

Examining the Status of Men of Color in California Community Colleges: Recommendations for State Policymakers

Frank Harris III and J. Luke Wood



In recent years, increased attention has been given to the dismal success of boys and men of color in education. Numerous conferences, symposia, academic journals, and reports have been released, documenting the deleterious outcomes for these males (Harper & Harris, 2012). Much of the research on these men indicates that disparate outcomes between boys and men of color, in comparison to their female and White counterparts, are a result of systemic and structural challenges that must be addressed through federal and state policy interventions. The purpose of this report is to document specific policy interventions that can be implemented in the state of California to improve outcomes for men of color in community colleges. Recommendations offered in this report were presented to the Assembly Select Committee on the Status of Boys and Men of Color in California in October of 2013, convened by Assemblymember, Dr. Shirley M. Weber (D-79).

BACKGROUND

As the vast majority of men of color begin their postsecondary experiences in community colleges, these sites are critical for enhancing successful outcomes for these men. As noted by Bush (2004), community colleges are perceived by young men of color as a pathway to enhanced social and economic mobility. This point is particularly salient in California, where 81 and 82 percent of all Latino and Black male students enrolled in public postsecondary education are enrolled in community colleges.

While community colleges serve as a primary entry into postsecondary education, access is not always synonymous with success. While community colleges are certainly dedicated to the students and communities they serve, many men of color experience disparate outcomes in comparison to their peers. In fact, this point is true for nearly every conceivable marker of success (e.g., persistence, completion, achievement, transfer) (Harris & Wood, 2013). For example, only 58% of Black men who enrolled in credit courses during the Spring of 2013 passed those courses with a grade of C or better. This percentage is significantly lower than that of White males (at 74.6%) and the general male population (at 70%) (Table 1). Another marker of success outcomes is completion rates. Completion rates take into account a multiplicity of student goals; representing the total percentage of males who earned certificates, degrees, transferred, or became transfer eligible. While 65% of Asian American men complete their goals within six years, less than 40% of Black (38.6%), Native American (37.8%), Hispanic (38.0%), and Pacific Islander (37.8%) males do so. While even White males have lower completion rates than Asian American men, their rates (at 51.9%) are significantly higher than that of their underrepresented male of color peers (Table 2). Transfer outcomes also serve to highlight between group differences. While the average transfer rate is 41% at the state level, 55% of Asian American men transfer within six years. In contrast, only 31% of Native American and Latino males transferred within that same timeframe (Table 3).

TABLE 1

Male Credit Course Success Rate, Spring 2013

MALE RACIAL/ETHNIC GROUPS	SUCCESS
Male Total	69.7%
African-American	58.1%
American Indian	66.7%
Asian	73.9%
Hispanic	65.9%
Multi-Ethnic	67.2%
Pacific Islander	66.5%
Unknown	76.8%
White Non-Hispanic	74.6%

Source: California Community College Chancellors Office, DataMart

TABLE 2

Six Year Completion Rate, 2006/07 (Percentage of Males who earned Certificate, Degree, Transferred, or Became Transfer Eligible)

COHORT YEAR 2006-2007 (OUTCOMES BY 2011-2012)

State of California	49.2%
Male	48.1%
African-American	38.6%
American Indian/Alaskan Native	37.8%
Asian	65.0%
Filipino	48.6%
Hispanic	38.0%
Pacific Islander	37.8%
White Non-Hispanic	51.9%

Source: California Community College Chancellors Office, DataMart

TABLE 3

Six Year Transfer Rate, 2006/07 (Velocity Cohort Report)

State of California Total	41%
Male Total	41%
African-American	36%
American Indian/Alaskan Native	31%
Asian	55%
Filipino	35%
Hispanic	31%
Pacific Islander	35%
Unknown	43%
White Non-Hispanic	43%

Source: California Community College Chancellors Office, DataMart

Given the aforementioned outcomes, the importance of the recommendations proffered in this report is evident. The next section of this report outlines policy recommendations that can be implemented by state policymakers to improve success outcomes for men of color, particularly those who have been historically underrepresented and underserved in education.

