

California Black-Serving Institutions (BSI) Application

Institutional Profile

- **College/University:** Cerritos College
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- **College/University President:** Dr. Jose Fierro
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Application Lead Contact Information

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State your institution's commitment to address Black and/or African American student success and explain how your commitment is consistent with your institution's mission.

Cerritos College is deeply committed to advancing the success of Black and African American students, a priority that aligns with our mission to serve the community through inclusive, high-quality, and equitable learning opportunities. Guided by a strong focus on equity and student success, we take a strategic, data-informed approach to closing racial equity gaps and ensuring all students can thrive.

To uphold this commitment, the College uses Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) to systematically track and improve outcomes for Black and African American students. These metrics—including course success rates, persistence, degree and certificate completion, and transfer outcomes—are disaggregated by race and ethnicity. Through data dashboards and integrated planning, we monitor disparities, identify areas for improvement, and assess the impact of equity-focused programs.

When performance gaps are identified, we respond with targeted academic support, culturally responsive instruction, student services, and strategic interventions. Progress is reviewed regularly through institutional processes such as program review, annual planning, and the Student Success and Equity Committee to ensure continuous improvement and accountability.

In addition to data-driven strategies, Cerritos College fosters a sense of belonging through mentorship, leadership development, culturally relevant programming, and partnerships that reflect and support the experiences of Black students. These efforts are grounded in our institutional values of diversity, inclusion, and student-centeredness.

By centering the voices and needs of Black and African American students, Cerritos College fulfills its mission to empower all students to achieve their goals and contribute meaningfully to their communities.

Please state the percent of the institutions enrolled student population identifying as Black/African American for the current term.

In Fall 2024, 6% of students identified as Black/African American at Cerritos College. For the 2024-2025 academic year, 7% of students identified as such.

Please state the number of students identifying as Black/African American enrolled at the college or university for the current term.

In Fall 2024, 2,107 students identified as Black/African American at Cerritos College. For the 2024-2025 academic year, 3,071 students identified as such.

These numbers were gathered from self-reported ethnicity in Peoplesoft. BSI notes that if a student identifies their race as Black/African American, they qualify towards the headcount (including those who identify as Hispanic/Latino as their ethnicity as well). [RP Group Paper](#)

Describe the academic goals for the institution to achieve within the five-year period in which the initial designation is awarded. The goals described in this section should outline the institution's plans to improve retention, time-to-degree or time-to-certificate completion, and graduation rates of Black and African American students.

Over the next five years, Cerritos College is committed to advancing equitable academic outcomes for Black and African American students by achieving measurable improvements in retention, completion, and graduation. These goals are grounded in the College's mission to provide inclusive, high-quality, and equitable learning opportunities, and are supported by strategic initiatives already in motion.

1. Increase Retention Rates

Cerritos College will increase fall-to-fall retention rates for Black and African American students by 10 percentage points. This will be accomplished through enhanced early alert systems, expanded academic counseling within Umoja and related programs, and proactive engagement strategies aimed at fostering student belonging and persistence.

2. Reduce Time-to-Completion

Cerritos College aims to reduce the average time-to-complete for Black and African American students, with a goal of ensuring that 50% of these students complete their degree or certificate within five years or less. This will be supported by comprehensive academic planning, expanded access to critical gateway courses, and cohort-based scheduling within learning communities like Umoja to streamline academic pathways.

3. Increase Graduation and Transfer Rates

Cerritos College will increase graduation rates for Black and African American students by 15% and transfer rates by 20%. These improvements will be driven by integrated academic support, HBCU and CSU/UC transfer partnerships, and robust outreach from the Transfer Center to ensure students complete degrees and meet transfer milestones efficiently.

4. Close Equity Gaps in Course Success

The institution will reduce and ultimately eliminate equity gaps in course success rates, particularly in English, math, and high-enrollment general education courses. Faculty development in culturally responsive pedagogy and expanded academic coaching will be key drivers of this progress.

Cerritos College will use disaggregated Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) to monitor outcomes, inform resource allocation, and adjust strategies in real time, ensuring accountability and continuous improvement throughout the five-year period.

Describe the academic equity goals your institution aims to achieve within the five-year period of the initial designation as a California Black-Serving Institution. Specifically, outline how these goals will improve academic equity gaps in retention, time-to-degree or time-to-certificate completion, and graduation rates between your Black and African American students and the overall student population. Provide data-driven benchmarks and strategies for achieving these objectives.

