

THE STATE OF HIGHER EDUCATION *for* **Black Californians**

India Norwood, Graduation, 2019

Examining Disparities in College Opportunity by Gender for Black Californians

Part of our State of Higher Education series

California has long been a destination of opportunity—and challenge—for Black Californians. Known for its innovation and economic prosperity, California’s higher education institutions play a critical role for social and economic mobility for Black residents. In [The State of Higher Education for Black Californians](#), published in February 2021, we found that Black students in California have made substantial gains worth celebrating.¹ These gains include significant increases in access to college-level coursework in high schools, rising numbers of Black students taking and passing transfer-level coursework in their first year at a community college, and major growth in associate and bachelor’s degrees awarded to Black Californians. While a growing number of Black Californians have a college education, however, stark gaps continue to persist. For example, 36 percent of Black men ages 25-64 have a college degree compared to 56 percent of white men.² Forty-one percent of Black women have a college degree compared to 59 percent of white women, a gap of 18 percentage points. In addition, a third of all Black men and women have some college but no degree.³ Both the [earlier report](#) and this one find troubling gaps in access to opportunity and success in higher education for Black students with disturbing and pronounced inequities by gender.

In this report, we share additional findings by gender exploring the graduation rates among California’s Black men and women in the California Community Colleges (CCC), the California State University (CSU) and the University of California (UC).



The good news:

- Three- and four-year completion rates have improved for both men and women enrolling in the California Community Colleges.
- The four-year graduation rate more than doubled for Black freshmen women at the CSU, from 10 percent of Black women enrolling in 2011 to 24 percent of Black women enrolling in 2016, and more than half of Black women who enroll in the CSU as freshmen graduate within six years.
- The four-year graduation rate also doubled for Black men who entered as freshmen at the CSU from seven percent to 14 percent during the same time period.
- More than two-thirds of Black men and women who transferred into the CSU graduate within four years.
- Seventy-three percent of Black men and 81 percent of Black women who started in the UC as freshmen graduate after six years. In addition, over 80 percent of Black transfer students—both men and women—graduate from the UC within four years of enrolling.

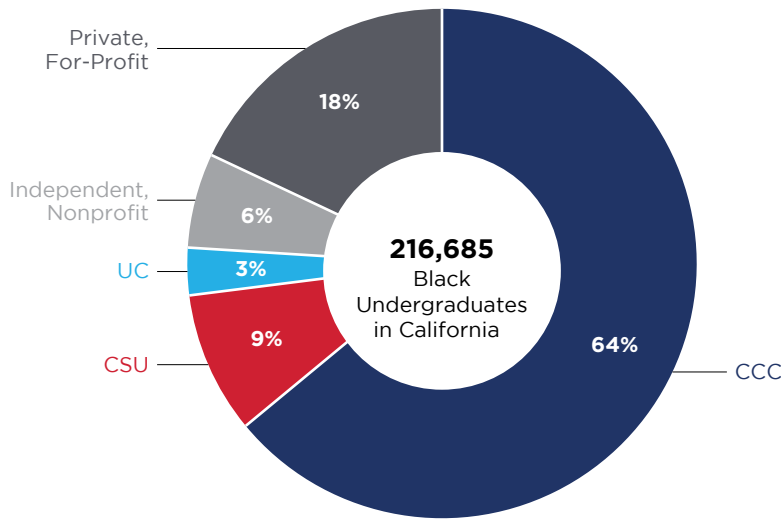
The bad news:

- Only eight percent of Black men and 10 percent of Black women who enrolled in the California Community Colleges in the 2016-17 academic year graduated with a degree or certificate within four years.
- More Black women transfer to for-profit colleges than to the UC and CSU combined.
- While graduation rates for Black men who enroll at the CSU as freshmen have doubled over the last six years, only one in six (14 percent) is supported to graduate within four years, and less than half (42 percent) of Black freshmen men who enrolled in 2014 graduated in six years.
- Only 30 percent of Black men and 39 percent of Black women who transferred into the CSU graduate after two years. While Black women graduate at higher rates, there is still a 13 percentage point gap between them and the graduation rate of white women.
- UC four-year graduation rate for Black men (50 percent) is 20 percentage points lower than that of white men (70 percent). For Black women in the UC, the graduation rate (65 percent) is 14 percentage points lower than their white female counterparts (79 percent).
- Only 17 percent of Black men and 18 percent of Black women are supported to transfer within four years.

Seventy-six percent of Black undergraduates attending college in California are enrolled in a public college or university. Eighteen percent were enrolled in private, for-profit colleges and universities.

California Community Colleges and our public universities enroll three in four Black undergraduates.

Figure 1. Black undergraduate enrollment by sector in California



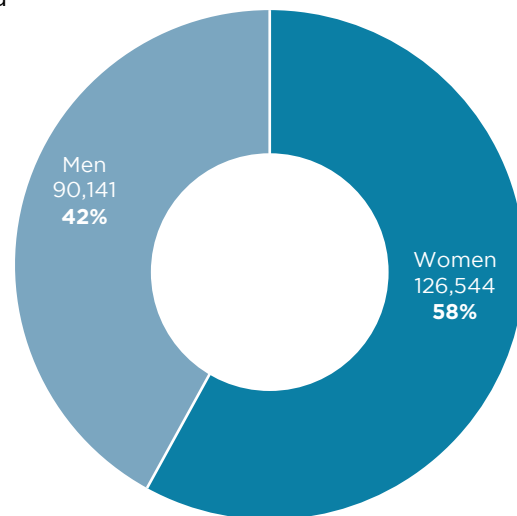
Source: National Center for Education Statistics, Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (2020), 12-month Enrollment Component (2018-2019), Table EFFY2019: Undergraduate. Available from: <https://nces.ed.gov/ipeds/use-the-data>

In 2019, there were 216,685 Black undergraduates in California of whom 58 percent are women and 42 percent are men. The imbalance of 16 percentage points in college enrollment by gender should be cause for concern.