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

- **Require student outcomes data on the Community College Student Success Score Card to be disaggregated by gender within race/ethnicity.**

In 2013, the California Community College Chancellor's Office (CCCCO) released the Student Success Score Card. The scorecard was a legislative recommendation derived from the statewide Student Success Task Force (codified in SB 1456). The purpose of the scorecard was to increase transparency on student outcomes data in the state's

community college system. The report card features course persistence data, remedial education success, completion rates, and other integral outcomes. The scorecard reports these data for the general student population, but also by race, gender, and age. While the scorecard is important in ensuring accountability for student success, the utility of the scorecard could be greatly improved by further disaggregation. Specifically, we recommend that the report card disaggregate racial/ethnic outcome data by gender. Currently, consumers of the scorecard can understand how population outcomes differ by race (e.g., White, Black, Latino, Asian, Native American) and gender (e.g., male, female) but not by race/ethnicity within gender (e.g., Black males, White females, Native American males). It is important to note that disaggregated scorecard data are already available through the Chancellor's Office DataMart via the Student Success Scorecard metrics system. However, the public version of the scorecard does not include disaggregated data. Making data already collected available



to the public would facilitate a better understanding of the challenges facing distinct student populations, particularly Black men, Latino men, Native American men, and other men of color. Outcome data for students who participate in athletics should be reported on the scorecard homepage as well, especially given the number of men of color who enroll in community college to participate in sports and transfer to a four-year institution, and the disparity that exist in transfer outcomes between men of color and their White male peers who participate in community college athletics (see Harper, 2009).

- **Refine ethnic classifications to better account for outcome disparities that are experienced by diverse student populations.**

Ethnic classifications that are currently collected by the CCCCCO need to be further refined. At present, CCCCCO data on Asian American populations are presented in three broad categories: Asian, Filipino, and Pacific Islander. While more expansive than in data collected in other states, these broad categories mask disparities that are evident in large Asian subpopulations, specifically Southeast Asian populations (e.g., Hmong, Laotian, Cambodian, and Vietnamese). This recommendation is particularly salient for states like California that have substantially diverse Asian American student populations. We recommend using the following ethnic classifications: Asian American (excluding Southeast Asian), Southeast Asian, and South Asian (e.g., Indian, Pakistani, Sri-Lankan, Pacific Islander or Hawaiian, Filipino). Samuel Museus, Minh Tran, and Shaun Harper’s forthcoming report, *Asian American and Pacific Islander Men in*

Higher Education: Current Conditions and Implications for Educational Policy, speaks to the significance of this issue. Moreover, the same recommendation can be applied to the “Hispanic” category, which does not adequately reflect important within-group differences and experiences across ethnic subpopulations. At the very least, data that are currently presented in the Hispanic category should be disaggregated into Mexican, Mexican American, and Latino (excluding Mexican/Mexican American descent).

- **Require community colleges to assign an increased percentage of full-time faculty to gatekeeper and basic skills courses.**

In the California community college system, there are 6,950 tenured and tenure-track faculty members and 17,630 academic temporary faculty members (adjuncts) (California Community College Chancellors Office, 2013a). Prior research has shown that the composition of community college faculty has a direct effect on student outcomes. Community colleges with higher percentages of part-time faculty members have significantly lower retention and graduation rates of students. (Bailey et al., 2005; Calcagno et al., 2007; Goble et. al., 2008; Jacoby, 2006). These researchers assert that contingent faculty often work at multiple institutions. As such, these faculty



have limited time to spend working with students. Researchers have also reported that historically underrepresented and underserved students are overrepresented in non-credit remedial/basic skills courses, particularly in the disciplines of mathematics and English. High percentages of these courses are taught by academic temporary faculty. These courses often have some of the lowest retention and completion rates and, as a result, serve as barriers to courses that students must take for degree completion and transfer to four-year institutions. For example, course completion rates for Black men in math and English remediation are 13.7% and 23.8%, respectively (Scorecard Metrics, 2013). Thus, given these data, colleges should assign more full-time faculty to basic skills courses, as doing so will ensure that these courses are being taught by faculty who are at the core of curriculum development and academic policy formation.