As part of its commitment to becoming a California Black-Serving Institution, Cerritos College has set ambitious, data-informed academic equity goals to close achievement gaps in retention, time-to-completion, and graduation rates between Black and African American students and the overall student population. These goals are aligned with the College's mission and equity-centered strategic priorities.

1. Increase Retention Rates

Current Gap: As of the most recent institutional data, fall-to-fall retention rates for Black/African American students trail the overall student population by 15 percentage points.

Goal: Close the retention gap by half within three years and fully eliminate it within five years.

Strategies:

- Expand Umoja and other culturally affirming learning communities
- Enhance early alert systems and intrusive advising
- Strengthen first-year experiences and peer mentorship
- Implement equity-based training for faculty and student services

2. Reduce Time-to-Degree and Time-to-Certificate

Current Benchmark: Fewer than 18% of Black and African American students complete a degree or certificate within five years, compared to over 28% of the general student population.

Goal: Increase the percentage of Black/African American students completing a degree or certificate within five years to at least 50% by 2029, reducing the gap to zero.

Strategies:

- Provide proactive academic planning and degree audits
- Increase course availability in key pathways
- Offer structured, cohort-based course sequences
- Integrate academic coaching and embedded tutoring into high-failure-rate courses

3. Improve Graduation Rates

Current Gap: The three-year graduation rate for Black/African American students is 11%, compared to 15% for the overall student population—a gap of 4 percentage points.

Goal: Increase the graduation rate for Black/African American students by at least 15 percentage points, and reduce the gap with the overall population by at least half within five years.

Strategies:

- Strengthen engagement in the HBCU Transfer Guarantee and CSU/UC pathways
- Expand access to Transfer Center programming and university partnerships
- Increase targeted scholarships and financial supports that mitigate stop-outs
- Offer milestone tracking through the Degree Planner and integrated advising tools

Monitoring & Accountability

Progress toward each of these goals will be tracked using disaggregated Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) via the college's data dashboard. Annual progress reports will be reviewed by the Student Success and Equity Committee, Executive Council, and shared with the campus community. These metrics will inform continuous improvement and resource allocation in support of sustained impact.

Identify institutional memberships, charters, or affiliations to organizations dedicated to the advancement of Black and or African American Students.

Cerritos College maintains a strong commitment to the advancement of Black and African American students through active membership and strategic partnerships with organizations dedicated to equity and student success. The College is a member of the statewide Umoja Community Education Foundation, which provides culturally responsive academic support, leadership development, and professional learning focused on African

American student achievement. Cerritos also participates in the California Community Colleges Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCU) Transfer Guarantee Program, offering guaranteed admission to over 30 HBCUs and promoting clear transfer pathways for students of African descent. In addition, Cerritos collaborates with the African American Male Education Network and Development (A²MEND), supporting Black male student leadership and faculty engagement through annual summits and mentorship initiatives. The College is also recognized as an Equity Champion for Black Students by the Campaign for College Opportunity for its commitment to eliminating remedial placement barriers. Furthermore, Cerritos partners with the National College Resources Foundation to participate in the Black College Expo, connecting students to HBCU recruiters, scholarships, and culturally affirming postsecondary options. Collectively, these affiliations reflect the College's mission-driven approach to educational equity and institutional accountability.

Attach your institution's strategic plan to address the academic goals and academic equity goals your institution aims to achieve within the five-year period of the initial designation as a California Black-Serving Institution. The strategic plan should include, but not be limited to, all the following: (A) a mission statement that addresses the applicant's commitment to serve Black and or African American students; (B) outreach services to potential Black and or African American students; (C) existing and/or proposed academic or basic needs support services to assist in the academic success of Black and/or African American students. Support services described in this section may include campus affinity centers, coursework, activities or events; (D) an outline of the planned allocation of resources during the five-year period in which the initial designation awarded; (E) an outline of how the institution is using or will use existing resources to provide culturally relevant professional development for the applicant's faculty and staff in pursuit of Black Serving Institution goals.

https://www.cerritos.edu/students-first-framework/_includes/docs/Students-First-Framework_ua.pdf

Community College applicants submit the following for the previous three academic years: (A) The number of degree and certificate programs completed by all students, and by Black and or African American students. (B) The number of all students, and of Black and or African American students, who completed degree and certificate programs within normal time and up to 300 percent of normal time to degree completion. (C) The student transfer rates for all students, and for Black and or African American students, to four-year colleges and universities.

