

CAAASA presents:

# *Lifting Our Voices:*

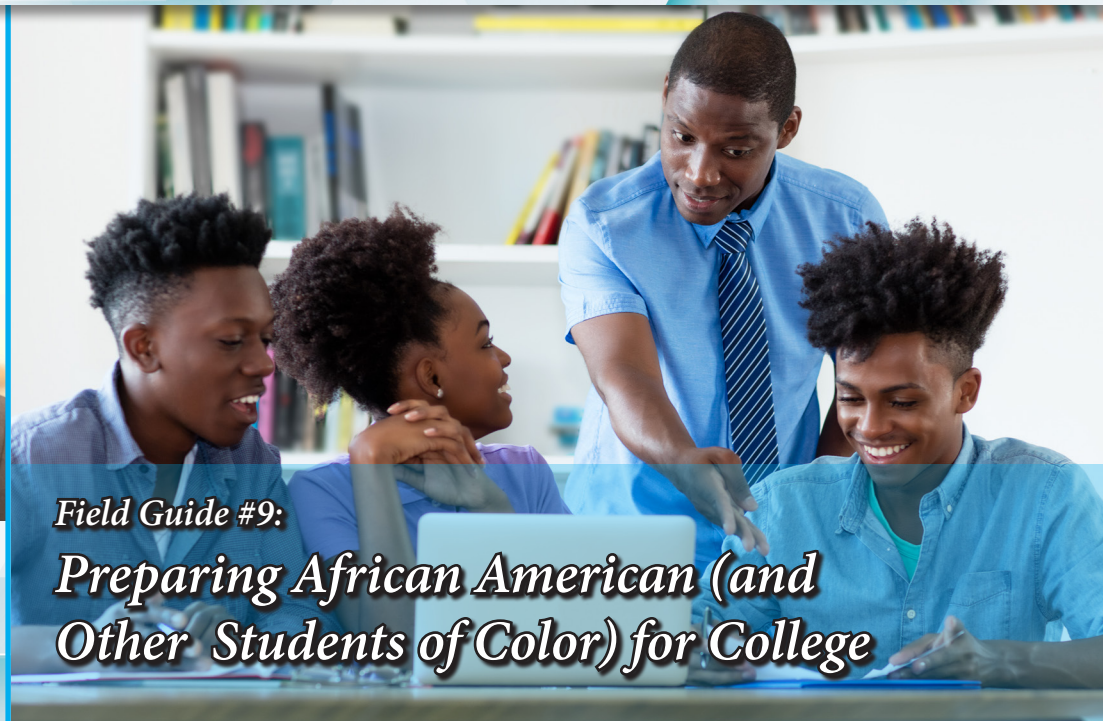


Presenter:

**Dr. Theresa Price**

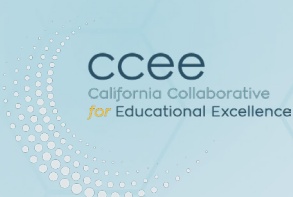
**Founder**

National College Resources Foundation



*Field Guide #9:*

***Preparing African American (and Other Students of Color) for College***



*School Re-orientation for Post-COVID Learning:  
What to Know, Do, and Expect  
as In-Person Instruction Resumes*

Sponsored by:

**California Collaborative for Educational Excellence (CCEE)**



California Association of African-American  
Superintendents & Administrators





**Field Guide #9: Preparing African American (and Other Students of Color) to Succeed in College**

Introduction: Field Guide #9: Preparing African American (and Other Students of Color) to Succeed in College ..... 1

Field Guide Overview ..... 1

- Description and purpose ..... 1
- Learning objectives ..... 2
- Components ..... 3