Fifty-eight percent of Black undergraduates in California are women.

Figure 2. Black undergraduate enrollment by gender in California



Source: National Center for Education Statistics, Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (2020), 12-month Enrollment Component (2018-2019), Table EFFY2019: Undergraduate. Available from: <https://nces.ed.gov/ipeds/use-the-data>

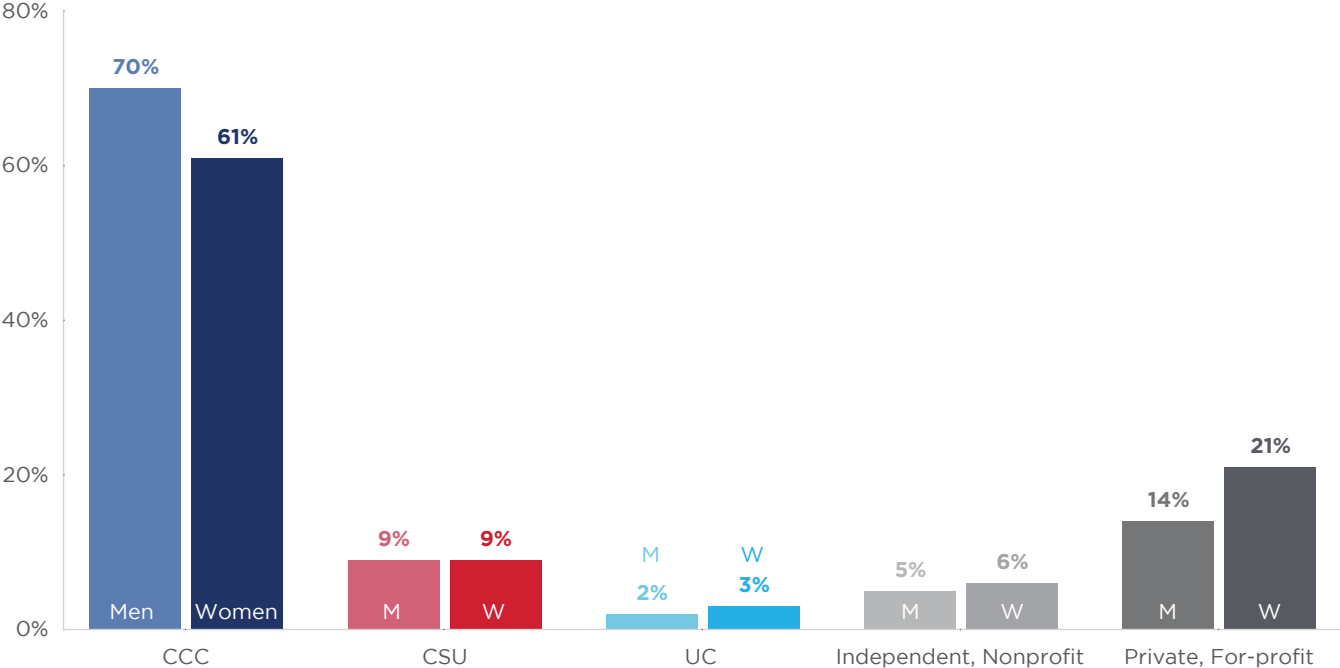


Both Black men and women rely on the community college system; 70 percent of Black men and just over 60 percent of Black women enroll in a California Community College. Looking at the undergraduate population at our state’s public universities, nine percent of Black men and women enroll at the CSU, respectively, while only two percent of Black men and three percent of Black women enrolled in a UC. Eighteen percent of Black undergraduates attend a private, for-profit college or university of those who attended in 2018-19. Fourteen percent of Black men, and 21 percent of Black women enrolled at private, for-profit colleges or universities.

Nationwide, the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on college enrollment was most pronounced among Black men. The National Student Clearinghouse estimated a 19 percent decline in enrollment for Black community college students who are men.⁴ This trend has important implications in California, where community colleges enroll 70 percent of Black undergraduate men.

The vast majority of Black men and Black women enrolled as undergraduates are enrolled in the California Community Colleges. Private, For-Profit colleges and universities enroll more Black men and Black women than the CSU system.

