UNLOCKING EXCELLENCE

Advancing Postsecondary Success for Men of Color through Policy and Systems *Change*

A National Demonstration Project

May 2019

EXECUTIVES'
ALLIANCE
FOR BOYS AND
MEN OF COLOR

About the Executives' Alliance

The Executives' Alliance for Boys and Men of Color (the "EA") is a network of national, regional, and community foundations driven by a bold vision that all boys and men of color will enjoy full opportunity and inclusion in the economic, educational, leadership, and wellness opportunities that America has to offer. The EA's mission is to grow the breadth, depth, and coordination of philanthropy's commitment to the safety and success of boys and men of color.   Learn more at www.funders4bmoc.org.

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Table of Contents

Background and Overview

Introduction

Completion of higher education is of particular value to men of color. Through this achievement, they unlock their own potential, improve their career options and lifetime earnings, and enable themselves to best contribute to their families and communities. Beyond individual benefits, completing a postsecondary education is important to the overall prosperity and vitality of our nation, better enabling communities to create, innovate, sustain, and persevere. The skills and experiences acquired through the completion of a higher education degree or credential help to strengthen the nation's labor force and economic systems and contribute to every part of our national fabric. Moreover, children whose parents hold postsecondary degrees have better health outcomes and educational advantages. Often, they maintain or improve upon the economic status of their parents. So, it stands to reason that an investment in increasing the number of boys and men of color who complete higher education is an investment in our future collective and societal well-being.

Earning a higher education credential or degree is a gateway to economic and social opportunity, particularly when the nation's economy is strong. For example, the most recent data from the Bureau of Labor Statistics shows that the median earnings of adults with associate's and bachelor's degrees are 18% and 64% higher, respectively, than of those who graduated from high school, while adults with at least a master's degree earn twice as much or more than high school graduates (See Appendix 1, Unemployment Rates and Earnings by Educational Attainment). High school graduates are nearly twice as likely to be unemployed as adults with bachelor's degrees. Even a strong economy features some rate of unemployment, but the possession of a higher education degree or credential greatly reduces this risk for an individual. Notably, obtaining some college credits without earning a degree does slightly increase median weekly earnings; however, it reduces the likelihood of unemployment by only 10 percent.

Persistence in and completion of higher education are critical for boys and men of color. According to data from the National Center Education Statistics (NCES), from 2009 to 2017, undergraduate enrollment among White men decreased by 11.5 percent, compared to a modest 5 percent decrease in enrollment for Black men and a large increase of 38 percent for Hispanic men. Among the total population of male undergraduate students in fall 2017, White men comprised 51 percent of the total, followed by Hispanic men (18 percent), Black men (11 percent), Asian men (7 percent), and Native American men (0.7 percent). (Information not included about men for whom data was either unavailable or inconclusive).

However, not all educational experiences and outcomes are equal. Despite increases in enrollment, postsecondary completion remains particularly elusive for too many men of color. Of the 816,953 Black men and 1.35 million Hispanic men enrolled in college, approximately 10 percent and 5 percent, respectively, attend for-profit institutions. Moreover, data from the U.S. Census Bureau reveals that among men aged 25 and over, college degree attainment rates (which include all associate, bachelors, and post-baccalaureate degrees) vary greatly by racial and/or ethnic group. For example, in 2018 Asian men had the highest percentage within-group degree attainment rate (65 percent), followed by White men (44 percent), Black men (32 percent), and Hispanic men (24 percent) (See Appendix 2, Degree Attainment Rates for Men by Race and Ethnic Group). NCES data from 2018 revealed that 68 percent of Asian male undergraduate students graduated within six years of their initial enrollment at a four-year

institution (public or private) compared to 58 percent of White males, 46 percent of Hispanic males, and only 30 percent of Black males. We need to examine what factors may influence these disparities and how institutions can improve this outcome, specifically for Hispanic and Black men.

Addressing these challenges is important not only for men of color, but for the nation as a whole. National demographic shifts reveal a significant population increase in communities of color, especially among the young. By contrast, the White population is decreasing and aging. As these demographic changes continue, America's overall success will be increasingly linked to the success of students of color—especially men. Helping men of color succeed in postsecondary education is essential to our collective prosperity.

Therefore, it is neither moral nor sufficient to blame male students of color for educational outcomes that are largely driven by systemic forces, volitional policy decisions, and discretionary allocation of resources. We reject the dominant, deficit-based narratives that suggest that male students of color are "broken," "unprepared," or have "low skills." Indeed, some who subscribe to such narratives often cite them as facts and consider them the sole reasons why some male students of color are not successful. Instead, we must critically examine the quality of educational experiences, contextual factors, and outcomes for male students of color through a framework that focuses on how institutional systems, policies, programs, and practices facilitate or hinder educational pathways. Scholars have argued that using this type of framework expands our understanding of the invisible forces (e.g., history, access) and visible forces (e.g., curricula, policies) that shape the lived experiences of students of color in higher education.

In addition to rejecting deficit-based narratives about men of color, we must also be aware of assets and positive traits that help these students navigate difficult institutional systems and policies in order to complete their degrees. For example, some research on Latino students in the last decade has used an asset-based lens to identify different forms of capital—such as familial, aspirational, cultural, and social—that positively shape the academic experiences of Latino male students at four-year institutions. Latino male students have used these forms of capital to navigate hostile racial campus environments and develop resilience. These studies highlight an asset-based narrative about how Latino men rely on their cultural capital to complete a college degree.

The national demonstration project described in this report examines how postsecondary education stakeholders in six metropolitan areas across the country have addressed success for men of color in unique ways within specific populations of male students of color. Across the six sites, each set of stakeholders experienced one common realization: *Even as institutions so often ask students of color, specifically male students of color, to become "college ready," the same institutions often do not ask themselves whether they are ready to serve male students of color*—whether they are sufficiently equipped to meet the social, psychological, and educational needs of male students of color whom they have duly admitted and who have often incurred significant debt in order to attend. This pivot was revelatory for many of the grantee organizations and postsecondary institutions involved in this project, and it promises to reframe how postsecondary institutions understand, predict, and respond to the educational experiences of these students.

About the Postsecondary Success Project

This national demonstration project was developed in order to advance four objectives that will increase the number of boys and men of color who enroll and complete postsecondary programs—including community colleges, four-year private and public colleges and universities, credentialed apprenticeships, and accredited vocational and technical programs—in a timely manner:

- Elevating knowledge and practice about postsecondary success among local stakeholders working to improve outcomes for boys and men of color;

- Promoting bridge-building and coordination between nonprofit organizations, public sector systems, and postsecondary institutions with a focus on male students of color;

- Fostering commitments from educational leaders, practitioners, and faculty members to improve educational experiences for boys and men of color and invest in their postsecondary success;

- Building organizations' capacity to advance systems and policy change as a complement to existing direct-service efforts to promote postsecondary success.