- **Require the California community colleges to implement a statewide early alert system.**

Early alert systems allow faculty, counselors, and other educators who are responsible for monitoring students' success and intervening when problems arise, to identify patterns of concern that can lead to underachievement. This identification occurs early in the semester/term and

results in appropriate actions to prevent students from falling further behind. For example, students who perform poorly on major class assignments, fail to submit assignments, or miss a significant proportion of class meetings, receive an early alert message that is generated to campus personnel. Students then meet in person with the appropriate college personnel who can offer advice and recommendations to resources that can be helpful in assisting the student. While having an early alert system in place has been identified as a practice that facilitates student success for men of color, few community colleges have implemented such systems. Among those colleges that have early alert systems, there is wide variation in their utilization and efficacy (Wood, 2011). For instance, some colleges have early alert systems that wait to identify concerning patterns half way through the semester; whereas identification at other colleges occurs early enough to curb academic challenges and help students get back on track. Given the beneficial effects that an early alert system can have on student success, we recommend that these systems be required of all California community colleges. Since it is widely documented that students who are enrolled in California's community colleges often enroll concurrently in more than one institution, a uniform system that can be accessed across districts and/or colleges may be necessary and worthwhile. Perhaps more important, faculty and counselors should receive professional development training on how to utilize the system in a way that will be most conducive to facilitating student success. The manner in which the early alert system will be utilized should be referenced in each college's student success plan. Finally, it is critical that the state provide technological resources

to implement and sustain these early alert systems in order to ensure their efficacy.

- **Redirect resources that are invested in corrections to postsecondary education.**

While California invests approximately \$9 billion in corrections and rehabilitation each year, (California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation, 2013), approximately \$474 million are invested annually in the State's community colleges (California Community College Chancellors Office, 2013b). Furthermore, men of color, particularly Black and Latino men, are overrepresented in California's criminal justice system. In 2010, Black and Latino men accounted for 5.8% and 32.8% of California's population, respectively (California Department of Finance, 2013). During the same year, Black men represented 29% of the total male prison population in the State, while Latino men represented 40.3% (Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation, 2011). While we acknowledge that criminal justice is a complex issue with many considerations, the substantial resources that are invested in incarcerating men of color is alarming and should raise serious concern about the State's priorities as they relate to this population. Thus, state policymakers should consider diverting resources away from the criminal justice system and reinvest these resources toward programs that increase the number of men of color who enroll and succeed in community college.

- **Reduce funding inequities in the State's postsecondary institutions so that institutions that serve high proportions of students of color receive adequate resources.**

During the 2012-2013 academic school year, University of California (UC) institutions received \$24,909 in programmatic funding per student from the State. Within the same year, California State University (CSU) institutions received \$12,729 and California Community Colleges (CCCs) received \$5,447 from the State (Legislative Analyst Office, 2013). Conversely, historically underserved students of color¹ who are enrolled in public postsecondary education in the State are overwhelmingly represented in the CCCs (45.0%) and CSU (35.5%). In comparison, only 23.0% of students of color are served by UC institutions. As shown in Table 4 below, these proportions become even more pronounced when the enrollment of men of color in California's public postsecondary institutions are considered. For instance, 83.4% and 81.5% of all Black and Latino men in California postsecondary institutions are enrolled in community colleges; these rates are strikingly high, especially in comparison to Asian American/Pacific Islander and non-resident students (CPEC, 2011).