Figure 3. Black Undergraduate Enrollment by Gender and Sector in California



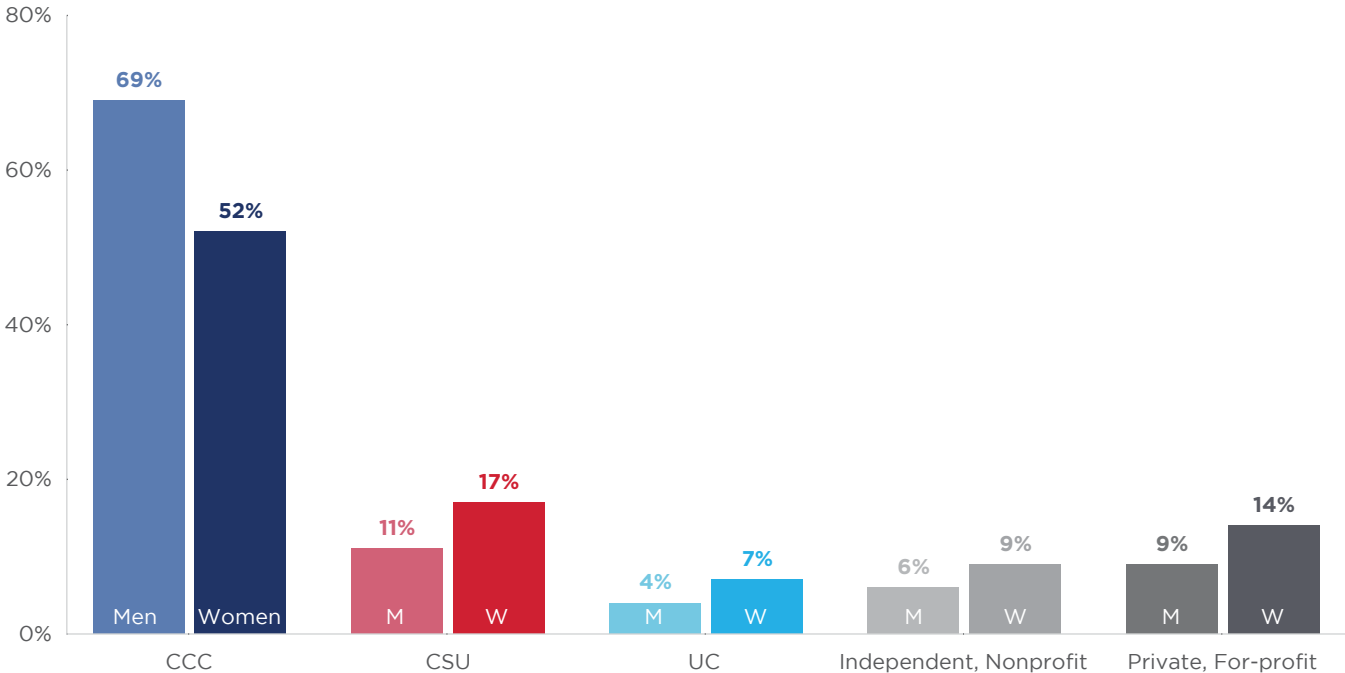
Source: National Center for Education Statistics, Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (2020), 12-month Enrollment Component (2018-2019), Table EFFY2019: Undergraduate. Available from: <https://nces.ed.gov/ipeds/use-the-data>



Among first-time freshmen, 69 percent of Black men start at a community college, compared to 52 percent of Black women.

The majority of Black undergraduate men and women begin their higher education at a California Community Colleges campus.

Figure 4. Black Undergraduate Enrollment by Gender, First-Time Freshmen

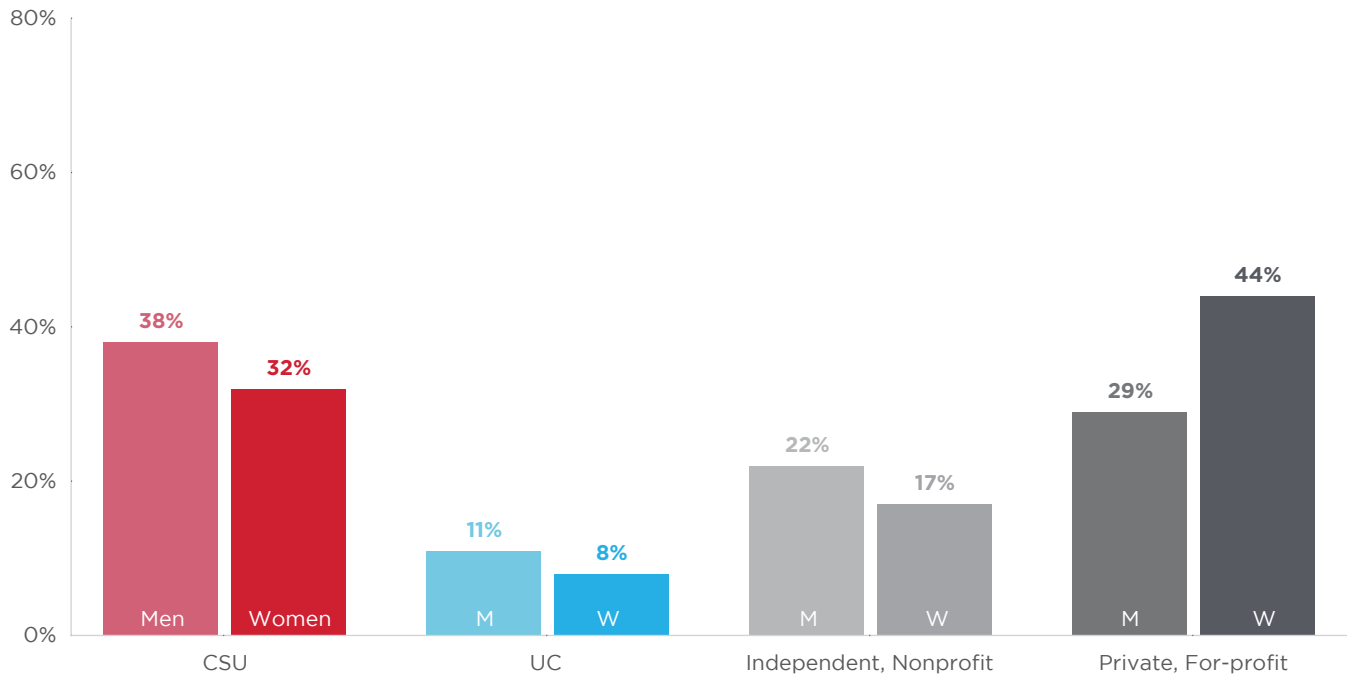


Source: National Center for Education Statistics, Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (2020), Fall Enrollment Component (2018-2019), Table EFFY2019a: Undergraduate. Available from: <https://nces.ed.gov/ipeds/use-the-data>

Among first-time transfer students, Black women are more likely to transfer to a private, for-profit college (44 percent) than their male peers (29 percent). Black men are transferring to the CSU at slightly higher rates than Black women—38 percent of Black men who transferred enrolled in a CSU compared to 32 percent of Black women who transferred.