Through generous support from the Lumina Foundation, the Executives' Alliance for Boys and Men of Color (the "EA") provided grants to support demonstration projects in six U.S. cities to build the capacity of nonprofits, networks, and advocacy efforts to improve postsecondary outcomes for boys and men of color. The grantees were pre-selected nonprofit organizations in six cities where EA member foundations and allies have supported place-based efforts to improve outcomes for boys and men of color: Detroit, Newark, Buffalo, Los Angeles, Little Rock, and Oakland. Each grantee organization received grant support and technical assistance from a team of national experts over the duration of the grant period. Representatives from each organization also formed a community of practice with other grantees, participating in periodic webinars as well as an in-person convening. In some cases, EA member foundations were particularly active as thought partners and relationship brokers.

In each city, grantee organizations worked to identify and develop "policy pathways"—policies, practices, methods, systems, and collaborations that can lay the groundwork for improving postsecondary outcomes for boys and men of color in the identified locales. In addition, the grant funds were used to build the capacity of those nonprofit organizations, networks, and community leaders to advance policy and systems change that promotes postsecondary success for boys and men of color.

Although the grantee organizations all focused on addressing the issues of male students of color, they varied greatly in terms of student population served, types of institutions involved (e.g., publicly supported schools, private colleges, or HBCUs), size of institutions (e.g., large or small student enrollments), location (e.g., large metropolitan areas or small cities), and scale of collaboration (e.g., one institution or a consortium of institutions). Moreover, the postsecondary institutions enrolled a wide variety of students ranging in age from 16 to 70 and therefore representing significantly different developmental requirements. More than 30 languages were spoken among these students, and they came from a myriad of faith traditions, countries of ori-

gin, and life circumstances. Collectively, the grantees provided a complex and diverse portrait of the nation's postsecondary education system and how it serves male students of color:

- **The Detroit Hispanic Development Corporation** convened a group of culturally identified nonprofits that worked in collaboration with several local postsecondary institutions to develop a cross-system strategic framework for improving college completion rates for men of color.

- **My Brother's Keeper Newark** was invited by the Newark City of Learning Collaborative to partner with Essex County College to understand and address systemic challenges for men of color in persisting to completion of two-year degrees and transferring to four-year programs.

- **Say Yes Buffalo** engaged Medaille College, SUNY Buffalo State, and Erie Community College to develop a local collaborative approach to enhancing outcomes of men of color pursuing postsecondary degrees.

- **The Social Justice Learning Institute,** located in Los Angeles County's City of Inglewood, facilitated a youth-led research, data collection, and analysis project, coordinated by male students of color under 30. This project engaged students, advocates, nonprofit service providers, faculty, and administrators from nearby postsecondary institutions to develop a set of recommendations for changing policy and systems in the region.

- **The Boys and Men Opportunity Success Team,** an initiative of The Urban League of Arkansas, supported the creation of the Postsecondary Policy Forum—a collaborative that includes local higher education institutions in Central Arkansas—to create a common statewide policy agenda to increase postsecondary success of boys and men of color.

- **The Urban Strategies Council** facilitated, and intensified cross-systems work to address widespread policy and systemic barriers for men of color who begin postsecondary education while incarcerated or pursue education upon reentry and who experience obstacles to transfer or completion of coursework in the San Francisco Bay Area. This endeavor engaged a broad spectrum of educational, governmental, and private sector partners in building collaborative resolve to promote positive policy and systems change in support of these deserving and determined students.

In the invitation for proposals and through the technical assistance model, a socioecological framework was used to underscore that improving the wellbeing of boys and men of color is possible when communities intentionally align public policies, education policies, institutional policies, nonprofit organizations, public systems, and environmental factors. This approach assumes that opportunities and positive outcomes occur when societal structures limit negative factors and encourage generative ones. A socioecological framework offers deep respect for context and an understanding of the factors that support or undermine the healthy development of individuals and communities. As such, a number of the grantees intentionally worked in coalition with local organizations, public sector partners, and accredited local postsecondary institutions to leverage the collective knowledge and perspectives necessary for policy and systems work.

An important feature of the project was a critical examination of:

1. How postsecondary institutions operate in ways that can either facilitate or hinder postsecondary educational pathways for male students of color.

2. How postsecondary partnerships with nonprofit organizations and public sector systems (e.g., juvenile justice or foster care) can promote persistence and completion.

Men of color are essential to the larger discourse of student access and success. Often, the discussion assumes that any generic intervention to improve educational outcomes will, by default, improve the educational outcomes of male students of color. However, one size does not fit all. Male students of color represent a diverse constituency. Therefore, in each municipality or region, stakeholders developed a learning community to honor local contextual factors and include multiple perspectives. Grant recipients examined how campus systems, policies, and partnerships can bolster or reduce degree completion rates for male students of color. They also explored how various aligned public systems and policies may differently affect the intersectional identities of male students across race, ethnicity, religion, and sexual orientation. Local postsecondary institutions in each site explored the assets of men of color, the factors that encouraged their successful transition into college, the quality of their academic experiences with faculty and students, and the importance of creating campus engagement, supportive institutional climates, and clear paths toward degree completion. They reexamined various aspects of their educational processes and their internal and external systems. The internal systems that proved critical include admissions, financial aid, developmental (others have used the term remedial) education curricula (intended to compensate for material students did not master during their K-12 years), and academic support services. Critical external systems included family, community, housing, transportation, labor market, foster care, and criminal justice.

While it was impossible for these organizations to fully achieve significant progress in a brief time period, they documented significant learnings, which are outlined in this report, the one-page site overviews in Appendix 3, and the more detailed individual site reports published separately. Together, the grantees and their partners provided a comprehensive and emerging perspective on the ways institutions can conduct critical institutional and cross-institutional self-assessments to understand how their systems and institutional policies may adversely affect the educational experiences of male students of color. The grantees and partners have formed a national community of practice; their learnings, progress, and growth have helped inform the knowledge and practice within the postsecondary professional communities focused on boys and men of color as well as among other stakeholders (e.g., nonprofit organizations and public sector systems) who are committed to advancing postsecondary success.

Cornerstones of Systems and Policy Change to Improve Postsecondary Success for Male Students of Color

Six Cornerstones

In the course of the project, the following six cornerstones emerged as essential prerequisites for advancing postsecondary success for male students of color by leveraging systems and policy change. Notably, these cornerstones posed challenges and growth opportunities not only for postsecondary institutions but also for nonprofit organizations, public sector systems, and other stakeholders.

1. Using disaggregated quantitative and qualitative data about male students of color
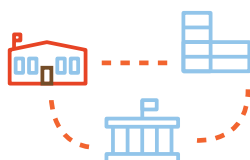
2. Collaborating within and between postsecondary institutions
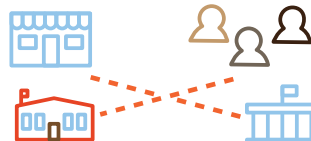
3. Collaborating across sectors with nonprofit organizations, the business community, and public sector systems

4. Adopting an asset-based narrative about male students of color

5. Listening and responding to the voices and needs of male students of color

6. Acknowledging and celebrating the diversity among male students of color

We will briefly highlight examples of how some of the sites demonstrated the cornerstones of success. For more details, see the one-page site profiles in Appendix 3.