The Why, the What, and the How of Field Guide #9 ..... 3 - 31

Introduction to the Voices videos: ..... 32

Lifting Our Voices: Student, Teacher, and Parent Interviews ..... 32

Professional Learning: ..... 33

- Participants Responses ..... 33
- Reflections and Applications ..... 34

Lessons Learned since 2020-21: ..... 34

Conclusion ..... 38

Resources ..... 39

References ..... 39 - 40

Field Guide Evaluation Survey ..... 40



## Field Guide #9: Preparing African American (and Other Students of Color) to Succeed in College

### Field Guide Overview

#### Description and purpose:

For most Americans, there will be no greater financial investment made during their lives than the dollars spent on earning a four-year college degree. There are a few rational arguments that can be made against pursuing a college education, although the cost factors continue to rise. A recent report from the Georgetown University Center on Education and the Workforce found that college without a doubt does pay. During their lifetime careers, individuals holding a bachelor's degree earn an average of \$2.8 million. That figure far exceeds the median for workers holding a high school diploma by \$1.2 million. The Georgetown study also found that:

- 16% of high school graduates, 23% of the workers who have had some college education (but did not receive a college degree), and 28% of Associate of Art's (AA) degree holders (from community colleges) earn more than 50% of what workers with a bachelor's degree earned during their careers.
- 36% of workers who have earned a bachelor's degree have wages that are more than half of workers who hold a master's degree.

While the lifetime earning statistics for college degree holders are encouraging, real work is required to earn that college degree, and one must be well prepared to thrive in college before ever stepping onto a college campus. Some say that college preparation begins in ninth grade (the first year of high school). Others hold to the belief that college preparation begins in elementary school. Psychologists, early childhood experts, and neuroscientists subscribe to the notion that college preparation begins in preschool (or even prenatally) and is an endeavor that stretches over nearly two decades.

#### The questions we will address in this Field Guide are:

- What have we learned about how educators and parents can help prepare African American students and students of color for success in college?
- What did we learn about college preparation during the pandemic and how can it be applied in the future?
- What sponsored our recent progress?
- Are there obstacles that African American students and other students of color commonly encounter in (1) being accepted to a college or university, and (2) earning a four-year college degree? How do they overcome those challenges?



## Introduction to Field Guide #9

**Dr. Darin Brawley**  
Superintendent  
Compton Unified School District

[Click to Play](#)

- How do we get more African American students “college-ready” to ensure their success once they arrive on their chosen college campus?

## **Learning objectives:**

**The professional learning objectives embedded in this Field Guide are designed to prepare educators to do the following:**

- Review some of the historical and contemporary challenges facing African American students before and after they step foot onto a college campus for their first day of classes.
- Examine what K-12 classroom practitioners can do to meet the academic needs of African American students more effectively to prepare them for college.
- Be able to lead (or contribute to) a school wide conversation on how to support African American students in ways that will increase the number of African Americans students prepared for college.
- Understand how the various roles of teachers, staff members, and administrators on a school campus each contributes to the college readiness of African American students.
- Understand what parents and caregivers can do at home to prepare their child for college entrance.

## **Components:**

The Preparing African American Students (and Other Students of Color) to Succeed in College Field Guide has been developed around the following essential components:

- A. The verbatim “Voices” -- excerpts from interviews with students, parents, and administrators. The focus is on their personal experiences within their local educational systems, and how those systems addressed the needs of students of color.
- B. Lessons learned – analyzing what has worked well for African American students, what did not work well, and how we can apply those lessons learned for a more promising future for our students in spite of the COVID-19 pandemic.
- C. Each of the above professional learning experiences will be accompanied by:
  - Questions and written responses to be completed independently or in small groups (with an opportunity to share responses with colleagues).
  - “Reflections and Applications” that are designed to provide educators with opportunities for reflection on the contents of this Field Guide, and to devise multiple strategies by which the content can be applied to their school, school district, educational program, and/or daily work.
- D. Videotaped excerpts from an “Advancing Equity in an Era of Crisis” webinar conducted by a distinguished California educational leader.



- E. Recommendations of additional print and video resources that will be useful in helping African American students and students from other communities of color, as they work their way towards college admission.
- F. A survey tool to evaluate Field Guide #9.

