range of academic, financial, faith-based and social services that might have contributed to the success of the universities.

Strategy Group Recommendations

Research indicates that rates of underrepresented student persistence, satisfaction, and achievement are directly tied to the strength of university leaders' commitment to institution-wide programming that serves the unique needs of these students (Johnson, 2013; Swail, Redd & Perna, 2003; Credle & Dean, 1991; Weddle-West & Bingham, 2010). Accordingly, the AASP Strategy Group recommends that the University Leadership make a clear, demonstrable commitment to building a more accessible, inclusive and empowering campus for black-identified students. Based upon the institutional data collected, research on best practices,

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and the expertise of those who participated in this year-long development process, the Strategy Group proposes that this commitment take the shape of a centralized, multi-pronged comprehensive program that reflects our Jesuit educational values of *cura personalis* and the development of the whole person. The Strategy Group believes that such a program, hereafter referred to as the Black Student Development and Achievement Program, will strengthen the community of black students at USF and in turn, strengthen the entirety of the University community.

The Black Student Development and Achievement Program (BSDA) is envisioned as a dynamic, comprehensive initiative that seeks to build on the USF's commitment to inclusive excellence and diversity by creating an academically challenging, personally supportive, and empowering educational experience for black-identified students. By offering high-impact, academic and extracurricular programs for undergraduate and graduate students that center on the unique and yet varied experiences of students of African descent, the BSDA Program will provide black students with a critical sense of belonging, opportunities for engagement in all aspects of university life and in the broader Bay Area community, and the resources, skills and support necessary to achieve academic excellence and pursue rich and rewarding careers after graduation.

In order to meet these broad goals, the staff of the Black Student Development and Achievement Program will oversee the creation of a Black Resource Center, a Living Learning Community, and a competitive Scholars Program, each of which are discussed in full below.

The goals of the Black Student Development and Achievement Program are:
- To create an institutional climate in which black students feel valued, included, supported and empowered to reach their full academic and human potential.
- To create safe spaces in which black students can develop meaningful connections with each other, and with black faculty, staff, alumni and administrators.
- To strengthen the engagement of black students in the University and in the surrounding Bay Area community.
- To create pathways for black students to move successfully through their University careers and into rich and rewarding professional careers.

The objectives of the Black Student Development and Achievement Program are:
- To increase the recruitment, retention and graduation of black students.
- To provide students with identity-specific tools and resources to navigate the University successfully.
- To develop a residential community for freshman and sophomore students with academic and service components.
- To create an accessible, physical meeting space where all black students can gather to openly discuss their experiences at the University.
- To create opportunities for students to examine their own racial identities and culture, as well as the historical experiences of people of African descent.
- To connect students to job, research and internship opportunities on and off campus.
- To develop opportunities for graduate and undergraduate students to be matched with

faculty, staff, alumni, and peer mentors.
- To foster students' mental, emotional, and spiritual health.
- To provide faculty, staff and administrators with resources and skills to support black students.
- To provide financial and housing assistance for students of African descent.
- To create opportunities for students to engage with the broader Bay Area black community.

A. Black Student Resource Center

A broad range of research from a variety of fields has demonstrated that space matters and thus, universities ought to be highly attuned to the ways in which the organization of campus spaces serves to increase or decrease students' sense of belonging. Feagin, Vera, and Imani (1996), for example, have detailed the ways in which the racialization and politicization of campus spaces often negatively impact the everyday lived experiences of black students. Because of these politics, along with the larger legacy of racial discrimination in the United States, Patton (2006) and others have argued that race-specific culture centers are still necessary at PWIs in order to provide safe spaces, cultural affirmation, academic and social support, and promote positive racial in-group associations between black faculty, staff and students (Yosso & Lopez, 2012).

Accordingly, the Black Resource Center (BRC) is proposed as a physical, communal space for all students of African descent at the University to gather, both informally and formally. In order to provide consistent support for students, the BRC will house the office of BSDA staff and interns, and the space will be made available for meetings of black campus organizations, such as the Black Student Union, the African Student Association, Sister Connection, Brother Connection, and campus chapters of black sororities and fraternities. In partnership with Gleeson Library, the Center will also house a resource library of books related to the study of Black culture, history, and life that students may freely access. Staff will coordinate the following efforts and programs targeted towards black students and available to all university students:

- *Black Student Orientation*
  Each Fall, BSDA staff will work with SEM and Student Life to offer two orientations— one for new black-identified undergraduate freshmen and transfer students, and one for new black-identified graduate students.

- *Black Student Resource Manual*
  BSDA staff will collaborate with Student Life (inclusive of Cultural Centers and other offices that can contribute) and the Office of Marketing Communications to enhance the existing Diversity Resource Manual created by the former office of Multicultural Recruitment and the Cultural Centers, and develop a specific print guide of resources geared towards black students.