Cornerstone 1: Using disaggregated quantitative and qualitative data about male students of color

To begin the process of systems and policy change, many of the institutions involved in this project needed to first obtain quantitative and qualitative data on key educational metrics for male students of color—for example, enrollment and degree completion rates across all degree programs by gender, race/ethnicity, family socioeconomic status, and other demographic identifiers—or to collect focus-group data on specific subgroups of male students of color (e.g. first-generation college students). Many of the postsecondary institutions involved in the project realized that collecting this data provided invaluable information about the educational experiences of and outcomes for male students of color.

Site Example: Newark, NJ

The Newark City of Learning Collaborative collaborated with Essex County College (ECC) and My Brother's Keeper Newark to collect and examine postsecondary completion data at ECC – disaggregating the data by race, gender, ethnicity, and enrollment status of students and by course and academic department. The process was the beginning of an extensive, intentional institutional assessment including retention rates, attrition rates by academic area, degree completion, transfer rates, systems, policies and institutional practices. The data review was supplemented by discussions with students that explored barriers to success and opportunities for institutional responses to the challenges that face African-American and Latino men. The Newark team also hosted conversations among faculty who expressed a commitment to changing the narrative concerning expectations for male students of color. Findings show that African-American men and Hispanic men had the lowest retention rates among all students enrolled at the college. Yet males of color who persisted had among the highest transfer rates to four-year colleges across the five-year period examined. This information is informing the development of proposals at ECC which include, among other things: training in cultural fluency for staff, tracking the performance of students of color, promoting tutoring and study skills, and re-examining course sequencing.

For additional information see Site Overview 5.

Cornerstone 2: Collaboration within and between postsecondary institutions
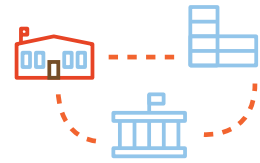
Most of the demonstration project leaders recognized that systems and policy change cannot happen when it originates from only one central leader or office. Instead, an *institution-wide response is required*, and only senior leadership within the college or university can provoke, resource, and sustain such a response. Project leaders recognized that organizational change must include an institutional commitment from the highest administrative levels, including administrators, faculty leaders, and professional staff across all departments and offices.

Additionally, collaboration among local and regional postsecondary institutions is crucial. For example, these types of partnerships often focus on improving seamless transfers from two-year to four-year schools via articulation agreements. Yet, this cross-system approach is not always simple or guaranteed. Toward that goal, some postsecondary institutions created memoranda of agreement or understanding (MOAs or MOUs) to articulate the specific commitments of resources and cross-institution collaborations that are needed to achieve systems and policy change.

Site Example: Little Rock, AR

The Boys and Men Opportunity Success Team (BMOST), an initiative of the Urban League of Arkansas, coordinated collaboration among postsecondary institutions as a key to creating sustained systems and policy change. They fostered full cooperation among postsecondary institutions through the development of BMOST's Postsecondary Policy Forum—a consortium of seven postsecondary institutions and the Arkansas Department of Higher Education. The seven institutions varied by type (public, private, or HBCU) as well as by the size of their respective populations of male students of color. Collectively, these institutions developed a shared goal to increase the postsecondary success of male students of color in the region, building on more than seven years of statewide collaboration among colleges and universities to support these men. Institutions signed memoranda of understanding, committed to collect and analyze key educational metrics (e.g., first-semester retention rates and specific retention data for the degree programs in which these men were most and least successful), and developed recommendations for how to shift policies, programs, and practices to increase the postsecondary success of men of color in Central Arkansas. The institutions also coordinated with the Arkansas Department of Higher Education to collect state-level data to better understand how Central Arkansas compared to other regions in the state.

For additional information see Site Overview 3.

Site Example: Newark, NJ

The president of Essex County College requested the assistance of the entire community college across all departments and divisions to identify areas of challenge for men of color. All academic departments and offices of student services (such as registration, financial aid, housing, health, and guidance) engaged in an internal review to identify systemic challenges and ways to facilitate persistence, completion, and smooth transition from two-year to four-year schools.

For additional information see Site Overview 5.
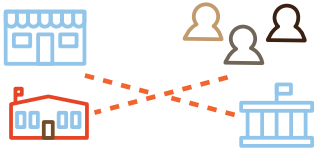
Cornerstone 3: Collaborating across sectors with nonprofit organizations, the business community, and public sector systems

Each of the project's lead organizations recognized that cross-sector collaborations among postsecondary institutions, nonprofit organizations, and (at times) the private sector and public sector systems were essential to accomplishing demonstration project goals. These collaborations were necessary in order to leverage collective resources and distribute the primary goals between all parties. In some cases, MOAs and MOUs between postsecondary institutions and nonprofit organizations proved helpful.

Site example: Detroit, MI

A coalition of nine community-based nonprofits led by the Detroit Hispanic Development Corporation has built a bridge from the city's troubled high schools to completion of degrees at local colleges through advocacy, tutoring, social support, mentoring, and partnership. The coalition worked with Wayne State University to develop a cross-system strategic framework for improving college completion rates for men of color. The nonprofits leveraged their community connections and cultural fluency to help Wayne State University identify specific barriers that have thwarted opportunity for men of color, including academic preparation, classroom instruction, relevant content/pedagogy, underrepresentation of faculty, and personal student challenges. In particular, the nonprofits began working with Wayne State University to better understand the issues facing specific subgroups (including African American, Latino, Native American, Arab and/or Muslim students, GBTQ students, immigrant students, first-generation college students, and system-involved students). They hope to help Wayne State University better facilitate a sense of belonging among students while reaching out to local business leaders to discuss workforce development, attainment of postsecondary credentials, and the realities facing men of color. Memoranda of understanding were developed to outline the agreement among the collaborating nonprofit partners.

For additional information see Site Overview 2.

Site Example: Los Angeles, CA

The Social Justice Learning Institute (SJLI) focused its efforts on a social justice development framework that included youth-led research and advocacy. Its approach was designed to identify systemic barriers to academic success for men of color by working with them to understand and reverse the social forces that produce inequity. SJLI convened focus groups with male students of color and local nonprofit service providers and also worked to strengthen collaborations among local postsecondary institutions and philanthropic organizations. The fruits of these efforts will help to increase the capacities of SJLI, the Southern California College Access Network (a regional coalition of over 60 nonprofits and educators focused on the transition to and completion of college), and a cohort of 15 postsecondary institutions.

For additional information see Site Overview 4.