It would be surprising to learn of any African American parent who is not interested in their child becoming a productive, stable, and financially secure adult. Recognizing that a college education has been the means of achieving those goals for millions of African Americans, this Field Guide can serve as a handbook for parents of K-12 students of color who want to see their child on a pathway towards earning a college or university degree.



## The Why

Since the founding of Harvard University in 1636, there has been a premium placed on education in general and higher education in particular, as reliable vehicles for guaranteeing employment opportunities and elevating the social status of well-schooled members of the upper classes. Horace Mann, considered one of the key influencers of American education said, "Education, beyond all other devices of human origin, is the great equalizer of the conditions of men, the balance-wheel of the social machinery."



For nearly 4 centuries, education has continued to shift the balance in favor of those who were fortunate enough to earn a degree from an institution of higher learning. It has been well documented that today there is an uncontested upside to attending a college or university, especially for individuals from historically marginalized communities. College degrees are regarded as a primary means of reducing poverty and closing the wealth gaps between people of color and whites.

For individuals who are upwardly mobile, as well as those who hope to maintain a middle class or upper middle-class status, a four-year college degree has been almost a requirement. In 1960, only 7.7% of the US population over the age of 25 had graduated from college. By 2020, that percentage had increased to 37.5% of American adults, graduating from one of the nation's 7,000 colleges. However, the U.S. ranks 19th in graduation rates among 28 countries in the OECD studies

Historically, African Americans and others from communities of color have encountered institutional and structural hurdles that presented barriers to educational attainment in higher education. Those factors include the following:

- It was illegal to teach Blacks how to read or write during centuries of enslavement
- Following the Emancipation Proclamation in 1865, there were almost no state-funded schools for African American children. In many southern states, Blacks with an equivalent education to whites were considered a threat to "the social order" that maintained white supremacy.
- In the two decades following the Civil War, several historically black colleges and universities (HBCUs) were founded, but not with the best of intentions. At Morehouse and Spelman colleges, Blacks could receive training certificates, but not college degrees. These HBCUs were funded by the Rockefellers and intended to create a black working-class. During those same years, the Rockefeller family founded the University of Chicago, which was designed to produce the white male managerial class. African American students were considered unfit for academically-oriented college and were directed towards trade schools or low-wage employment before or after high school completion.
- States that did support education for African Americans did so under the "separate but equal" restrictions, which were indeed separate, but far from equal to the education opportunities provided white children. Whites feared that a quality education for Blacks would allow Blacks to compete with whites on an equal footing.
- American education systems were developed around Jim Crow and segregated schools for blacks and whites, which dominated the black experience during the first half of the 20th century. One of the biggest contemporary debates concerning African American education was between two African Americans, WEB DuBois and Booker T. Washington, who advocated for academic education versus vocational education for Blacks, respectively.



- Funding trends during the 20th century typically favored predominantly white schools within a state, and predominantly white schools within the same school district often at ratios of 3 to 1. De facto segregation was the rule in northern schools, while de jure segregation was commonplace in thousands of southern school districts.
- The 1954 Brown versus the Board of Education ruling by the Supreme Court set the stage for the desegregation of American schools. However, today there are more segregated schools than there were on the day of that decision. Although segregation became illegal, schools with predominantly African American students faced multiple inequalities.
- Whites in both the North and South fought against school desegregation from the 1960s - 1980s. To achieve school integration, typically small numbers of black students were bussed to predominantly white elementary, middle, and high schools. Busing white students to predominantly black schools was by no means considered a rational solution, and white parents were well aware that the black schools were intended to be inferior and funded to accomplish that mission. (Perhaps a more effective proposition for school integration would have been to bus white students to the inferior school sites in the inner-city with lower-paid teachers, lower funding, fewer resources, and poor staffing. In this hypothetical scenario, Black students would have been sent to the better-resourced schools in the suburbs. Very few white parents would have objected to sending their children to better schools, even if there were black students present, since equal funding for all schools would have eliminated many disparities.) Regardless of the time period, white students typically received educational resources and teaching quality that was considerably superior to African American students.
- For a century and a half, institutions of higher learning for African Americans were limited to HBCUs. During the 1960s, several southern universities were integrated for the first time with black students, although this effort required Executive Orders from two US presidents (Eisenhower and Kennedy). Breaking the college color line was only accomplished with the assistance of the US Armed Forces escorting black students onto southern college campuses. White resistance and riots occurred during the process of college integration.
- Given the long and troubled history of deliberately diminishing educational opportunities for African Americans, unequal achievement outcomes should hardly be unexpected.