- *Navigating USF Workshops*
  All students will also be strongly encouraged to enroll in USF101, in order to orient them to the University, identify campus resources and develop strong study habits and career

direction. In addition, BSDA staff will develop workshops specifically geared towards black students to help them successfully navigate the University, such as dealing with racial microaggressions, identifying campus allies and safe spaces, and resources to assist with financial aid and housing.

- *Resiliency Workshops*
Twice per year, staff from CAPS and University Ministry will be invited to the BRC to offer workshops and or/support group sessions that center on spirituality and mental health.

- *Brownbag Lunches with Faculty*
BSDA Staff will invite an African American faculty member to join students for a casual conversation over lunch twice per semester. Faculty will be asked to share about their career paths, experiences navigating systems of higher education, and their research interests, among other subjects.

- *Mentoring Opportunities*
BSDA staff will collaborate with CASA to connect black male-identified undergraduates to the PACT program and build a track for African American students in the Office of Development's Alumni Mentory , while also developing new programs that will afford graduate students and female-identified undergraduates the opportunity to develop mentoring relationships with black faculty, staff, alumni, and peers.

- *Competency Workshops for Faculty, Staff, Administrators, & University Leaders*
In partnership with the Tracy Seeley Center for Teaching Excellence, Human Resources, DECO, CAPS, and BERT, BSDA staff will assist in the development and delivery of workshops to strengthen the competency of University personnel to leverage diversity in their classrooms and on campus, navigate contentious conversations about race, and identify and respond to the particular needs and experiences of black students.

B. Living Learning Community

Research undertaken nationally and at USF has shown the effectiveness of living-learning communities in increasing student persistence, social engagement, and academic achievement (The Council of Independent Colleges, 2015; Stassen, 2003; Zhao & Kuh, 2004; Czarnik-Neimeyer & Powell-Hodge, 2015; "Living-Learning Communities," 2008). Researchers have also suggested a need for increasing identity-specific LLCs in order to mitigate the problems facing underrepresented student populations, create spaces and meet their particular needs (Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005; Fink & Hummel, 2015; Czarnik-Neimeyer & Powell-Hodge, 2015). Accordingly, this proposed residential learning community will build upon the University's successful LLC models while striving to strengthen black students' adjustment, engagement and achievement at USF.

The LLC will serve as a dynamic residential living opportunity for freshman and sophomore students who are seeking to build a fun, supportive community with students of African descent and those who have an interest in deepening their understanding of African American history, politics, culture, and identity. Ten freshmen and ten sophomores will be

admitted to the LLC each year, amounting to a residential community of twenty students.

- *Student Onboarding*
  BSDA staff will work closely with SEM, Student Housing and Residential Education (SHaRE) , admitted students and their families to create a comfortable transition to the University and the residence hall.

- *Residence Hall Programming*
  At the outset of the fall semester, BSDA and Residence Life staff will engage students in the design of the LLC by inviting them into the process of biweekly program planning for the year that suits their varied interests. In addition to these programs designed by the students, staff will collaborate with Cultural Centers' staff to develop and encourage students to participate in programming that builds awareness of intersectionality and promotes student growth, empowerment, and solidarity with members of the broad student body.

- *Academic Coursework (6-8 units)*
  Fall Semester: All LLC students will be required to enroll in one 2-4 unit African American Studies (AAS) themed course that will be taught by the BSDA Faculty Director and include guest lectures by other African American Studies Program faculty. As an introductory, interdisciplinary course, the class will enable students to explore the rich and varied history, cultural traditions and experiences of African Americans and engage them in rigorous examinations of social inequality, change, and justice. Upon completion of the 2-4 units of coursework, students will have fulfilled the University's Core CD requirement.

  Spring Semester: All LLC students will be required to enroll in one 4 unit Service Learning Course which will be designed in collaboration with the McCarthy Center, DECO and the African American Studies Program. The course will provide an opportunity for students to deepen their understanding of the socioeconomic, political, religious, and cultural dynamics of African American communities by engaging with and serving local Bay Area black communities. Depending upon the Faculty Director's academic expertise, the course will investigate a specific line of inquiry related to the local experiences of African Americans. Upon completion of the 4 units of coursework, students will have fulfilled the University's Core SL requirement.

- *Community Engagement*
  In collaboration with the McCarthy Center, DECO, Office of Admissions, and the African American Studies Program, staff will develop opportunities for students to engage with the broader Bay Area community. Opportunities may include service projects with local black churches and community organizations in the Western Addition through Engage SF. Other opportunities may include engagement with students in Upward Bound, summer bridge programs, and community based organizations, and/or historic walking tours of the Fillmore Jazz District and Black Panther Community sites in Oakland.