More Black women transferred to a Private, For-Profit college or university than to a CSU in Fall 2018.

Figure 5. Black Undergraduate Enrollment by Gender, Transfer Students



Source: National Center for Education Statistics, Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (2020), Fall Enrollment Component (2018-2019), Table EFFY2019a: Undergraduate. Available from: <https://nces.ed.gov/ipeds/use-the-data>



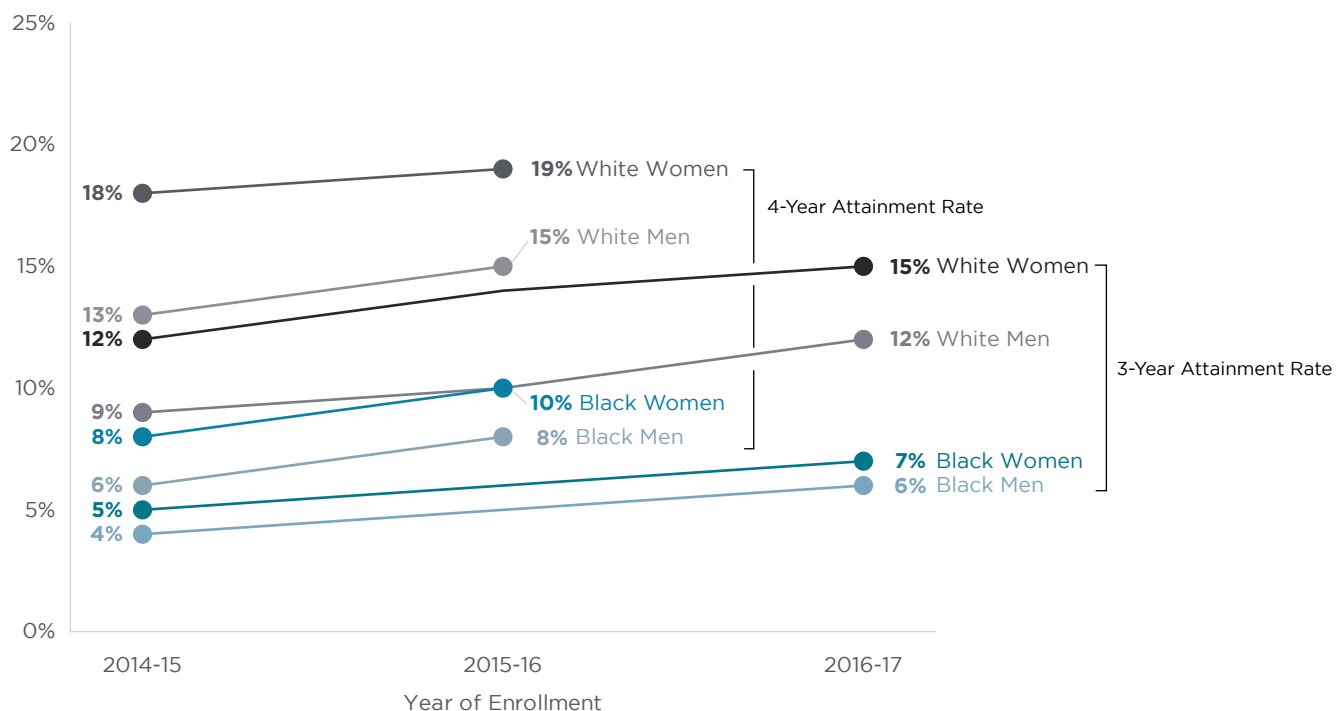


CALIFORNIA COMMUNITY COLLEGES

California's community colleges enrolled 115,069 Black undergraduates in the 2019-2020 academic year.⁵ While completion rates have improved in recent years, Black community college students are not as well supported to complete a certificate or an associate degree and/or transfer to a four-year institution as their peers.⁶ The percentage of all community college students who earn a certificate or degree within three years has increased from nine percent to 12 percent.⁷ However, of all Black community college students, only six percent of men and seven percent of women who enrolled in 2017-18 were supported to earn a certificate or degree within three years. In addition, the percentage of Black men (17 percent) and women (18 percent) who are supported to transfer within four years is almost half the rate at which white women transfer (33 percent).

Only six percent of Black men and seven percent of Black women who enrolled in the California Community Colleges in 2017-2018 earned an award or degree within three years.

Figure 6. Three- and Four-Year Cohort Completion Rates, California Community Colleges, by Race & Gender