Today's challenges for African Americans students on college campuses is no longer merely admission. Instead, the goal is now (1) admission, (2) retention, and (3) course completion and graduation. To meet these targets, American students need

- ✓ better K-12 preparation for college admission
- ✓ campus environments that do not force black students into social isolation
- ✓ enhanced on-campus academic and financial support that leads to course completion and graduation



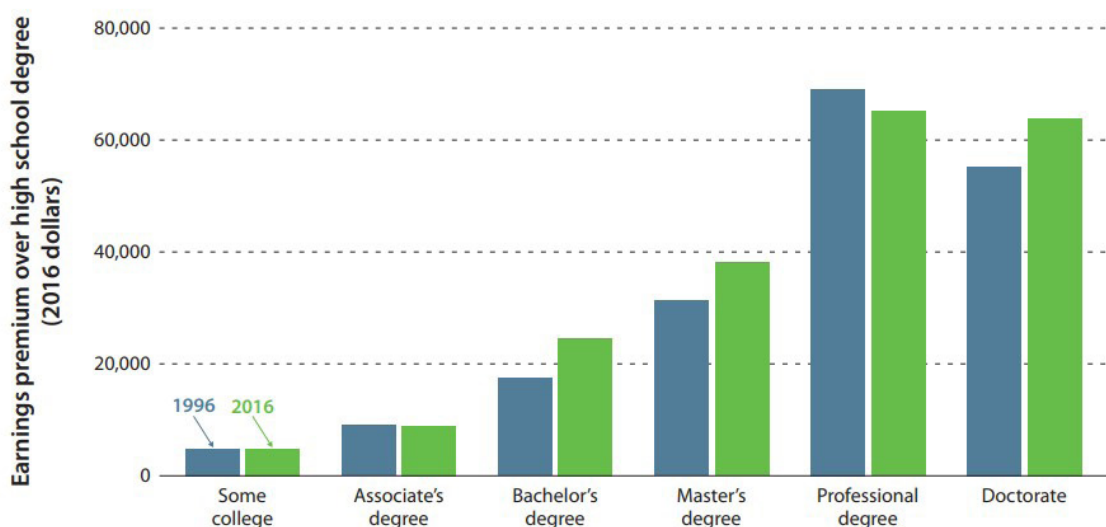
## Why is college so beneficial?

One of the fastest and most straightforward way to raise one's wages is via a college education. Americans earning advanced degrees not only earn higher wages, but also have higher wage growth potential over the course of their careers.

Moreover, earnings premiums become progressively larger with more advanced degrees (Master's and doctorates), and these premiums continue to rise annually. In the past two decades, the premium for a bachelor's degree holder has increased by almost 40 % to \$25,000; the premium for a master's degree has increased around 20% to almost \$40,000; and the premium for a doctorate has increased by about 15% to \$64,000. The largest premium is for professional degree holders, although that has fallen in the past 20 years by about 6% from \$69,000 to \$65,000. (See chart: Annual Postsecondary Earnings Premiums, 1996 and 2016).

FIGURE 1.

### Annual Postsecondary Earnings Premiums, 1996 and 2016



Source: U.S. Census Bureau 1997, 2017a; authors' calculations.

Note: The "earnings premium" is median earnings minus \$37,000, which is the approximate median earnings of a high school graduate. "Earnings" are medians and are expressed in 2016 dollars, deflated using the Consumer Price Index for All Urban Consumers Research Series (CPI-U-RS). "High school degree" includes GED attainment. The population includes people ages 25 to 64 years old that work full-time and year-round.