C. Scholars Program

The effectiveness of college honors programs in retaining high-achieving students,

strengthening their academic achievement, and preparing them for graduate school and professional careers has been well-documented by researchers (Shushok, 2006; Cosgrove, 1994). Studies indicate that students of color who participate in honors programs receive greater benefits than their peers (Seifert et. al. 2007), yet they are typically underrepresented in honors communities (Fries-Britt & Griffin, 2007). Accordingly, they are more likely to be underrepresented in graduate programs and in the upper ranks of their chosen professions (Epstein, 2006). Literature suggests that high-achieving black students need particular forms of support in order to ensure their success in honors programs at PWIs. Because they may be even more isolated than members of the larger black student population and face increased pressure to prove their intellectual abilities and counter racial stereotypes (Strayhorn, 2009), mentoring has been found to be a particularly significant component of their success (Freeman, 1999). Strong academic advising, research-focused faculty mentorship, service-learning, and assistance with setting goals and defining career aspirations have also been indicated as predictors of success (Rodgers & Summers, 2008; Griffin; Ishiyama, 2007; Strayhorn & Saddler, 2009). Lastly, honors programs that combine these elements and specifically target African Americans have been shown to be effective, in part because they bring together a critical mass of high-achieving black students and mitigate feelings of isolation (Fries-Britt & Turner, 2002; Epstein, 2006).

The Scholars Program therefore, is designed as an ambitious, rigorous and competitive academic program, grounded in Jesuit values, that seeks to educate the whole undergraduate student and develop their potential to fashion a more humane and just world. Designed specifically for talented African American undergraduates, the program aims to build student leadership capacity, provide research, internship and service opportunities, and strengthen the larger African American student community at USF. Students who are selected as Scholars will receive a full four-year scholarship covering the cost of tuition and room and board, at the conclusion of which, they will be well-equipped to serve the needs of underserved communities throughout the world through their chosen career-paths.

Eligibility
● Incoming Freshman African American students are eligible to apply.
● Must have a high school GPA of 3.5 or greater.
● Must demonstrate a commitment to pursuing a career related to social justice and working for the advancement of people in need.
● Participation will not be limited to, but preference will be given to first-generation students and those who demonstrate financial need.

Program Structure and Enrollment: The program is based on a four-year cohort model. Five students will be admitted in the first year, and five students per year thereafter, each receiving full scholarships for four academic years. Based upon availability and resources, exceptions may be made to allow sophomore students into the program. Also, accepted students may simultaneously be admitted as University Scholars and/or enrolled into the College of Arts & Sciences Honors College Program once it is developed. In the latter

case, admitted students would have an opportunity to pursue a specific honors curriculum while still participating in and benefitting from programming designed by the Black Student Development and Achievement Program.

Year 1: The first year of the program is designed to introduce the new scholars to USF and the Bay Area African American community. The students will be full members of the Living Learning Community and participate in all required programming, including the required African American Studies coursework. In addition, BSDA staff will coordinate small, monthly communal dinners that will host a well-known Bay Area African American community member. These dinners will provide an opportunity for students to begin thinking about long-term career paths, and develop relationships with potential community mentors.

Year 2: The second year of the program is designed to strengthen the Scholars' understanding of social justice issues and their relationships with Bay Area community members. At the start of the first semester, the students will be matched with community mentors from a wide variety of fields (Business, Law, Social Work, Education, Nursing, etc.) who will be required to meet with them informally at least twice per semester. Over the course of the year, students will also be required to take at least one class in the field of African American Studies that also serves as a University Core Requirement, such as African American History, Sociology, Literature, Philosophy or Politics. Lastly, students will continue to meet for communal dinners twice per semester and participate in a volunteer project that serves the Bay Area African American community.

Year 3: The third year of the program is designed to strengthen the Scholars' academic training and experience in their chosen career-path. Students are matched with faculty mentors across the University's various schools as student research assistants and commit to working with their faculty mentor for a full academic year. In order to strengthen their skill set as research assistants, students are required to attend monthly workshops that cover research techniques and graduate/professional career preparation. Students may also receive additional training in order to do specific tasks required in their actual research setting. Student Research Partners work between 5-15 hours per week and will receive either monetary compensation or academic credit for research hours, time involved in meeting with the faculty mentors and participation in research workshops. At the end of each year, students participate and present their work at an undergraduate research symposium, such as the College's Creative Activity and Research Day (CARD).

Year 4: The fourth year of the program is designed to allow students to implement their education and training. Depending upon their chosen career path, students will either continue their roles as faculty research assistants, or be placed in internships over the course of the year. During the fall semester, they will also work with the Program Director to design a capstone project and/or immersion trip that they will engage in during the spring semester. Lastly, they will be designated as peer mentors to incoming Scholars.