[Cerritos BSI Application Data.docx](#)

Please Submit a certification, in writing, by the chief administrative officer of the college or university, of the applicant's commitment to address Black and African American student success that is consistent with the applicant's mission.

[BSI Certification Letter](#)

Describe the campus resources available to promote equity and inclusion for Black and African American students. Include details on academic support programs, cultural centers, mentorship opportunities, student organizations, financial aid initiatives, and any other institutional efforts designed to foster an inclusive and supportive campus environment.

Cerritos College provides a range of programs and resources to support Black and African American students, ensuring an inclusive and equitable campus experience. Below is an overview of key resources across academics, cultural engagement, mentorship, student life, financial support, and institutional initiatives:

Academic Support Programs

- **Umoja Success Program:** A learning community dedicated to the success of students of African descent. Umoja offers culturally relevant academic support, including a specialized course centered on African American experiences. Students receive guidance from dedicated counselors, help with internships and scholarship searches, and a supportive family environment. The program's goal is to improve academic outcomes and assist students in transferring to four-year universities.
- **Tutoring and Success Center:** Black students have full access to free tutoring services through the college's Success Center. In addition to general tutoring, Cerritos has introduced affinity-based study groups for subjects like math and English, where Black/African American students can study together with tutors of similar backgrounds. These study groups create a sense of belonging and help improve course success.
- **Transfer Services:** The Transfer Center helps students plan for university transfer, including guidance on UC/CSU pathways and out-of-state options. Notably, Cerritos participates in a transfer guarantee program with Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs), offering guaranteed admission to HBCUs for qualifying community college students. This partnership, along with transfer workshops and college fairs (such as an annual Black College Expo), ensures Black students have clear pathways to continue their education.

Cultural Centers and Initiatives

- **Student Equity Center:** Cerritos College's Equity Center serves as a safe, welcoming space for marginalized student groups. It houses multiple equity programs, including Umoja, under one roof. The center fosters a sense of belonging through community-building and culturally responsive programs. Black students

can drop in to find support, use the lounge or study space, and connect with staff who advocate for their success.

- **Black Cultural Events:** The campus celebrates Black heritage and accomplishments through various events. Every February, the college hosts Black History Month programs such as panel discussions, film screenings (for example, movie nights featuring culturally significant films), mixers, and guest speakers. These events educate the campus community and celebrate Black culture. In the spring, the college holds a special Black Graduation Celebration ceremony to honor African American graduates. This ceremony, complete with cultural traditions (like African drummers or kente stoles), recognizes the achievements of Black students in a culturally affirming way. Such events and celebrations help promote inclusion and pride on campus.

Mentorship and Leadership Development

- **Mentorship:** Mentorship is a key component of support for Black students. Through Umoja, students gain mentors who provide guidance on academic and personal development. Faculty and staff involved in Umoja often serve as role models, and there are efforts to connect students with community mentors and alumni. These relationships help students navigate college life and plan for careers or further education.
- **Leadership Opportunities:** Cerritos College encourages Black students to grow as leaders. The Umoja community and the Black Student Union often provide leadership workshops, retreats, and conferences (for instance, students may attend regional African American student leadership conferences). On campus, students can take part in the Falcon Leadership Institute, join student government, or spearhead cultural initiatives. By engaging in these activities, Black students develop leadership skills, build confidence, and become advocates for themselves and their communities.

Student Organizations and Community

- **Black Student Union (BSU):** The BSU is a vibrant student-led organization that builds community and empowers Black students. It organizes social and cultural activities year-round, from welcome mixers and open-mic nights to educational forums. The BSU provides a space for students to voice concerns, celebrate Black culture, and support one another. By joining BSU, students can form friendships, engage in campus life, and work together on issues affecting Black students.
- **Other Clubs and Networks:** In addition to BSU, Black students at Cerritos can connect with peers through various clubs and networks. For example, there are academic clubs and honor societies where students of color collaborate and support each other. Many campus organizations are committed to diversity and inclusion, meaning Black students are welcomed and can take on leadership roles in any student group. This inclusive club environment ensures that Black students have multiple avenues to find community and get involved on campus.