THE  
HAMILTON  
PROJECT  
BROOKINGS

It has been estimated that two thirds of today's jobs require college experience, with 30% of them demanding at least a bachelor's degree and 36% requiring at least some college or an AA degree (Carnevale, Smith & Strohl, 2013).

## Degrees and employability: Your major matters

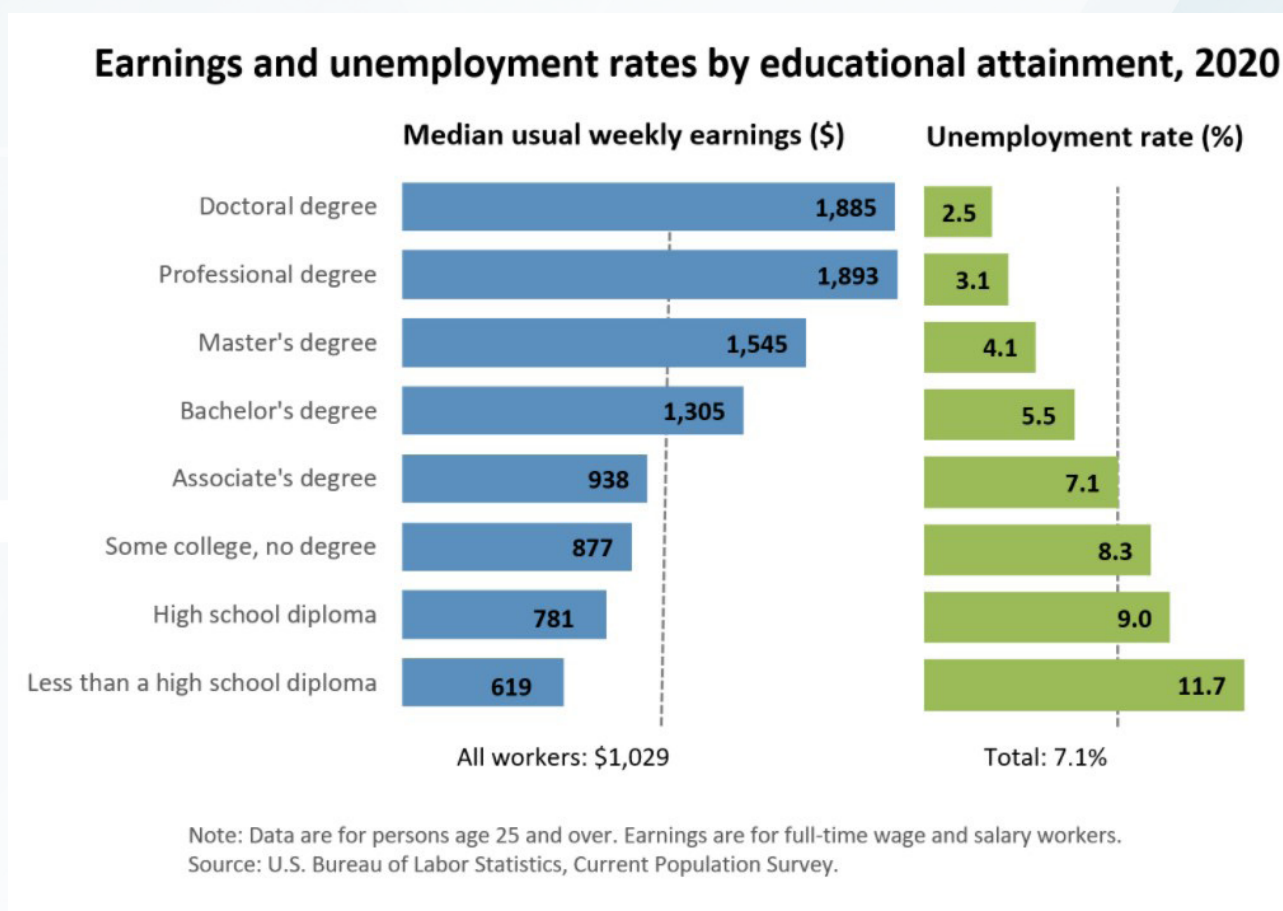
Research has shown that one's field of study matters and is closely correlated with lifetime earnings. Below are the median lifetime earnings for individuals holding bachelor's degrees in various fields.