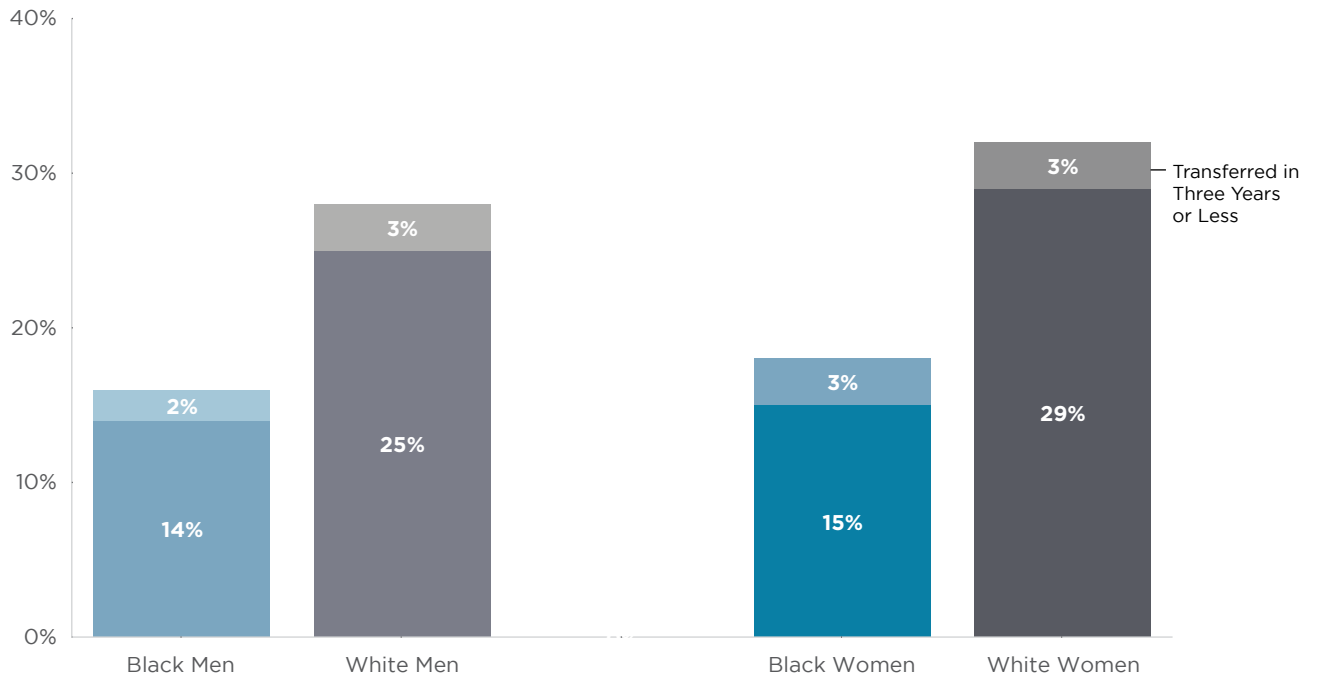


Note: Different scale than other graphs.

Source: Cal-PASS Plus. (2021). Student Success Metrics (All Students-Cohort View). [Data Dashboard]. Retrieved from: <https://www.calpassplus.org/LaunchBoard/Student-Success-Metrics>

Black men and Black women enrolling in the California Community Colleges are supported to transfer at far lower rates than their white peers.

Figure 7. Four-Year Transfer Rates for Students Enrolling in 2014-15.



Source: Cal-PASS Plus. (2021). Student Success Metrics (All Students-Cohort View). [Data Dashboard]. Retrieved from: <https://www.calpassplus.org/LaunchBoard/Student-Success-Metrics>





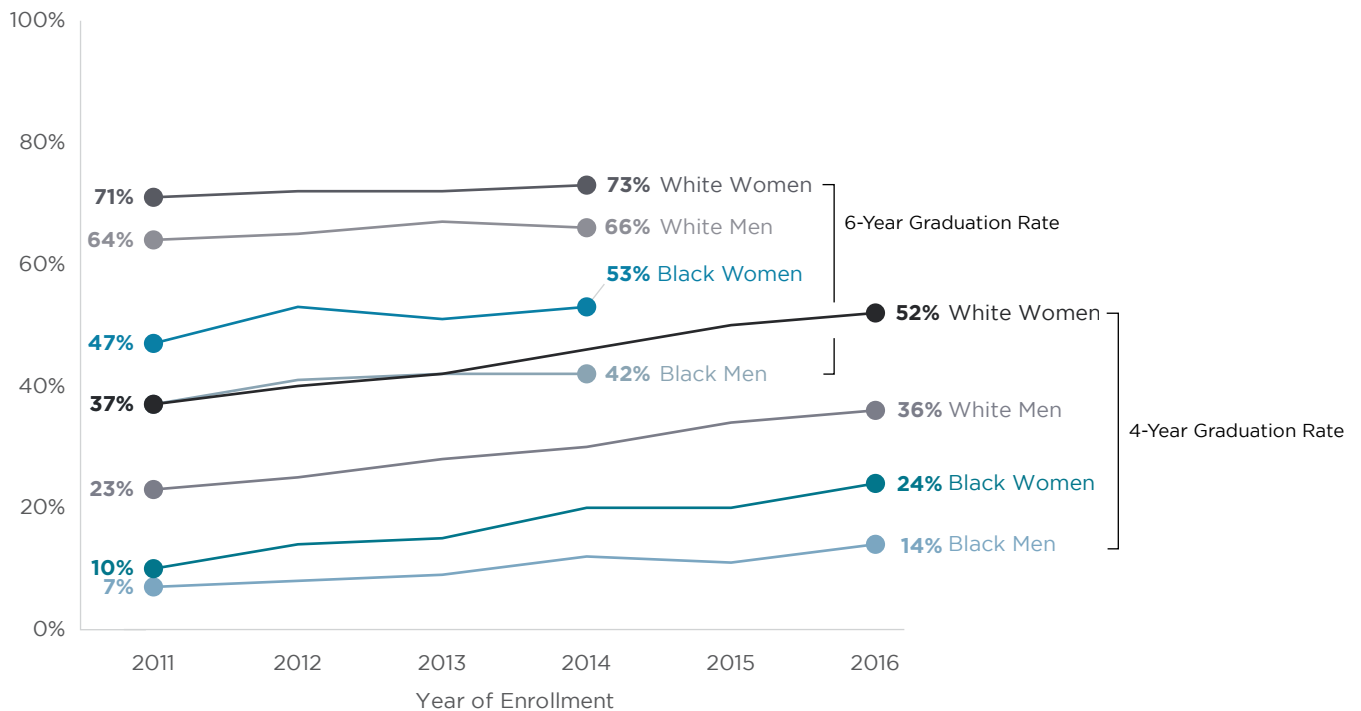
CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY

The CSU is the nation’s largest four-year public university system, but the CSU enrolls only nine percent (19,298) of Black undergraduates in the state.⁸

Graduation rates for both Black men and Black women enrolled in the CSU have increased in recent years, but Black students are not being supported to graduate at the same rates as their peers. Black CSU students have a six-year graduation rate that is significantly lower than the average of 62 percent. For Black men it is 42 percent and 53 percent for Black women. While Black women have higher completion rates than Black men by 11 percent, the graduation gap between Black women and white women is 20 percentage points. White men have a 66 percent graduation rate—24 percentage points higher than the rate for Black men.

