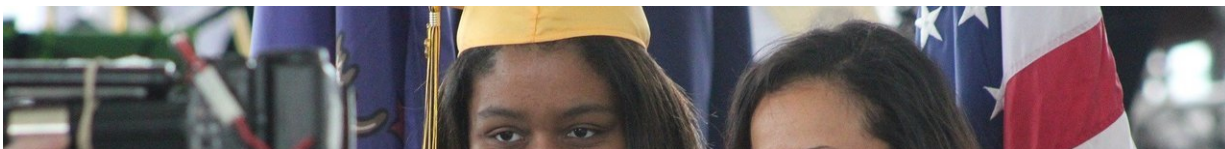


# New report shows public universities fail to find, support and graduate black students

September 25 2018, by Ross Brenneman

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Public colleges and universities collectively enroll more than 900,000 black students. Yet a new report from the USC Race and Equity Center finds that when it comes to supporting those students from admission through graduation, very few schools can be held up as exemplars.

"You can't just throw a couple dollars at the problem or hire a chief diversity officer or bring a speaker to campus," says Shaun R. Harper, the center's executive director and the Clifford and Betty Allen Chair in Urban Leadership at the USC Rossier School of Education. Harper authored the report with Isaiah Simmons, a research associate at the center. "Addressing the systemic problems that [black students](#) face requires a deeper strategy."

Using data from the U.S. Department of Education and the U.S. Census, the report's authors grade every school for its efforts in representational [equity](#), gender equity, completion equity and student-to-faculty racial

ratios. Harper says that the report's assignment of GPA-style grades is a way to ascribe value and accountability to data.

The report, funded by a grant from the Ford Foundation, includes information on 506 public colleges and universities. Not included in the report are HBCUs, Tribal Colleges, military academies, university health and medical institutes, graduate universities, community colleges and public institutions that primarily confer associate's degrees.

Massachusetts (2.81), Washington (2.59) and California (2.46) scored the highest marks in the report. Louisiana (1.18), Nebraska (1.38) and North Dakota (1.38) performed worst. Among individual schools, the Massachusetts College of Liberal Arts, UC San Diego and University of Louisville all scored highest (3.5).

But Harper cautioned that even schools at the top of the grading scale still had significant room for progress. "We deem it problematic to offer kudos to any campus that sustains inequity on any equity indicator or that otherwise disadvantages black undergraduates."

Recommendations in the report include use of workshops and other resources related to improving [college admissions practices](#), improving [graduation rates](#) and hiring and retaining more full-time black professors. But Harper adds that higher-education professionals need to address knowledge gaps, too.

"Our research at the USC Race and Equity Center makes painfully clear that most people who work in higher education never learned much, if anything at all, about how to address racism or strategically achieve racial equity," he says. "Since those who are supposed to fix racial inequities on campuses were not taught how to do so, it is no surprise that widespread inequity continually persists."

Provided by University of Southern California

Citation: New report shows public universities fail to find, support and graduate black students (2018, September 25) retrieved 12 May 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2018-09-universities-black-students.html>

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