Cornerstone 4: Adopting an asset-based narrative about male students of color

A commitment to changing postsecondary systems and policies to benefit men of color requires an abiding belief that these men can succeed. Postsecondary institutions and non-profits alike found that they had to eliminate negative and deficit-based narratives about male students of color and men of color overall. Instead, they had to adopt asset-based narratives that highlight the inherent positive value of male students of color and establish both an expectation of student success and an institutional commitment to making that success a reality. Sometimes, an asset-based narrative means recognizing the value that young men of color can bring as leaders in their own right. This pivot was critical to developing a shared approach to improving how the institutions engage, empower, and work with these students to improve their educational experiences and outcomes.

Site example: Los Angeles, CA

Social Justice Learning Institute (SJLI) student researchers are changing the narratives that sustain inequity. SJLI youth have directly engaged with decision makers in the criminal justice and foster care systems to build a youth diversion and development system in Los Angeles County that is aligned with postsecondary partners. SJLI student researchers are currently advancing this work within multiple coalitions in Los Angeles, including the Probation Change Coalition, the Probation Reform Implementation Coalition, and the Youth Diversion and Development Committee. Additionally, alumni student researchers of the program presented a research proposal on the barriers to postsecondary persistence of men of color as related to housing to the Los Angeles Neighborhood Trust organization at the California Community Foundation Convening. Optimally, this work seeks to place young men of color as leaders in narrative change; their image will become one of hope, diligence, intelligence, competence, and care.

For additional information see Site Overview 4.

Cornerstone 5: Listening and responding to the voices and needs of male students of color

Across all the sites, postsecondary institution leaders recognized the need to learn from the perspectives of male students of color directly. These students shared many of the challenges that hindered their educational pathways. In some cases, their success hinges on whether the institutions can help meet non-academic needs (e.g., food or housing) by transforming post-secondary policies and practices, often in alignment with public sector systems (e.g., juvenile justice or foster care).

Site example: Detroit, MI

A collaborative of nine nonprofits in Detroit is seeking to analyze the unique barriers to post-secondary success faced by male students of color, premised on prioritization of the cultural identities of individual groups (African American, Latino, Native American, Arab and/or Muslim students, GBTQ students, immigrant students, first-generation college students, and system-involved students). Context matters, and it is diverse. The inclusion of English language learners, immigrant students, and those from a range of identities adds gravitas and perspective to the system and policy transition process. The collaborative's goal is to identify successful models for improving postsecondary success by honoring the voices of students, then analyzing and distilling core components which may be predictive of success. Currently, the collaborative is working closely with Wayne State University to develop a cross-system strategic framework that can strengthen completion rates for men of color in Detroit.

For additional information see Site Overview 2.

Cornerstone 6: Acknowledging and celebrating the diversity among male students of color

The participating postsecondary institutions serve a diverse student population. Unlike the "traditional" notions of college students, these institutions recognize that male students of color vary by many identity-based traits (e.g., non-traditional age, former incarceration status, ethnicity, and sexual orientation) which require institutions to change their policies and programs to meet diverse educational and social needs. One size does not fit all.

Site example: Oakland, CA

The United States incarcerates over two million people – mostly men – in federal, state, and local jails and prisons. When we take into account those who are on probation or parole, the number of people under some form of justice system supervision rises to a staggering 7.1 million. In response to this reality, the Oakland, CA site developed a program to help formerly incarcerated men of color to successfully transition to postsecondary education with an emphasis on removing the stigma of their past. While many local organizations and postsecondary schools are increasing available supports for previously incarcerated men of color, further progress will also depend upon removing system-determined barriers and intentionally moving policy toward a commitment to rehabilitation.

For additional information see Site Overview 6.

Sidebar: Supporting Formerly Incarcerated Students

Support for dismantling the policies and practices that have made the U.S. a world leader in incarceration rates is growing across a wide range of constituents, from residents of communities of color to fiscally responsible policymakers on the left and right. Such dismantling would have enormous implications for men of color who are highly overrepresented in state and federal prisons. Although they represent only 12 and 23 percent of the U.S. adult population, African Americans and Latinos represent 33 percent and 23 percent, respectively, of people serving more than one year in state and federal prisons. Most (93 percent) are men. Many of them entered prison before having a chance to meaningfully advance their education. On average, 36 percent of people in state prisons did not complete a high school education, compared to 19 percent of all adults. Only 14 percent of people in state prisons have at least some postsecondary education, compared to 51 percent of adults overall. At one time, many states offered skills training and educational programming, including college coursework, to incarcerated people. However, after changes to federal higher education law in the mid-1990s, correctional postsecondary education dramatically declined.

Most people who are incarcerated will one day be released from prisons and jails and return to their communities; some 700,000 returning citizens are released each year. People returning from incarceration face several challenges to advancing through postsecondary education. First, many college applications include questions about an applicant's conviction and arrest history and require substantial additional information from those who respond affirmatively. Some returning citizens fail to complete the application process because of the stigma attached to involvement in the justice system. Second, those who do benefit from the few remaining educational options in correctional settings have no guarantee that they may transfer credits earned to accredited postsecondary institutions on the outside. Since many formerly incarcerated people are non-traditional students, these credit-transfer problems represent almost unsurmountable threats to persistence and completion. Even when they can transfer credits, they may still be unable to access required courses for their major fields of study. This so-called "bridging problem" occurs because colleges give course enrollment priority to students who fulfilled prerequisites at the same institution.

These challenges to postsecondary persistence and completion became acute in California when the State Assembly passed Assembly Bill 109 (AB 109) in 2011. As a result of this legislation, many people convicted of low-level, non-violent crimes were no longer sentenced to state prisons; instead, they were assigned to county jails or noncustodial mandatory supervision arrangements, including furlough, work release, community service, restorative justice, and substance abuse treatment programs. These sentencing options radically increased the number of justice-involved men living in the community and applying for public colleges and universities in California, which is home to one of the largest open-access public college systems in the country. Meeting these challenges became the focus of work led by the Urban Strategies Council in Oakland, California.

Recommendations

For postsecondary institutions to create policies, programs, and practices that are more "male students of color ready," they must undertake system and policy changes that ease college transition for students facing various life circumstances, reform and prioritize effective out-reach about financial aid and degree completion, and improve the campus climate to increase students' sense of belonging in and out of the classroom. The insights below were gleaned from existing research and from the nonprofit organizations, coalitions, public sector partners, and postsecondary institutions involved in this demonstration project. Although some of these recommendations represent ideas still in development, each has potential to guide the development of institutional systems and policies that will help men of color successfully complete college credentials or degrees.