Only 42 percent of Black men enrolling as freshmen in 2014 were supported to complete their degrees within six years.

Figure 8. California State University Four- and Six-Year Completion Rates for First-Time, Full-Time Freshmen by Gender, 2018-19



Source: California State University Office of the Chancellor, Division of Institutional Research and Analyses, 2020, Graduation Dashboard

Since 2011, four-year graduation rates for Black men who enrolled as freshmen in the CSU system doubled from seven percent of students enrolling in fall 2011 to 14 percent of students who enrolled in fall 2016; the rate for Black women more than doubled from 10 percent of students who enrolled in 2011 to 24 percent of students who enrolled in 2016. **Of the 1,027 Black men who enrolled as freshmen in 2016, 885 did not complete their degrees in four years.**

Outcomes for Transfer Students at the CSU

The CSU is the primary transfer destination for California Community College students. Unfortunately, as can be seen from Figure 5, more Black women transferred to a private, for-profit institution (44 percent) than to a CSU (32 percent) in the fall of 2018.

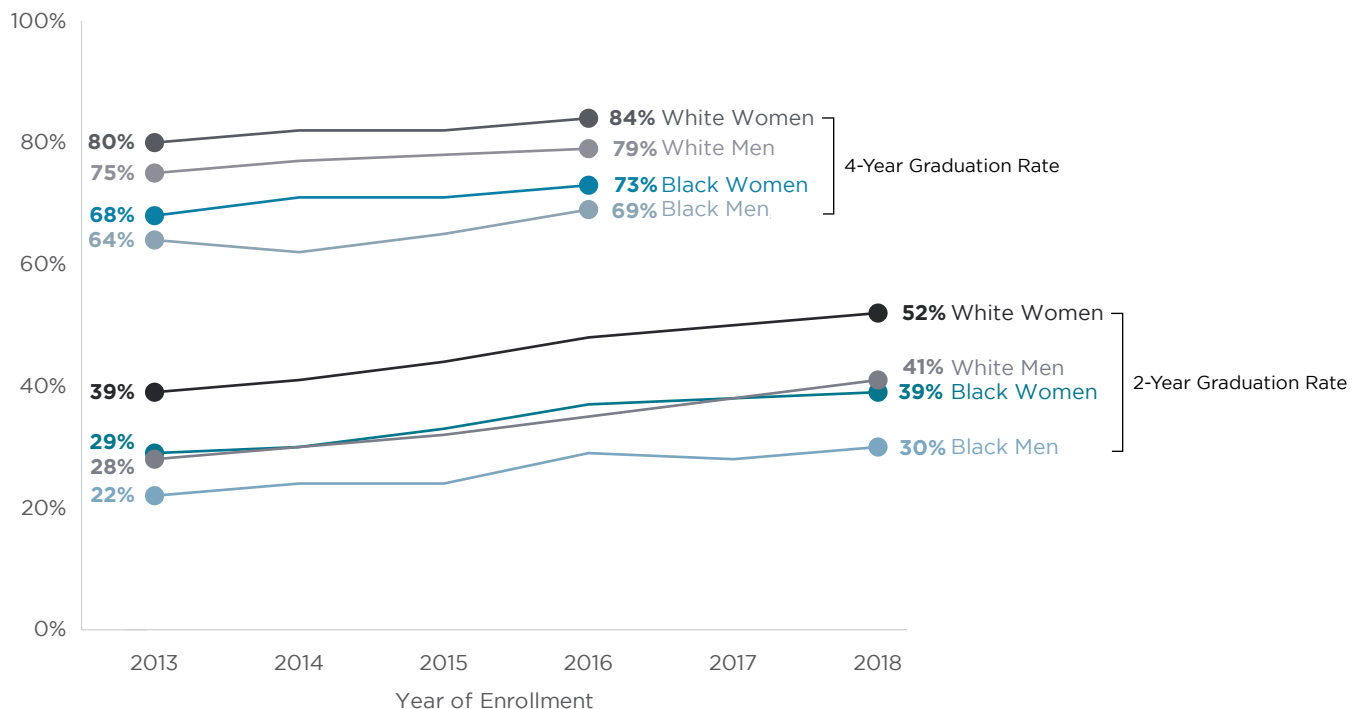
As a primary transfer destination for California Community College students, the CSU plays a critical role in supporting community colleges towards earning a bachelor's degree. Through proactive efforts, including the Graduation Initiative at the CSU, which has an explicit focus on closing the gaps in completion for students by race/ethnicity,⁹ completion for transfer students has been on the rise, even though gaps continue to persist. The good news is that the four-year graduation rate at the CSU is 79 percent after six years, but the bad news is that it is only 44 percent after two years.

While 84 percent of white women graduate four years after transferring into the CSU, the graduation rate for Black women is 11 percentage points lower.



More than two-thirds of Black men and women who transferred to the CSU graduate in four years, but Black men are still only supported to graduate at rates that are 10 percentage points lower than white men. Unfortunately, only three out of every ten Black men who transferred to the CSU finish in two years.