While all of these institutions receive little support from the State, community colleges are more reliant upon state funding for fiscal viability. UC and CSU institutions have opportunities to generate research and development revenue from federal research grants (e.g., Department of Education,

¹ In this analysis, historically underserved students of color included Black, Filipino, Latino, and Native American. The percentages are actually underestimated given that CPEC does not collect data from Southeast Asian populations (e.g., Hmong, Laotian, Cambodian, Vietnamese) separately from Asian American.

TABLE 4*Proportion of Men of Color Enrolled in California's Public Postsecondary Institutions*

	Asian/PI	Black	Filipino	Latino	Native American	White	Non-Resident
UC	23.0%	4.8%	11.4%	4.8%	11.0%	10.8%	29.8%
CSU	18.8%	11.8%	14.4%	13.7%	12.6%	17.0%	31.0%
CCC	58.3%	83.4%	74.1%	81.5%	76.4%	72.1%	39.2%

Note: Data excludes the CCC district office.

Department of Rehabilitation, National Science Foundation, National Institute of Health), while the community colleges rarely have the capacity to compete for such monies. Given the substantial proportion of men of color who are served by the State's community colleges, it seems both logical and reasonable to conclude that supporting postsecondary access and success for these students will require a significant investment of resources (human, programmatic, and financial) in community colleges. One area of need is institutional research and evaluation offices, which are often chronically understaffed and under-resourced to meet the demands of data-driven leadership and accountability.

- **Require federally designated minority-serving colleges and universities to include the statement, “serving historically underrepresented and underserved students” in their institutional mission and/or strategic plan with stated student success goals.**

A substantial proportion of California's community colleges can be considered federally designated minority-serving institutions based on their enrollment of

students of color. These institutions may qualify for grants as Hispanic-Serving Institutions (HSIs) and/or Asian American and Native American Pacific Islander-Serving Institutions (AANAPISIs) under Title V and Title III of the Higher Education Act, respectively. Many community colleges in the State have received this funding. However, despite being designated as HSIs and AANAPISIs, outcome gaps and disparities persist among Hispanic, some Asian American and Pacific Islander (particularly Southeast Asian), and Native American students at these institutions. Moreover, advocates have rightfully questioned the extent to which institutions that receive Title V and Title III funds are indeed committed to the success of students whom these programs are meant to support, and the extent to which they are held accountable for doing so. Thus, we recommend that community colleges designated as HSIs and AANAPISIs be required to include the phrasing, “serving historically underrepresented and underserved students” in its institutional mission statement and strategic plan. Moreover, the strategic plan (or other guiding documents) should include student success goals to be benchmarked and monitored for institutional performance.

We believe that doing so will signal a transparent commitment to serving these students and perhaps ensure a greater level of accountability. Along the same lines, institutions that receive these funds should be required to integrate a comprehensive professional development program to build capacity among faculty, student services professionals, and administrators to serve these students effectively. This would be a particularly worthwhile endeavor given that federal grant funding that supports minority-serving institutions is typically short-term. Thus, professional development can serve to inculcate values and strategies that sustain activities after grant funding has expired.

- **Create a statewide educational initiative for men of color.**

In 2011, New York City (NYC) Mayor Michael Bloomberg launched the “Young Men’s Initiative”—a comprehensive effort to reduce educational outcome disparities, reform juvenile justice, remove barriers to employment, and redress health disparities for Black and Latino men in NYC. As a part of this effort, nearly \$130 million were invested in programs and city agencies that served Black and Latino men. Similarly, in 2003, the University of Georgia System established the “African American Male Initiative” to attract and retain African American males to the State’s public higher education institutions. Initiatives like these have been enacted in other states across the country, including North Carolina and Texas. The [“Texas Education Consortium for Male Students of Color”](#) serves as a particularly salient example in that it brings together key stakeholders from K-12 districts, community colleges, and four-year institutions. California policymakers

should consider the extent to which a statewide effort to improve outcomes for men of color is both necessary and feasible to address the disparities that have been highlighted in this report. If such an effort is deemed warranted, the State should identify and partner with private entities that have improved the lives and outcomes of boys and men of color as a core component of their mission. This effort should be data-driven and informed by current research on the status of men of color in California.