Improve Transitions to College for Men of Color

The transition for men of color into a postsecondary institution is a critical period that requires institutions to invest in improving how these students navigate their first academic year. Many of these students find themselves entering college at different points—for example, some just after completing high school, some with a decade or more of work experience after high school, and others after periods of incarceration. These diverse initial starting points under-score the importance of attention to successful transition, the predictors of which vary for every student. Toward that goal, postsecondary institutions must leverage their resources col-lectively with local nonprofits, institutional offices, and other stakeholders to develop specific first-year experiences for male students of color. For example, an extended orientation during the first term, faculty of color and student of color mentoring programs, and participation in academic support services can all provide the critical supports that help many male students of color successfully transition to college.
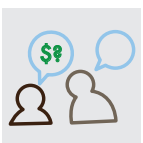
Improve How Institutions Help Men of Color Finance College

Postsecondary institutions must support men of color in applying for financial aid. Additionally, they must provide workshops to help these students balance financial responsibilities with school and family obligations throughout their postsecondary education. Moreover, institutions must provide clear and transparent financial information that explains the true costs of college attendance. For example, institutions should offer information that explains tuition, institutional fees, course materials, living expenses, and anticipated increases over time. Clarity is essen-tial for students to understand what is covered by various scholarships and what costs they themselves must bear. Together, these details provide a clear and transparent financial picture. It is imperative that institutions also provide financial literacy workshops to help students suc-cessfully finance their higher education. Finally, it is crucial that institutions help these students complete their degrees to ensure that they can earn salaries commensurate with their educa-tions and repay their college-related loans.

Toward these goals, institutions must develop proactive educational outreach efforts that educate and empower these students to fully understand the financial implications and offer information about the resources available to them. Moreover, postsecondary institutions can also help reduce student loan default rates by providing guidance to students in their choice of college coursework, simplifying financial aid application processes, and creating incentives for students to persist in and complete higher education in a timely manner.

Change Requirements and Limit the Burdens of Developmental Education Courses

Redefining the critical role of developmental education courses is a critical institutional policy decision-point. These types of courses can often reduce persistence and completion rates among male students of color. Developmental education courses are costly for many male students of color because they are often required to enroll and complete these non-credit bearing courses before enrolling in credit-bearing degree course requirements. Colleges must reform developmental education policies by revising sequencing requirements to allow students enrolled in developmental education to complete such courses while they are enrolled in college credit courses or creating other strategies so that these students spend less time (and money) on coursework for which they receive no credit toward graduation requirements.
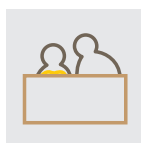
Provide Critical Academic Support Services

Postsecondary institutions must help male students of color obtain academic advising, academic support services (e.g. tutoring), and peer mentoring to ensure they have adequate institutional support. Postsecondary institutions must also provide proactive (i.e. intrusive), intentional, *required* academic advising services so that male students of color better understand course prerequisites and sequences, timelines, and milestones toward degree completion. Beyond providing timely academic advising, institutions must also implement flexible course scheduling and additional weekend and evening course options to accommodate the needs of non-traditional-aged men of color who are working their way through college. Toward this goal, institutions should develop early-warning systems that effectively track student progress in specific courses, registration status for the following semester, and overall pathways to graduation for male students of color.

In addition to proactive academic advising, institutions must connect academic support tutoring offices with academic departments, especially those with math and English development courses. These partnerships provide male students of color an opportunity to directly access services via their academic courses. In addition, access to male peer mentors could help students feel safe seeking academic assistance and reduce the stigma associated with asking for it.

Enhance the Cultural Competency of Faculty and Staff

Postsecondary institutions must actively work to eliminate racism, homophobia, and other factors that create a negative climate for male students of color. They must also require training and support for faculty members and professional staff, who often lack the cultural fluency or humility to understand the lived experiences of men of color. In addition, professional development workshops should encourage these stakeholders to address implicit and explicit micro-aggressive behaviors that can create negative educational experiences for male students of color. Faculty members must incorporate equity concepts and models into the curriculum across all academic areas, and staff must create opportunities for male students of color to actively engage in the classroom and beyond.

Hire More Men of Color for Faculty and Professional Staff Positions

Beyond improving the cultural competency of faculty and professional staff, institutions must also hire more men of color in faculty and professional staff positions. Simply put, first impressions matter. This diversity demonstrates that the institution is committed to a broad diversity of perspectives and that it sees value in inclusion. Institutions must recruit, hire, and retain a racially/ethnically diverse faculty and staff who reflect the cultural, racial, ethnic, and linguistic diversity of the student body. Such representation is a critical element to helping male students of color find faculty and professional staff who look like them and who are invested in improving their educational experiences, persistence, and degree completion.

Create and Actively Support Affinity Groups for Men of Color

Finally, many postsecondary institutions support the creative use of student affinity groups to foster a sense of inclusion for students of color—sometimes specifically for male students of color. Such peer influences can take the form of mentoring programs operated by and for male students of color, student clubs, organizations, housing, and male academic peer coaches. In addition to hiring individuals who look like and speak the native languages of men of color from diverse backgrounds (e.g., Latino, West African, East African, Native American, and Arab and/or Muslim students), institutions must also create access to information and spaces (e.g., gyms, campus offices, student houses) that help male students of color address their personal and emotional wellbeing in safe, affirming spaces.

Conclusion

Advancing systems and policy change in postsecondary education for men of color is both complex and challenging; it requires multiple stakeholders who have developed a shared understanding and commitment to improving how postsecondary institutions work, whether within their own structures, in partnership with other institutions, or directly with male students of color. Together, the stakeholders in this demonstration project exemplify how community and educational leaders can collaboratively strive to improve public policy and systems that can drive positive postsecondary experiences and outcomes for men of color. These leaders saw men of color as essential to the nation's future social and economic wellbeing and were invested in their success. This foundational belief allowed them to work together in innovative ways and enabled the leaders of postsecondary institutions to become more introspective and self-critical about how their institutions often fail to address these critical issues. They recognized that improving educational experiences and outcomes for male students of color requires more than a series of special programs that help them perform under existing institutional paradigms. Instead, institutions must develop new policies, systems, and approaches that intentionally build and align structures that are inclusive, evidence-informed, asset-based, and culturally fluent. This is a difficult but necessary commitment for leaders that entails a combination of inspiration, creativity, engagement, and political will to guide collaborative efforts.

Institutional transformation requires trust, time, intention, teamwork, communication and persistence. But there is still potential for stronger collaboration and successful results in each of the six demonstration sites. We invite postsecondary leaders and stakeholders in other cities to join us in this journey by embracing and implementing the cornerstones and specific recommendations outlined in this report. Together, institutions of higher education and cross-sector partners can transform policy and systems, change narratives, and set new standards of postsecondary success for men of color.

Appendices

Appendix 1: Unemployment Rates and Earnings by Educational Attainment

Unemployment rates and earnings by educational attainment, 2018

Unemployment rate (%)

Education	Rate
Doctoral degree	1.6
Professional degree	1.5
Master's degree	2.1
Bachelor's degree	2.2
Associate's degree	2.8
Some college, no degree	3.7
High school diploma	4.1
Less than a high school diploma	5.6

Total: 3.2%

Median usual weekly earnings ($)

Education	Earnings
Doctoral degree	1,825
Professional degree	1,884
Master's degree	1,434
Bachelor's degree	1,198
Associate's degree	862
Some college, no degree	802
High school diploma	730
Less than a high school diploma	553

All workers: $932

Note: Data are for persons age 25 and over. Earnings are full-time wage and salary workers. Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Current Population Survey.