Figure 9. Two- and Four-Year Graduation Rates for Transfer Students at the CSU by Gender, 2018-19



Source: California State University Office of the Chancellor, Division of Institutional Research and Analyses, 2020, Graduation Dashboard



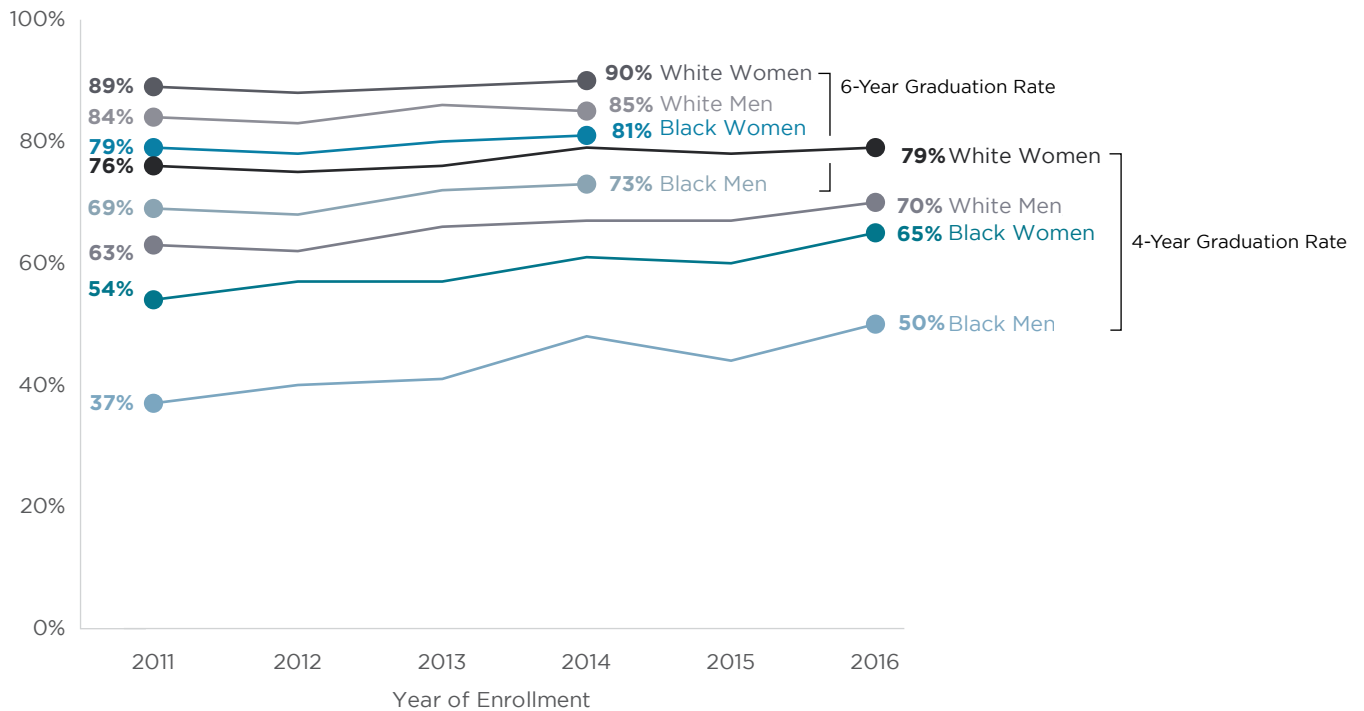
UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA

The UC is the premier public institution of higher education in California, if not the world. Unfortunately, the UC enrolls fewer Black undergraduates than any other system in the state, with just two percent and three percent of Black men and Black women, respectively. In the UC's publicly available data on enrollment and outcomes by race/ethnicity, students who identify as both Black and Latinx are reported together with students who identify as Black alone. By this definition, a total of 9,636 Black undergraduates attended the UC in Fall 2020.¹⁰

Black students enrolling in the UC, both men and women, are more likely to complete their bachelor's degrees on time with an average six-year graduation rate of 86 percent and average four-year graduation rate of 71 percent. The good news is that there have been significant improvements in the four-year graduation rates for Black first-time freshmen at the UC, with graduation rates for Black men rising from 37 percent to 50 percent from 2011 to 2016. Black women also saw an 11 percentage point improvement in their four-year graduation rate (from 54 percent to 65 percent) over that same period. While these improvements deserve to be celebrated, it still means that half of Black men who enrolled in the UC in 2016 did not graduate in four years.

Only half of Black men who enrolled in 2016 as freshmen graduated in four years, and the gap between Black men and their white peers is 20 percentage points. The gap between white women and Black women is 14 percentage points.

Figure 10. University of California Four- and Six-Year Completion Rates for First-Time Freshmen by Race and Gender, 2018-19