- Architecture and engineering - \$3.8 million
- Majors in computer science, statistics, and mathematics - \$3.6 million
- Business - \$3 million
- Physical sciences - \$2.9 million



- Health professions - \$2.9 million
- Social sciences - \$2.8 million
- Biology and life sciences - \$2.8 million
- Communications and journalism - \$2.7 million
- Agriculture and natural resources - \$2.6 million
- Law and public policy - \$2.6 million
- Industrial arts, consumer services, and recreation - \$2.5 million
- Humanities and liberal arts — \$2.4 million
- The visual and performing arts - \$2.3 million
- Psychology and social work - \$2.2 million
- Education - \$2 million

As one moves up the educational attainment ladder, the probability of experiencing periods of unemployment (with months or years of lost or reduced income), continues on a declining scale. (See chart: *Earnings and Unemployment Rates by Educational Attainment, 2020*).



While advanced degrees do not guarantee that one will never experience unemployment, degrees clearly diminish that possibility. Similarly, the poverty rate for individuals with less than a high school diploma was 24.5% as compared to 4.8% for individuals who have earned a BA degree or higher.



## Race and earnings

Over the past 30 years, African American incomes has continued to increase

- 27.3% of black households earned an income between \$25,000 and \$50,000
- 15.2% earned between \$50,000 and \$75,000
- 7.6% earned between \$75,000 and \$100,000
- 9.4% earned more than \$100,000.

Across all educational levels, the traditional racial gaps in earnings persist. Whites typically often earn more than comparably educated African Americans or Hispanics. The median weekly earnings of a white male holding an advanced degree were \$1,760 compared to \$1,295 for an African American male with an advanced degree (US Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2018).

- Among high school graduates, white workers earn a median of \$1.7 million, compared to \$1.4 million for Asian, Black, and Latino workers.
- White workers with an AA degree earn a median of \$2.1 million, compared to \$2 million for Asian workers, \$1.9 million for Latino workers, and \$1.7 million for Black workers.
- At the bachelor's degree level, white and Asian workers each earn a median of \$2.9 million, compared to \$2.3 million for Black and Latino workers.
- At the master's degree level, Asian workers earn \$4 million, compared to \$3.2 million for white workers, \$3 million for Latino workers, and \$2.7 million for Black workers.

Students of color average a 21% increase in earning potential when attending more selective colleges. For several reasons, high-achieving, well-qualified, low-income Black or Latino students do not apply to top-tier universities (referred to as "undermatching"). The reasons include ineffective counseling in high school, affordability concerns, modest self-confidence, or students' perceptions about how welcoming campuses may be to people from first-generation, low-income or minority backgrounds. The average increase in earning potential is 15% for white or Caucasian students attending the same selective schools. Black and Latino students are disproportionately underrepresented in nearly all of the selective public and private universities in California, according to a study by the Urban Institute, highlighting the challenges some institutions have in improving diversity. Students at California's top-tier universities don't reflect state's racial and ethnic diversity, according to the study.

Black students in the UC system face persistent racial equity gaps, as supported by a study published by the Campaign for College Opportunity (CCO) in February 2019. Black student enrollment within the UC system remains severely low, at only 2% of the undergraduate population. Latino students are underrepresented at seven of the nine undergraduate UC campuses.





