Improving Admissions Process and Recruitment and Retention

CSULB yield rates have steadily declined in recent years. Low yield rates force us to make more offers of admission. It is harder to predict who will enroll, making it more difficult to construct a cohort that matches institutional capacity in the distribution among majors and colleges. Data[1] below demonstrates the drop in yield rates in the past five years among both first-time freshmen and transfer admitted students. Furthermore, CSULB is committed to local access; however, certain groups are under-represented in our student body compared to the surrounding community, particularly African Americans.

Cohort	Total Enrolled	Yield rate
Fall 17	4,138	23.44%
Fall 18	4,912	22.61%
Fall 19	5,161	18.42%
Fall 20	4,908	17.28%
Fall 21	4,865	15.47%

Enrolled and Yield data for Freshmen

Cohort	Total Enrolled	Yield rate
Fall 17	3,759	41.04%
Fall 18	4,214	37.87%
Fall 19	4,816	36.49%
Fall 20	5,093	36.81%
Fall 21	4,461	34.37%

Enrolled and Yield data for Transfer

While many programs exist across CSULB, they are operating separately and may not have knowledge of what other efforts are being done across campus. Taking an audit of this work to then institutionalize them at CSULB would prove more effective through a unified, CSULB-wide effort to address the above challenges. CSULB needs to have a collective effort as a campus to work collaboratively towards improving the admission process and to recruiting and retaining African American/Black students. A collaborative, institutionalized effort will prove more powerful and effective than smaller, less consistent efforts.

The Advisory Council in Strategic Enrollment Management (ACSEM) in the academic year of 2021-2022, considered two questions: a) How can we improve the admissions process to meet future needs? and b) How can we improve the recruitment and retention of African American/Black students at CSULB?

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[1] Source: https://data.ir.csulb.edu/t/IRA-Public/views/UndergraduateStudents/AppliedAdmittedandEnrolledTrends?%3Aiid=1&%3AisGuestRedirectFromVizportal=y&%3Aembed=y

To improve the admissions process to meet future needs, ACSEM recommends CSULB leadership allocate resources to hold a major event for admitted students, adopt a CRM system for more effective and efficient communication to attract prospective students, and establish a committee to oversee university communications and branding.

To improve recruitment and retention of African American students, ACSEM recommends peer mentoring and advising, freshman programs, and community outreach to develop a sense of belonging for African American students. Furthermore, ACSEM recommends assessing differential impact of financial aid across ethnicities and institutionalizing retention initiatives to remove barriers to African American student success.

Proposed strategies are outlined below and provided in detail in the linked appendix.

How can we improve the admissions process to meet future needs?

1. Hold an Admitted Students Day
2. Adopt a CRM system for communication with prospective students
3. Creation of a committee to oversee university communications and branding

How can we improve the recruitment and retention of African American/Black Students at CSULB?

1. Increase peer mentoring and advising for Black students, as well as unifying and utilizing current mentoring programs and initiatives across campus.
2. Increase community outreach efforts within the local Long Beach area that focus on Black students, families, and community organizations.
3. Focus on financial aid for Black students, including University debt forgiveness, examining the impact of financial aid packages and gap-in-aid on student retention by race/ethnicity.
4. Develop and implement freshman programs focusing on Black students' sense of belonging, racial pride/affirmation, and networking and academic skills.
5. Review current retention efforts across colleges and departments to then institutionalize all initiatives and remove any barriers that prevent African American/Black student success.

Recommendations on improving admissions processes

A subcommittee of ACSEM was tasked with answering the question "How can we improve admission process to meet future needs?" We identified two key future needs. The first is to increase CSULB's yield rate, i.e. the percentage of accepted students who actually enroll. Our yields have steadily declined in recent years. Low yield rates force us to make more offers of admission. It is harder to predict who will enroll, making it more difficult to construct a cohort that matches institutional capacity in the distribution among majors and colleges.

The second need is to increase applications and yields specifically from groups who are under-represented in our student body compared to the surrounding community, particularly African Americans.

After discussion and research, we have three recommendations.

Recommendation 1: Hold an Admitted Students Day

CSULB is one of few local universities not to hold a major event for admitted students. We suspect that this is one reason CSULB's yield is decreasing. CSULB previously had an event for admitted students, but this was discontinued about a decade ago.

During an Admitted Students event, prospective students could learn about a variety of campus resources, including support for first gen, URM, LGBTQ+, and other student groups. After a welcome event in the Pyramid, students could explore the campus and visit units such as Housing, EOP, colleges, and departments. This would create a framework within which college and departments could offer their own welcome activities. We believe that this would increase yields among admitted students.