Source: UCOP Infocenter

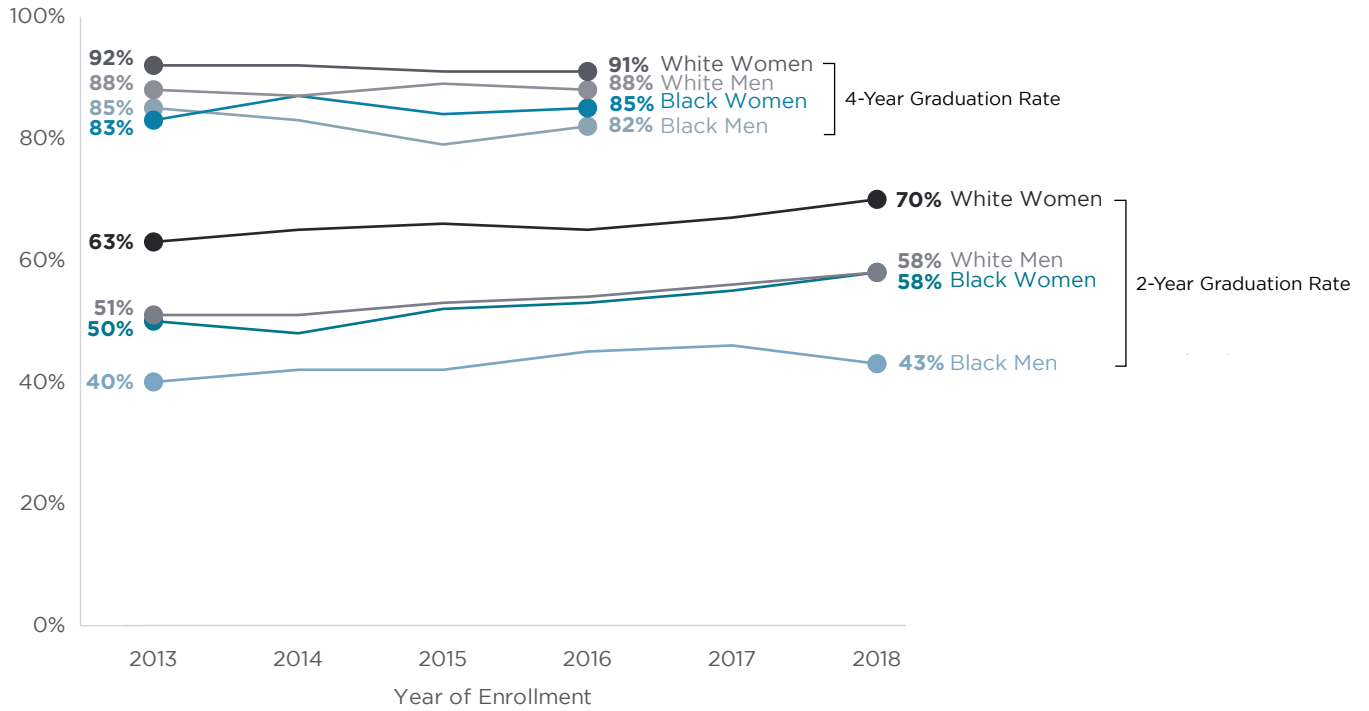
Note: Traditional single-race categories include students who identify as Latinx and Black together with Latinx students. In reporting outcomes using single-race identifiers, the UC includes these students with Black students who do not also identify as Latinx.

Outcomes for Transfer Students at the UC

Overall, 89 percent of transfer students at the UC who enrolled in 2016 were supported to finish their bachelor's degrees in four years or fewer and 61 percent did so in two years. However, gaps persist for UC's Black students. Eighty-two percent of Black men graduated within four years, a decline from 85 percent in 2013. The gap between white women compared to Black men and women is significant. The two-year graduation rate is 70 percent for white women compared to 58 percent for Black women and 43 percent for Black men, a gap of 12 and 27 percentage points respectively.

The UC must do more to support Black men and women who transfer to graduate in two years.

Figure 11. Two- and Four-Year Graduation Rates for Transfers to the UC, by Race and Gender



Source: UCOP Infocenter

Note: Traditional single-race categories include students who identify as Latinx and Black together with Latinx students. In reporting outcomes using single-race identifiers, the UC includes these students with Black students who do not also identify as Latinx.





CONCLUSION

A true commitment to supporting Black student success is possible. While we celebrate the improvements in high school graduation and college preparation occurring statewide, we know much more needs to be done to ensure equity in opportunity and success in our public colleges and universities for Black undergraduates. We continue to press our state leaders to set an ambitious statewide goal of ensuring 60 percent of Black Californians in the workforce hold a degree or high-value credential by 2030. Intentional commitments by both policymakers and colleges leaders are necessary. This must include a sobering review of their data by race/ethnicity and gender with a proactive response to closing the persistent gaps experienced by Black men and women on their campuses. Strengthening efforts that improve student supports, eliminating ineffective remedial education, strengthening the transfer pathway, improving hiring of diverse faculty, staff and leadership, and providing adequate financial aid to ensure college is affordable are key to a more equitable higher education experience for Black Californians.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Tylar Campbell, Vikash Reddy, PhD., and Michele Siqueiros co-authored this report.

ENDNOTES

1 Reddy, V. & Siqueiros, M. (2021). *The State of Higher Education for Black Californians*. Los Angeles, CA: Campaign for College Opportunity.

2 US Census Bureau, American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates 2014-2019, Public Use Microdata Sample.

3 US Census Bureau, American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates 2014-2019, Public Use Microdata Sample.

4 Fall 2020 Enrollment (As of Oct 22). (2020, Nov. 12). *Stay Informed with the Latest Enrollment*. Information. Retrieved from National Student Clearinghouse Research Center Website: <https://nscresearchcenter.org/stay-informed/>

5 Cal-PASS Plus. (2021). *Student Success Metrics (All Students)*. [Data Dashboard]. Retrieved from: <https://www.calpassplus.org/LaunchBoard/Student-Success-Metrics>

6 Reddy, V. & Siqueiros, M. (2021). *The State of Higher Education for Black Californians*. Los Angeles, CA: Campaign for College Opportunity.

7 Cal-PASS Plus. (2021). *Student Success Metrics (All Students - Cohort View)*. [Data Dashboard]. Retrieved from: <https://www.calpassplus.org/LaunchBoard/Student-Success-Metrics>

8 National Center for Education Statistics, Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS), *12-month Enrollment Component* (2018-2019), Tables: EFFY2019. Available from: <https://nces.ed.gov/ipeds/use-the-data>

9 The California State University. (2021). *Graduation Initiative 2025*. Retrieved from: <https://www2.calstate.edu/csu-system/why-the-csu-matters/graduation-initiative-2025>

10 University of California. (n.d.) *Fall Enrollment at a Glance* [Data Dashboard]. Retrieved from: <https://www.universityofcalifornia.edu/infocenter/fall-enrollment-glance>



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