Appendix 2: Degree Attainment Rates for Men by Race and Ethnic Group

Degree Attainment Rates by Race and Ethnic Group
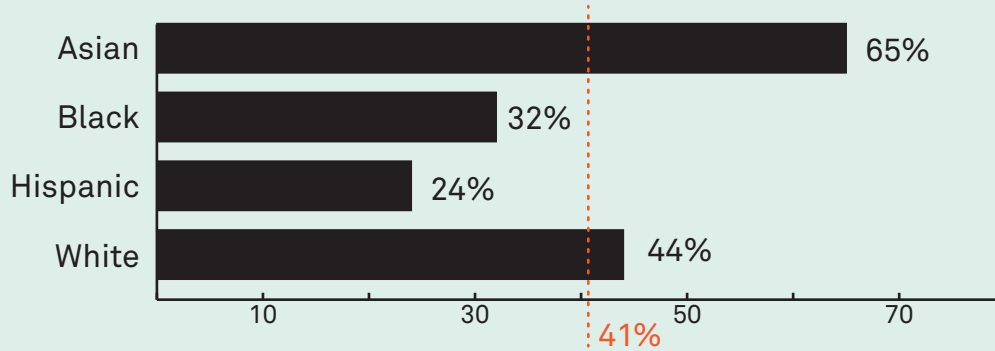
Data showed that 41 percent of all males over the age of 25 have earned a college credential or degree. But there are disparities along racial and ethnic lines, with Black and Hispanic men having the lowest percentages of attainment.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Survey, 2018 Annual Social and Economic Supplement. Retrieved May 2019 from https://www.census.gov/data/tables/2018/demo/education-attainment/cps-detailed-tables.html

Appendix 3: Profiles of the Six Demonstration Sites

Site Overview 1: Buffalo, NY

Site Overview 2: Detroit, MI

Site Overview 3: Little Rock, AR

Site Overview 4: Los Angeles, CA

Site Overview 5: Newark, NJ

Site Overview 6: Oakland, CA

Postsecondary Success for Boys and Men of Color in Buffalo, NY

In 2013, Say Yes Buffalo launched its promise scholarship program, making postsecondary tuition scholarships available to all qualified graduates of Buffalo's Public Schools. In the years that have followed, the partnership has deepened and expanded to facilitate comprehensive supports for students in the K-12 public schools and their families to remove barriers impacting student success.

The growth and increased outcomes as a result of this work for Buffalo students are promising; however, there was an understanding that there needed to be a more focused approach to improving the outcomes for boys and young men of color. Toward that end, Say Yes partnered with three local postsecondary institutions in this demonstration project to increase matriculation, persistence, and completion for male students of color (e.g. African-American, Latino, and American Indian male students). The three educational partners are SUNY Buffalo State College (a four-year public college), SUNY Erie (a community college) and Medaille College (a four-year private institution).

The institutions recognized that this demonstration project allowed them to examine how their institutional policies, programs, and practices address the unique educational needs of male students of color.

How We Arrived Here

There are approximately 31,000 students in Buffalo's Public School System. Of these students, about 36% or just over 11,000 are young men who identify as American Indian, African-American, Hispanic, Latino or multi-racial. Since the launch of Say Yes Buffalo there has been a significant increase in the number of these young men who graduate high school – so much so that the disparity in graduation rates between these students and their white counterparts has shrunk significantly. However, challenges still exist preventing these students from successfully matriculating to, persisting and completing a postsecondary degree program.

Specific challenges this demonstration project looked at included strengthening transfer articulation policies that may have made it difficult for students to transfer between two- and four-year institutions and the true costs of postsecondary education beyond tuition e.g., books, transportation, administrative fees, room and board, which are often high and unanticipated. These institutions are committed to understanding and addressing the adverse effects of these types of barriers on persistence and completion of male students of color.

Toward that goal, the Buffalo demonstration project focused on defining the terms of collaboration between the educational institutions and the nonprofit organization in the interest of improved outcomes. The institutions recognized the importance of shaping how they commit resources and institutional information to address systems and policy changes. Specifically, Say Yes Buffalo developed a draft collaborative document that could serve as an inter-institutional agreement to clarify and advance their collective efforts. When completed, the Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) between each of the institutions will provide a tangible and public commitment to the educational experiences of male students of color from enrollment to college completion.

One anticipated element of the MOA will be a commitment to collect disaggregated institutional data to shed light on the unique educational issues that male students of color face across these institutions. This type of data provides a deeper understanding of postsecondary persistence and potential barriers (e.g. gateway courses, developmental education courses) that confront male students of color. More importantly, such data will provide a better understanding of the promising pathways and practices already in place that can be replicated across the institutions to improve outcomes for male students of color.

Findings

While still in a nascent stage, this demonstration project served an important role in laying the groundwork for new partnerships. Intensive technical assistance during the demonstration project provided insights and tools that facilitated dialogue between Say Yes Buffalo and the local post-secondary institutions focused on strengthening outcomes for males of color. This dialogue also helped the partnership solicit additional external funds from other private foundations including the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation which announced a $2.9 million investment in July 2019 to support efforts specifically aimed at increasing matriculation, persistence and completion rates for students of color. This community is engaged in a process to effectively work together to more clearly understand, outline, and address issues related to a historically marginalized student group. Working in concert with the other sites in the demonstration project also provided the Buffalo site with important insights about institutional responsibility to focus on the unique needs of men of color.

Partners

- Say Yes Buffalo
- SUNY Buffalo State College
- SUNY Erie Community College
- Medaille College

Postsecondary Success for Boys and Men of Color in Detroit

The Detroit Hispanic Development Corporation (DHDC), a leading youth-serving organization in its region for over 20 years, coordinated the metropolitan area initiative in collaboration with nine area nonprofits. Each of the participating social justice nonprofits is deeply knowledgeable about the unique attributes of men of color, the dynamics of culture, identity, narrative change, and the imperative of postsecondary completion. The Detroit project identified the barriers male students of color face to postsecondary success and highlighted specific assets and barriers of individual sub-groups (African American, Latino, Native American, Arab and/or Muslim, GBTQ, immigrant, first-generation college students); identified promising strategies and successful models for improving postsecondary success locally or nationally; and worked with local postsecondary institutions, policymakers, and philanthropic institutions to develop a cross-system strategic framework that would strengthen persistence and completion rates for male students of color in Detroit.

How We Arrived Here

A range of complex, braided factors are behind the college completion rate gap; most are systemic in nature. Context matters and data builds a culture of evidence highlighting promising entry points. To obtain qualitative data, conveners held a series of focus groups with several of the culturally based organizations, inviting authenticity. Quantitative data reveal significant disparities in a) progression through college and graduation; b) enrollment in remedial/developmental education courses; and c) outcomes of Detroit Public school graduates. Lack of preparedness for the academics and culture of postsecondary education reflects a history of inadequate school funding, resources, and low expectations for men from historically marginalized urban communities.