- **Create programs to reclaim “near completers”—those who have completed a substantial proportion of college units but have not completed their degrees.**

For decades, California’s community colleges were held accountable and funded based on the number of students who were enrolled, rather than the number of students who completed and were successful in courses and programs. Similarly, state financial aid policies also emphasized enrollment more so than completion and success. One unintended outcome of these policies is a substantial number of students who have accumulated community college units and have yet to transfer or earn a degree or certificate. Therefore, policymakers should consider enacting a statewide strategy to identify community college students who have completed a significant proportion of coursework and were never awarded a degree or certificate. It is important to note that students in California can transfer to a public four-year institution in the state without being awarded an associate’s degree or certificate. Thus, the policy need not account for students who



transfer. Given the increased emphasis that has been recently placed on student completion and success (as a result of the Student Success Task Force), and the enhanced demand for postsecondary education and state financial aid in California, institutions can no longer afford to allow students to accumulate units without making measurable progress toward goals. Students who are approaching 60 units toward completion of a degree or certification should be flagged for academic advising and transfer credit services. Per a recent policy recommendation on near completers from the California Community College Academic Senate, colleges should also consider adopting automatic awarding of associate's degrees for students who have met graduation requirements.

- **Ensure that Men of Color are equitably represented among students who transfer to CSUs via Senate Bill 1440.**

In 2011, Senate Bill 1440, the Student Transfer Achievement Reform Act, was signed into the law by Governor Arnold

Schwarzenegger. This law sought to ensure a more timely and transparent pathway toward the bachelor's degree for students who transfer from the State's community colleges to CSU institutions. SB 1440 requires the CSU to admit students who have earned the transfer Associate of Arts degree with junior standing. In addition, the bill mandates CSU institutions to require no more than 60 additional units of coursework for these students to earn a bachelor's degree. The impetus for the bill was to enable a greater number of students to be served by the State's postsecondary education system by improving the time to degree for students who transfer to the CSU from CCCs. Data on students who are afforded access to the CSU by way of SB 1440 should be routinely collected, reviewed, and disaggregated by race/ethnicity within gender. In addition, policymakers should also examine these data by institution and major to ensure that men of color who transfer via SB 1440 are equitably represented in all 23 of the CSUs and in a range of academic programs. Institutions (both community colleges and CSUs) that do not have an acceptable proportion of men of color represented in its transfer cohorts over several years should be required to develop and implement a plan to redress this issue.

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ABOUT M2C3

The Minority Male Community College Collaborative (M2C3) is a project of San Diego State University (SDSU) that was established with a grant from the San Diego State University Presidential Leadership Fund. M2C3 is affiliated with SDSU's doctoral program in Community College Leadership. M2C3's research and practice agenda prioritizes men who have been traditionally underrepresented and underserved in postsecondary education. M2C3 partners with colleges across the United States to build capacity to facilitate student success for these men. Our work enables institutions to use data to inform institutional decision-making and practices on how to serve men of color effectively and equitably.

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Frank Harris III and J. Luke Wood are on the faculty in the College of Education at San Diego State University. They co-direct the Minority Male Community College Collaborative.

CONTACT INFORMATION:

Frank Harris III, Ed.D.
Associate Professor
frank.harris@sdsu.edu
<http://works.bepress.com/fharris/>
@fharris3

J. Luke Wood, Ph.D.
Assistant Professor
luke.wood@sdsu.edu
www.jlukewood.com
@jlukewood

San Diego State University
College of Education
Administration, Rehabilitation, &
Postsecondary Education Department (ARPE)
5500 Campanile Drive
San Diego, CA 92182-1127