## The What

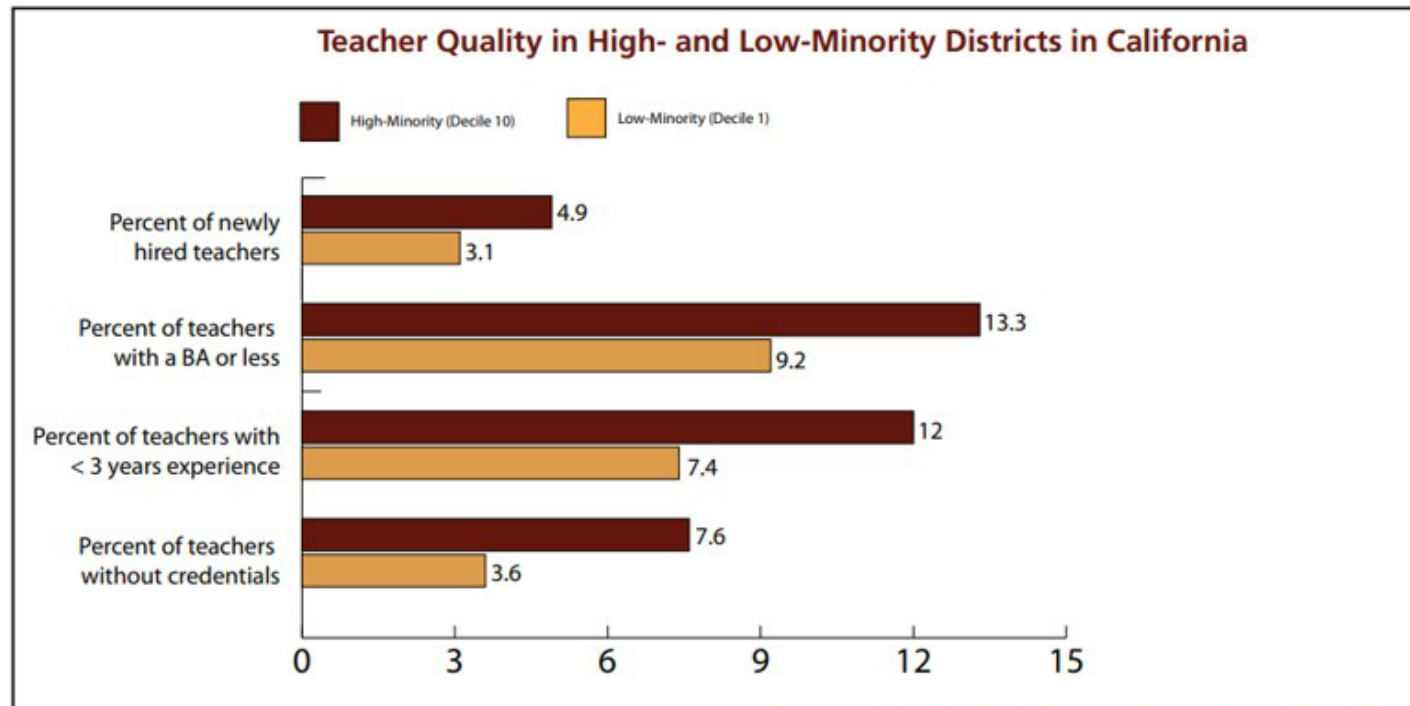
It should be noted that African American students and other students of color (including English language learners) are often enrolled in K-12 schools where their:

- (1) teachers hold fewer credentials
- (2) teachers earn lower salaries, and
- (3) faculties are staffed by more teachers in the first year of their teaching career.

Almost 500,000 students nationwide attend schools where 60% or fewer of teachers meet all of the state certification and licensure requirements. The National Commission on Teaching and America's Future found that new teachers hired without meeting certification standards (25% of all new teachers) are frequently assigned to teach the most disadvantaged students in low-income schools with higher percentages of students of color. One study found that almost 90% of the variance in student reading and math scores in grades 3, 6, and 8 was a function of differences in teacher qualifications. Research suggests that the quality of the teaching that students receive is the most important in-school factor impacting their school achievement (Thompson, Warren, Foy, & Dickerson, 2008. See chart: Teacher Quality in High- and Low-Minority Districts in California). Schools with lower



numbers of experienced teachers, predictably produce more students who are under-prepared for college.