An analysis that centers these systemic factors is imperative not only for improving the life outcomes of male students of color but more generally for improving the economic and social vitality of the city of Detroit and the region of Southeast Michigan by empowering and expanding a more highly skilled workforce.

Institutional support for this work was provided by the Detroit Regional Chamber of Commerce, the Damon J. Keith Center for Civil Rights, and Wayne State University Law School, with data analysts from Data Driven Detroit. The postsecondary anchor partner was Wayne State University, and logistical and political support was provided by the Skillman Foundation.

Results and Implications

Mentors and nonprofits must be acknowledged for their pivotal roles in supporting these men on their journey. Men of color report feeling excluded at times and to varying degrees, often based on race and demographic characteristics. Postsecondary schools were often not prepared for these students to be successful. Acknowledging student voices and valuing authentic perspective is foundational to system improvement. Students are looking to bring their whole selves to school. Therefore, proactive support for the academic, career, personal, social, and financial concerns of male students of color is necessary. These types of supports are also vital components of many initiatives across the country that have proven effective in improving postsecondary outcomes for male students of color. To that end, we offer the following recommendations:

Recommendations

- Implement a mandatory college introduction course.
- Expand university outreach programs, including transition to college, application, financial aid, etc.
- Run summer developmental (remedial) course-work at no cost to students.
- Adopt small learning communities: individualized instruction, study groups, study buddies, etc.
- Offer early assignments and feedback within first two weeks of all classes so that students can understand expectations.
- Ensure greater POC representation in faculty, administration, and staff.
- Require cultural relevance skill development for faculty, staff, and students.
- Create mentorship programs for students of color.
- Integrate community organizations into student services.
- Develop special schedules, office hours, and consideration for working students.
- Provide greater financial aid support for male students of color.
- Incorporate dedicated legal support for systems-involved students.
- Promote inclusion of this coalition in senior civic dialogues across Southeastern Michigan.

Coalition

- American Indian Health and Family Services Arab Community Center for Economic and Social Services (ACCESS)
- Black Family Development (BFDI)
- Detroit Justice Center (DJC)
- D-LIVE (Detroit Life Is Valuable Everyday)
- Ruth Ellis Center
- Neighborhood Service Organization (NSO)
- Midnight Golf

Postsecondary Success for Boys and Men of Color in Little Rock, AR

Even as postsecondary enrollment in Arkansas increased by 34 percent between 2012 and 2017, men of color only represent a small percentage of the State's higher education student population. In response to this pressing issue, seven postsecondary institutions of varied sizes and resources created a consortium called the Boys and Men Opportunity Success Team (BMOST) to share insights and develop strategies to increase postsecondary enrollment and completion rates of male students of color. In partnership with the Arkansas Department of Higher Education, these institutions are focused on taking political action to increase the postsecondary success of men of color in the Central Arkansas region.

How We Arrived Here

BMOST Postsecondary Policy Forum partners have examined disaggregated data on key educational outcomes in the hopes of understanding the educational experiences of this marginalized student group. For example, several of the institutions made a commitment to collect and analyze key educational metrics for male students of color (e.g. first semester retention rates, most successful degree programs, highest and lowest degree-program retention rates, and academic-program specific dropout rates by term and year). In addition, these institutions coordinated with the Arkansas Department of Higher Education to collect state-level data to understand how the Little Rock region compares to regions in the state.

Next, these institutions recognized that they needed to reframe the narrative about male students of color. The institutions focused on reframing how faculty members, administrators, and staff discussed the educational needs of men of color. That is, they recognized that they needed to understand how they could better meet the needs of these students through revised institutional policies, programs, and practices.

Takeaways

The institutions identified the importance of cross-postsecondary collaboration to create sustained systems and policy changes. Based on the commitment of the charter partners to participate and their desire to expand the initiative statewide, BMOST and the Urban League of Arkansas may convene other postsecondary institutions, nonprofit organizations, and state and municipal agencies to pursue similar work. The goal would be to build capacity and resources to realize the consortium's shared vision: empowering boys and men of color to succeed in school and careers and strengthen the Central Arkansas education community.

Findings for Coordinated Action

- Develop and implement core courses that are culturally relevant and responsive to male students of color.
- Provide more direct support for students to complete basic courses and avoid mandatory remedial coursework.
- Increase the number of male postsecondary professionals of color who are accessible and relatable to the student body to generate a greater sense of belonging.
- Create and maintain mentorship networks that further promote a sense of belonging.
- Increase leadership and personal development opportunities for male students of color in areas beyond major- and minor-related coursework.
- Formalize networks of support to offer mentorship and tutoring.
- Reframe recruitment for math, science, technology, and engineering courses and majors to emphasize that male students of color belong in these academic fields.
- Offer early on-campus programs for first-generation, first-year students to supply relatable mentors who can help students build peer groups and complete necessary remedial coursework to ease difficulties during the first semester.
- Create spaces on campus for conversations about maintaining and improving physical and mental health.

Partners

- The University of Arkansas at Pine Bluff
- The University of Arkansas
- Pulaski Technical College
- Shorter College
- Hendrix College
- Arkansas Baptist College
- The University of Arkansas at Little Rock
- Philander Smith College
- Arkansas Department of Higher Education
- Urban League of Arkansas

Postsecondary Success Project Los Angeles: Social Justice Learning Institute

In Los Angeles, California, the Social Justice Learning Institute (SJLI) conducts participatory action research with marginalized populations to understand and reverse the social forces that produce the inequities they face. Among institutions of higher education, the negative narratives and systemic confluence of race, ethnicity, poverty, and gender support complacency about low rates of postsecondary persistence and completion among male students of color. SJLI's programs work to improve the everyday material conditions of communities of color while empowering them to effect long-term systemic change. The organizational theory of change encompasses three levels of impact: (1) empowering individuals through education; (2) creating thriving communities; and (3) changing systems.

How We Arrived Here

SJLI firmly believes that the work must be driven by those directly affected by the issues; thus, SJLI depends on direct participation to engage and inform youth in research projects related to their neighborhoods and life circumstances.

Specific components of this youth development framework include identification of systemic barriers between men of color and postsecondary success; convening focus groups with men of color and local nonprofit service providers; strengthening networks; and fostering collaborations among educational institutions, community-based institutions, and foundations. The youth of color produced, presented, and facilitated dialogues with stakeholders on policy and systems change recommendations. Ultimately, this project will increase the capacity of SJLI and of the Southern California College Access Network (a group of more than 60 nonprofits and educators focused on the transition to and completion of college) in their postsecondary work.

Additionally, the youth-led research component of the project created opportunities for SJLI's alumni researchers to interview college-aged men of color who are currently enrolled to inform system change and advocacy efforts. Once all data are collected and analyzed, policy and system change recommendations will be compiled in a report which will be presented at a College Persistence and Success Research and Action convening in late November or early December of 2019.

Takeaways for SJLI

- Continue reciprocal dialogues with more than 60 nonprofit partners and more than 15 postsecondary schools to deepen understanding of the unique strengths and perspectives of men of color. This will enable institutions to better prepare to welcome promising groups of students.