Action Item: We recommend that University Outreach and School Relations create a committee to organize an annual Admitted Students Day, ideally beginning in April 2023. This committee should include representatives from ASI, Admissions, colleges and other constituents. We ask that this committee report back to the Senate.

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Recommendation 2: Adopt a CRM system for communication with prospective students.

Client Relationship Management (CRM) systems are powerful tools for managing and tracking communication. They can compile data on communication with potential students via multiple channels, including email, websites, telephone, live events, and social media. For example, we could know when a prospective student last received a CSULB e-mail, whether they opened it, which pages they visited or videos they watched, etc. The CRM can also be linked to databases

that store other information, such as application completion status and demographic data. A CRM system has already been proven as effective in International admissions.

A CRM would allow us to:

- target communications with more granularity, to specific demographics or interest groups among prospective students.
- avoid overwhelming prospective students with uncoordinated communications from different campus units.
- assess the effectiveness of different communications in creating engagement.
- better predict which admitted students are likely to come, based on level of engagement.

Action Item: We recommend that ITS adopt a CRM system for use in communications with prospective students. We request that ITS report back to the Senate with a timeline for implementation.

Recommendation 3: Creation of a committee to oversee university communications and branding

The existence of multiple acronyms and nicknames can be confusing, especially to non-local students, and hampers searchability. There are multiple dissimilar university logos in current use. A unified look and feel can make communications more effective.

Action Item: To improve the quality and consistency of communication with prospective students, we recommend that the Senate create a committee to oversee branding. This committee should include representatives from the faculty, students, University Relations and Development, athletics, and other constituents. We request that this committee report back to the Senate.

Recommendations on Improving Recruitment and Retention

A subcommittee of ACSEM was tasked with answering the question "How can we improve the recruitment and retention of African American/Black Students at CSULB?" We identified two key future needs. The first is to examine current programs and initiatives across different colleges and departments that are individually working to recruit and retain Black students. While many programs exist across CSULB, they are operating separately and without knowledge of what other efforts are being done across campus. Taking an audit of this work to then align and institutionalize them as needed at CSULB. This would prove more effective through a unified, CSULB-wide effort to recruit and retain African American/Black students. CSULB needs to have a collective effort as a campus to work collaboratively towards recruiting and retaining African American/Black students across all colleges and departments. A collaborative, institutionalized effort will prove more powerful and effective than smaller, less consistent efforts.

The second need is to improve campus climate for African American/Black students at CSULB. Efforts towards ensuring that African American/Black students at CSULB feel included on campus and not as tokenized or isolated as minoritized students of color. Part of this work includes making an effort to recognize, validate, and affirm African American/Black students' cultural backgrounds, history, and perspectives. To that effort, CSULB needs to institutionalize higher educational practices that include African American/Black voices and perspectives in any efforts to recruit and retain African American/Black students, both before the college experience begins and during their college experiences.

After discussion and research, we have <u>FIVE recommendations</u>.

<u>Recommendation 1</u>: **Increase peer mentoring and advising for Black students, as well as unifying and utilizing current mentoring programs and initiatives across campus.**

As part of Beach 2030, one of our Student Ready goals is to ensure that every student has a trained peer mentor. We recommend that each African American/Black student has a trained, junior/senior Black/BIPOC peer mentor that acts as role model, community, and guide for the CSULB/higher educational experience. *Peer mentoring can provide the necessary support beyond freshman programs and the first year to provide students with older mentors, create communities of support to make the college experience less overwhelming, and teach students to network.*

Race/Ethnicity will now be a category in EAB to do targeted campaigns to have equity-oriented strategy for advising. Data, while focused and only available to approved liaisons, we recommend that they establish targeted campaigns starting AY 2022-2023.

We recommend continuing the Advising Equity Roundtables and the investigation of administrative barriers to best serve students of color. Continuing to support these roundtables will be key. We encourage Anna Ortiz, PECC Co-Chair, to continue to support groups committed to equity to function and grow.

We recommend inviting all faculty advisors, when available, to these roundtables. Given their knowledge of student timelines, college/department requirements, curriculum, and academic policies, the perspectives of faculty advisors will prove beneficial towards understanding any administrative barriers.

We recommend that each college provide professional development time for at least one representative at the equity roundtables. To support the representatives at the equity roundtables, we also recommend funding to bring in specialists for effective trainings for the faculty and staff advisors.

Finally, we recommend that students from minoritized communities be included in the equity roundtables. If the needs of African American/Black students are going to be discussed, it is essential that their voices be present at the table to provide their perspectives and to center their experiences. Without including students in these discussions, we are not being truly inclusive.

Recommendation 2: Increase community outreach efforts within the local Long Beach area that focus on Black students, families, and community organizations.

