



California
Community
Colleges

PRESS RELEASE

October 18, 2018

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California Community Colleges Holds First of Five Town Hall Meetings to Address Barriers and Challenges of Black and African-American Enrollment

Hundreds of students, parents, educators and community leaders joined in the conversation

SACRAMENTO, Calif. — The California Community Colleges held the first of five statewide town hall meetings this week at Holman United Methodist Church in Los Angeles to engage students, parents, educators and community leaders in discussions of the barriers and challenges that impact Black and African-American college enrollment.

College officials gathered to hear the first-hand experiences of students while enrolled in college and to learn about the support services needed to help them attain their educational goals. Approximately 150 students and members of the community attended.

“The town hall meetings will ultimately allow us, the California Community Colleges, to better serve our students,” said Chancellor Eloy Ortiz Oakley, who was a keynote speaker at this week’s event. “By listening to our students, we can identify where more resources to succeed are needed. We are committed to serving the top 100 percent of students, and believe higher education should be accessible to all.”

The Black and African-American Advisory Panel of the California Community Colleges, comprised of community leaders and influencers statewide from education, workforce development, business and faith community fields, will lead the town halls to identify obstacles and discuss sustainable solutions. The Advisory Panel supports Chancellor Oakley’s [Vision for Success](#), which encompasses social justice, economic mobility and workforce development, and focuses on full and open access to higher education for all.

“The challenge before us is to raise awareness among Blacks and African-Americans about the benefits of higher education and to create an atmosphere of encouragement for students who choose community college as their pathway to jobs and careers that can help ensure a middle-class income and upward social mobility,” said Gregory Irish, executive director, City of Los Angeles Workforce Development Board and Advisory Panel co-chair.

The town halls are divided into three segments: a general session, four breakout listening sessions where attendees share their personal experiences and perspectives and a closing session that includes a report from the listening sessions.

Speakers from this week’s town hall included Dr. Kaneesha Tarrant, vice president, student services, Los Angeles Trade Technical College; and Dr. George McKenna, Los Angeles Unified School District board member. Southern California community colleges were well-represented, with Dr. Kathryn E. Jeffery, president, Santa Monica College; Diana Z. Rodriguez, president, San Bernardino Valley College; and Dr. Linda D. Rose, president, Santa Ana College serving as co-facilitators in the four listening sessions.

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The Black and African-American Advisory Panel was created in fall 2017 as part of the California Community Colleges African-American outreach program. The statewide outreach program is designed to raise awareness among Black and African-American students, prospective students and their influencers with the goal of increasing their enrollment rates in community colleges as well as the graduation, completion and transfer rates.

The California Community Colleges is the largest system of higher education in the nation, composed of 73 districts and 115 colleges serving 2.1 million students per year. California community colleges provide career education and workforce training; guaranteed transfer to four-year universities; degree and certificate pathways; and basic skills education in English and math. As the state's engine for social and economic mobility, the California Community Colleges supports the [Vision for Success](#), a strategic plan designed to improve student success outcomes, increase transfer rates and eliminate achievement gaps. For more information, please visit the [California Community Colleges website](#) or follow us on [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#).

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