Program Oversight

Faculty Director
This position would be held by a faculty member who facilitates relationships between program partners and oversees the development, implementation, and evaluation of the Black Student Development and Achievement Program. As part of her/his responsibilities, the Director would also be responsible for coordinating the Scholars Program, developing and teaching the African American Studies courses required for students participating in the Living Learning Community, creating and delivering faculty workshops, and developing similar program models that could meet the specific needs of other underrepresented student populations.

Program Coordinator
This position would be held by a Student Life staff member who develops and coordinates the workshops and programming offered by the Black Resource Center and the Living Learning Community, oversees the program budget, and coordinates the mentoring programs.

Higher Education Student Affairs Intern
An intern placed in this position would assist in the development and delivery of workshops offered by the Black Resource Center and the Scholars Program.

Resident Advisor
This position would be held by a specially trained Resident Life staff member.

Program Evaluation

The Black Student Development and Achievement Program will be evaluated based on the overarching objectives of the program, as well as on specific objectives created for the three components of the program—the Black Resource Center, Living Learning Community, and Scholars Program. For the overarching BSDA Program, assessment methods will include the measurement of retention and graduation rates, the measurement of social engagement and connectivity data collected by the National Survey of Student Engagement, the measurement of exit survey data, and tracking students' career placement. For each of the program components, various assessment tools will be utilized including course evaluations, orientation evaluations, workshop evaluations, service-learning program partner evaluations, and full program evaluations.

Key Program Partners

- African American Studies Program
- Black Student Union
- Black Alumni Society
- Black Community Council

- College of Arts and Sciences

- Critical Diversity Studies

- Office of Development

- Office of Diversity Engagement and Community Outreach

- Office of the Senior Vice Provost for Academic Affairs

- Office of Student Life
  - o Center for Academic and Student Achievement
  - o Counseling and Psychological Services
  - o Cultural Centers
  - o Priscilla A. Scotlan Career Services Center
  - o Student Housing and Residential Education

- McCarthy Center

- Muscat Scholars Program

- PACT

- Strategic Enrollment Management

Proposed Timeline

Fall 2017-Spring 2018
- Black Resource Center Developed
- Black Resource Center Program Development
- Living Learning Community Development
- Living Learning Community Course Development

Summer-Fall 2018
- Black Resource Center Opens
- Living Learning Community Begins
- Scholars Program Begins

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Appendix I.

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**African American Scholars Project
Strategy Group Members**

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- o **Ariana DasGupta**, *Program Manager, Office of Diversity Engagement and Community Outreach*
- o **Ashley Jones***, President, Black Student Union (graduated Spring 2017)*
- o **Barbara Thomas,** *Senior Director, Counseling and Psychological Services*
- o **Candice Harrison**, *Associate Professor of History, College of Arts and Sciences (Faculty Co-lead)*
- o **Charlene Lobo Soriano,** *Associate Dean of Student Academic Services (Branch Campuses, Center for Academic and Student Achievement*
- o **Dallas Hogue,** *Student Representative, Black Student Union*
- o **Daniel Erwin,** *Marketing Client Manager: Development, Marketing/Project Management*
- o **Darrick Smith,** *Assistant Professor, Leadership Studies, School of Education*
- o **Erin Echols,** *Co-Director of the Cultural Centers*
- o **Golden Venters III,** *Director of Organizational Effectiveness, Division of Student Life*
- o **Jessica Jordan,** *Associate Vice President, Annual Giving, Special Giving, Development Services, and PR & M*
- o **Julie Orio,** *Vice Provost for Student Life (Leadership Team Co-Lead)*
- o **Leighia Fleming,** *Assistant Director, Student Conduct, Rights, and Responsibilities*
- o **Michael Tadesse-Bell**, *Academic Success Coach, Director of Student Experience and Persistence Programs, Center for Academic and Student Achievement*
- o **Monica Njoku***, Assistant Director, Alumni Integrated Communications, Alumni Engagement*
- o **Naomi Follett,** *Associate Director, Strategic Enrollment Management*
- o **Pamela Balls Organista**, *Associate Dean for Social Sciences and Professor of Psychology, College of Arts & Science (Co-lead)*
- o **Preston Walton***, Senior Associate Vice President, Development (Leadership Team Co-lead)*
- o **Shawn Calhoun,** *Associate Dean, University Libraries, & Department Head of Access Services, Access Services*
- o **Stephanie Sears**, *Chair and Associate Professor, Sociology Department, College of Arts and Sciences (Faculty Co-lead)*
- o **Suzette DeGrange,** *Director, Access and Inclusion, Student Enrollment Services* (until April 2017)