In the upcoming year, we strongly recommend reconnecting with the AVP of University Access and Retention about enhancing and extending community outreach efforts to attract and retain African American/Black students. We recommend continuing efforts that are currently in practice to those ends given the positive effect they have on community building, social inclusion, and social mobility.

We also strongly recommend outreach creating a focused campaign to recruit within the African American/Black communities (i.e., High Schools, Community Organizations [e.g., churches, sports leagues], Community Colleges). This effort can increase applications and yields to better reflect the African American/Black community in Long Beach.

We recommend assigning peer mentors for African American/Black students at the point of admissions to increase yields.

We recommend colleges and programs connect with admitted African American/Black students via a campus visit to CSULB to increase yields.

To enhance retention, we recommend collaborating with departments to connect African American/Black students to discipline-specific communities and organizations (e.g., BPUSA, BRAGUSA, NABJ, NBMBAA, NOBCCHE) to build community for networking, inclusion and representation.

We recommend offering scholarships and other financial incentives to recruit and retain African American/Black students.

Lastly, we recommend research into outreach practices adopted by HBCUs and community colleges to learn from and model such practices.

Recommendation 3: Focus on financial aid for Black students, including University debt forgiveness, examining the impact of financial aid packages and gap-in-aid on student retention by race/ethnicity.

We recommend that the different data systems across campus share data so that financial aid can be used with other variable data (e.g., GPA, race), when looking at retention and graduation patterns. By sharing data from various student data systems (e.g., Financial Aid, Enrollment, Student Financials), CSULB can better understand the types and amounts of financial aid that students have available to them. This data should be disaggregated at the student level to explore whether there are impacts on retention and graduation related to types of financial aid and the gap between total aid and cost of attendance. In particular, providing a unified financial aid picture of CSULB students will also make visible any differences African American/Black students have in their financial aid from other racially/ethnically demographic student groups. Research in this area, across university datasets, can inform financial aid policy and outreach to admitted and enrolled students to reduce equity gaps and meet overall GI 2025 goals.

Recommendation 4: Develop and implement freshman programs focusing on Black student sense of belonging, racial pride/affirmation, networking, and academic skill-building.

African American/Black students thrive in learning environments that welcome and affirm their backgrounds and identities. Freshman programs aimed at specifically marginalized communities have been developed and implemented across the country with positive effects on recruitment

and retention (e.g., CSU San Bernardino, University of North Texas, Central Washington University, Northern Illinois University, UC San Diego, Cornell). To improve African American/Black students' sense of belonging, racial pride/affirmation, network building, and academic skill-building:

We recommend that CSULB create and implement an incoming student program aimed at African American/Black freshman and African American/Black transfer students with an ACTIVE recruitment effort taking place at CSULB's freshman orientation. Recruited students should then be invited to attend a SEPARATE African American/Black or BIPOC student orientation with African American/Black/BIPOC faculty, staff, and junior/senior students present to increase African American/Black/BIPOC community and a sense of belonging from day one.

We recommend a freshman program that includes peer mentoring (see Recommendation One).

We recommend a freshman program include a course that focuses on African American/Black history and culture to recognize and affirm African American/Black students' backgrounds, identities, culture, history, and perspectives. This course will help African American/Black students to leave CSULB with their cultural identities intact.

We also recommend building into the freshman program workshops or courses focused on academic skills and cultural knowledge needed to be successful at CSULB, which some students may lack coming into higher education.

Finally, we recommend a freshman program that connects students to African American/Black-identified CSULB alumni and faculty who are currently working across different fields and disciplines to help African American/Black students feel less isolated and gain the cultural capital needed to be successful at CSULB and the job market. We want to acknowledge the cultural taxation that faculty of color already do mentoring students of color and we do not want to add to their workload without proper compensation.

Recommendation 5: Review current retention efforts across colleges and departments to then institutionalize all initiatives and remove any barriers that prevent African American/Black student success.

We recommend more targeted advising campaigns for African American/Black students (see recommendation three).

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We recommend continuing efforts to re-enroll African American/Black students, including the GI2025 campaign focused on the 2019 cohort, college-based EAB campaigns, and campaigns to connect continuing students who have not registered for the following term.

We recommend collecting data (e.g., surveys) to identify reasons why African American/Black students do not re-enroll and to use those data to inform re-enrollment efforts.

We recommend the Associate Director of the Cultural Identity Center for African American/Black students assist with re-enrollment efforts that foster retention.

Lastly, we recommend identifying policy, financial, administrative, and curriculum barriers to African American/Black student success. For consideration, offer more exploratory or meta major courses at the lower division to ensure curricular pathways for successful degree completion.