- Expand qualitative and quantitative data collection to bolster the robust culture of evidence that braids the perspectives of students, faculty, staff, public systems, and community-based nonprofit partners.

- Conduct ongoing analysis of research findings, interview outcomes, and focus group responses to build a continuous cycle of learning.

- Strengthen the SJLI Alumni Council, which provides a supportive structure throughout the application and transition periods and postsecondary years for young male high school graduates of color to enhance their critical thinking and research skills and civic engagement acumen.

System and Policy Recommendations

- Provide greater financial aid, supports, and financial education for men of color.

- Enhance college academic support services and college registration process.

- Provide clarity on graduation and major trajectories, timelines, and requirements.

- Deepen students' sense of belonging and affirm ethnic, racial, income, language, and family backgrounds.

- Develop aligned affirming spaces.

- Ensure greater representation of people of color in faculty, administration, and staff.

- Offer cultural relevance skill development for faculty, staff, and students.

- Implement flexible scheduling as well as many more weekend and evening classes.

- Build intentional bridges with foster care and juvenile justice systems to ease transition and provide additional supports, including much more robust affordable housing options for these students.

Partners

- Southern California College Access Network (More than 60 nonprofit leaders)
- More than 15 postsecondary California Institutions

Postsecondary Success for Boys and Men of Color in Newark

In recognition that many residents lack the degrees and credentials to participate in Newark's growing economy, leaders across New Jersey's largest city established a goal to raise the postsecondary attainment rate from 17 percent to 25 percent by the year 2025. This collective effort is facilitated through the Newark City of Learning Collaborative (NCLC), a city-wide initiative working to increase overall college enrollment, persistence, and completion rates by drawing on the expertise of organizational partners in a range of sectors: nonprofit, corporate, philanthropic, municipal government, K-12 education, and higher education. Building on the city's recent gains (Newark's postsecondary attainment rate now stands at 21 percent), NCLC and two leading partners—Essex County College (ECC) and My Brother's Keeper Newark—have embarked upon a targeted approach to improve persistence and completion outcomes for males of color enrolled at ECC.

Examining Systemic Challenges and Opportunities at ECC

With support from the Executives' Alliance for Boys and Men of Color, ECC conducted an extensive data analysis to assess the academic experiences of male students of color, including retention rates, attrition rates by academic area, degree completion, and transfer rates. Findings show that African Americans and Hispanic male students had the lowest retention rates compared to all students enrolled at the college. Yet males of color who persisted had among the highest transfer rates to four-year colleges across the five-year period examined. The data review was supplemented by student and faculty discussion groups that explored barriers to student success and opportunities for institutional responses to challenges facing African American and Latino males.

Takeaways

Discussion group participants identified several strategies that ECC can adopt to improve outcomes:

- Re-examine course sequencing to enable students to postpone courses with high levels of difficulty until the second semester.
- Improve customer service and cultural fluency training for front-line staff members and faculty.
- Enhance student supports to help students build critical skills (e.g., study habits, time management, writing and critical thinking, effective note taking), which students believe are critical to their success.
- Assure the support of a caring person for all students, including college faculty and/or staff and peer mentors.
- Improve academic advising by offering clear guidance, support, and information to help students navigate the academic experience.
- Promote the availability of tutoring, study-skills workshops, mental health services, and other resources that would benefit African American and Latino males.
- Coordinate methods to keep track of students, know when or whether they are registered for the next semester, and identify— and intervene— when their academic standing is in jeopardy.

Partners

- Essex County College
- Newark City of Learning Collaborative
- My Brother's Keeper Newark

Postsecondary Success for Boys and Men of Color in Oakland

California has significantly reduced its number of incarcerated people and has become a national leader in the development of support programs on several public college campuses to help formerly incarcerated students continue higher education after release. In response, eight public community colleges and two public four-year universities have joined with community partners to form the East Bay Consortium of Support Programs for Formerly Incarcerated College Students. The Consortium hopes to:

1. Promote closer networking and cooperation among emerging campus-based support programs and assure their growth and sustainability.
2. Build capacity to create systems change.

To inform the Consortium members' efforts, Urban Strategies Council, a seasoned regional advocacy and research organization in Oakland, CA, conducted a survey and series of focus groups with formerly incarcerated male students of color at three two-year public colleges in the East Bay Area. Findings revealed barriers and supports that impact student experiences inside jail and prison and on college campuses.

Takeaways

- Move from a punitive to a rehabilitative culture. The dearth of consistent policies, programming, and supports within the criminal justice system presents formidable barriers to educational progress for formerly incarcerated students.
- Offer support, encouragement, accurate information, and access to resources for those who wish to pursue postsecondary schooling while incarcerated.
- Initiate more accessible college-level course offerings on the inside and better pre-release planning and support for those wishing to continue postsecondary education on the outside.
- Strengthen coordination between the criminal justice system and postsecondary institutions to facilitate the transfer of college and vocational education credits between correctional and educational systems.
- Facilitate the translation of technical work experience acquired during incarceration into career and technical education credits after release.
- Facilitate access to a range of supportive services that include finding and maintaining employment while attending classes; health, counseling, mental health, and substance recovery services; and affordable housing.
- Prioritize registration in high-demand courses for students who have challenges with the registration process.

Strengths of Postsecondary Support Programs: Promising Models for Returning Males of Color

1. Safe and welcoming spaces on college campuses where formerly incarcerated students can build community and establish a sense of belonging.

2. Student supports for navigating enrollment, registration, financial aid, and course selection.

3. Student services in remedial tutoring, disability services and general troubleshooting.

4. Leadership development among formerly incarcerated students and opportunities for these students to practice leadership skills.

Next Steps

To address concerns and increase the number of effective support programs, the Consortium is identifying technical assistance tools to promote best practices among campus support programs; replicate such programs on other college campuses; conduct further research; and promote system change regarding formerly incarcerated students. Immediate next steps include:

1. Seeking funds to sustain the Consortium and capacity-building efforts to formalize its governance structure.

2. Improving links between East Bay Area colleges and postsecondary courses at San Quentin and Solano State Prisons so that students can more seamlessly transition from these prisons into local colleges and universities.

3. Building relationships with sheriffs who operate local jails and with the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation.

4. Developing a Career Technical Education/ Associates degree curriculum at one of the Consortium's participating campuses.

Partners

- **Campus-based Support Programs:** Merritt College, Chabot College, Laney College, College of Alameda, UC Berkeley, California State University, East Bay, San Francisco State University
- **Participating Colleges with programs in formation or under consideration:** Contra Costa College, Diablo Valley College, Los Medaños College, Solano Community College
- **Community Partners:** Urban Strategies Council, Five Keys Schools and The Opportunity Institute, EASTBAY Works, Health Right 360
- **Public Sector:** Alameda County Office of Education, Alameda County Public Defender's Office, Alameda County Probation Department, Contra Costa County Adult Education Consortium

Appendix 4: Resources

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