Financial Aid and Scholarships

- **Targeted Scholarships:** Cerritos College offers financial aid resources to help Black students afford their education. The Cerritos College Foundation administers scholarships specifically for African American students. For instance, there are awards designated for Black/African American women and other scholarships that require the recipient to be of Black descent. These targeted funds aim to reduce financial barriers and recognize the achievements of Black students.
- **General Financial Support:** Black students also benefit from comprehensive financial aid services available to all. The Financial Aid Office assists students in obtaining federal/state aid, and programs like EOPS (Extended Opportunity Programs and Services) support many first-generation and low-income students of color with book vouchers, counseling, and grants. Umoja counselors often guide students to apply for external scholarships (such as those from community organizations or the Umoja Community statewide) and internships. By combining these resources, Cerritos works to ensure that cost is not a prohibitive factor for Black students pursuing higher education.

Institutional Efforts and Strategic Initiatives

- **Student Equity Plan:** As part of its commitment to closing achievement gaps, Cerritos College has a formal Student Equity Plan that identifies disproportionately impacted groups and outlines strategies to support them. African American students are a priority in this plan. The college tracks data on Black student success in areas like course completion, retention, and graduation, and implements initiatives to improve these outcomes. This could include new programs, additional tutoring, or curriculum changes to make learning more inclusive. The equity plan serves as a roadmap for institutional changes that promote fairness and academic success for Black students.
- **Black Excellence Collaborative:** On campus, faculty and staff have formed the Black Excellence Collaborative (BEC) – a workgroup focused on improving the experience of Black students and employees. BEC acts as a voice and advocacy group, advising campus leadership on issues of diversity and inclusion. They help identify and address any institutional barriers or biases that Black students face, and they coordinate culturally centered activities (such as professional development workshops and the Black History Month events). By engaging both employees and students, this group reinforces a campus culture that values Black excellence and actively fights anti-Black bias.
- **Staff Development and Training:** Cerritos College invests in training its staff and instructors to better serve an increasingly diverse student body. This includes cultural competency workshops and equity-focused training that often highlight the experiences and needs of Black and African American students. Through these efforts, faculty adopt inclusive teaching strategies while student services professionals learn to foster a welcoming, affirming environment. The result is a college workforce more attuned to the challenges of Black students and more capable of mentoring and supporting them.

As part of this commitment, Cerritos College sponsored a team to attend the ADES 2024 All African Diaspora Education Summit, a professional development opportunity designed to deepen understanding of historical and cultural educational contexts. Participants, including Board members and campus leaders, engaged in field research, met with African educators, non-governmental organizations, and village leaders, and explored comparative educational practices. This immersive experience fosters a global perspective and strengthens the College's ability to create innovative, culturally responsive strategies to support diverse student populations, particularly students of African descent. By integrating lessons learned from the diaspora, Cerritos College continues to evolve as an equity-driven institution that values global learning and inclusive excellence.

- **Strategic Partnerships:** The college actively partners with external organizations to enhance opportunities for Black students. In addition to the HBCU transfer agreements, Cerritos collaborates with groups like the African American Male Education Network and Development (A2MEND), which provides mentorship and empowerment for Black male students across California community colleges. The campus also works with local community organizations and events (for example, hosting booths at the Black College Expo and inviting community leaders to campus) to create a pipeline of support. These partnerships extend the college's reach and bring in additional resources, from scholarship funds to mentorship programs, all aimed at helping Black students thrive.

By combining academic assistance, cultural affirmation, mentorship, student engagement, financial support, and systemic change efforts, Cerritos College strives to foster an environment where Black and African American students feel valued and equipped to succeed. Each of these resources plays a role in promoting equity and inclusion, ensuring that Black students can achieve their educational goals and participate fully in campus life.

Include any additional information that the governing board should consider in evaluating your institution's readiness to be identified as a Black Serving Institution.

Cerritos College is well-positioned for designation as a Black-Serving Institution, with a strong foundation in equity-driven leadership, data-informed decision-making, and culturally responsive practices. The College's Student Equity and Achievement Plan prioritizes African American student success, and institutional Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) are regularly analyzed to guide targeted interventions. Measurable gains in disaggregated retention data and the continued growth of programs like Umoja underscore the College's institutional readiness.

Leadership across all levels—Board, administration, faculty, and staff—demonstrates a sustained commitment to racial equity. Representation of Black employees continues to grow, and mentorship opportunities for Black students are expanding as a result. Strategic partnerships with organizations such as Umoja, A²MEND, and the HBCU Transfer Guarantee Program provide additional academic and transfer support for Black and African American students.

Cerritos College's recognition as an Equity Champion for Black Students highlights its successful track record of implementing systemic reforms that promote equity and student success. Collectively, these efforts reflect the College's deep and ongoing readiness to fulfill the responsibilities and opportunities of being a designated Black-Serving Institution.