*Source: California Education Data Partnership, 2008.*

Recent studies inform us that (1) teacher credential status, (2) years of teaching experience, and (3) teacher's educational attainment have a statistically significant effect on the remediation rates of students entering in college (Guarino, Brown, & Wyse, 2011; Howell, 2011).

Nearly 25% of our school districts with two or more high schools report a teacher salary difference of more than \$5,000 between those high schools with the highest and the lowest numbers of black and Latino students. Most teacher training programs offered through colleges of education do not train new teachers how to address the unique educational needs of students of color or students of poverty in urban settings. The students they are hired to teach are necessarily not the kind they were trained to teach (or the ones they necessarily want to teach). Teacher qualifications and class sizes can influence achievement in math and reading more than poverty, race, and parent education.

Furthermore, the average nonwhite school district receives \$2,226 less per pupil (approximately \$78,000 per classroom) than white school districts as a result of community wealth gaps. According to EdBuild, a nonprofit organization dedicated to overhauling school finance systems, majority-minority school districts receive \$23 billion less in funding than majority-white school districts. It should come as no surprise that the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) 4th and 8th grade scores for black students are 26 points lower than for white students.

Many school-based interventions (defaulting to distributing dittos and worksheets) are ineffective although seldom abandoned. Economists describe this collectively as a "return on investment." Annual investments in traditional inequities yield unsurprising outcomes negatively impacting



college readiness for students of color. Education is also a civil right, and every child should be entitled to attend a school that receives adequate funding and is staffed by educators adequately trained and fully credentialed.

As we found in the case of elementary and secondary schools, higher education was also heavily impacted by the 2020-2021 Corona Virus pandemic. Beginning in the spring of 2020, colleges shifted from in-person classes to exclusively online courses. More than half (51%) of postsecondary students in the fall of 2020 report-ed that the Corona Virus pandemic was “likely” or “very likely” to negatively affect their ability to complete their degree. Black students reported an even higher likelihood.

Today, there are decreasing numbers of white high school graduates and the number of black and brown high school graduates is increasing. Colleges and universities that were initially founded to educate students from the dominant culture must now admit more students of color than a generation ago for financial reasons. In recent years, elite universities have increased their African American student enrollment and graduation rates.

- In the fall of 2021, higher education enrollment fell an additional 2.7% following a 2.5% drop in the fall of 2020.
- Continued enrollment losses during the pandemic represent a total two-year decline in students of 5.1% since fall 2019.
- Every institution sector (four-year colleges and universities, community colleges, and for-profit colleges) saw undergraduate enrollment drops, with the largest numerical drops at public four-year institutions (-3.8%) and the steepest percentage decline at private for-profit four-year colleges (-11.1%).
- Overall, the number of enrolled college students has declined 6.6% since 2010.

While African American students have made enrollment gains over the past two decades, there has been less progress in closing the degree-attainment gap. Studies show that black students on average spend a year longer in college than their white counterparts to complete their degrees. (The median time black students spend to obtain a bachelor’s degree is five years and four months, one year more than the median for white students, according to the Center for American Progress (CAP). For Latinx students = 4 years, 8 months; For Asian students = 4 years). This extra time in college puts black students in a financial bind since the longer they are in college, the more debt they accumulate through student loans.

Moreover, because of inferior K-12 educational preparation, students of color often take remedial courses in college which consume both time and money. High schools must cease the practice of enrolling students of color into courses that do not prepare them for college.

The education that black college students often receive in their K-12 schools affects their ability to be admitted, to keep up, and to graduate from a four-year college. African American students who have little understanding of the history of American social policies sometimes mistakenly blame



themselves for being under-prepared for college. This is merely a consequence of being unaware of the systemic inequities that impact educational opportunities by race and family income. Misplaced self-blame contributes to lower self-confidence that can impact academic performance in a negative way.

Researchers have identified three factors in teacher quality that are critical for college readiness

- (1) high-level instruction in challenging courses,
- (2) high expectations from teachers,
- (3) positive relationships with teachers and other school staff  
(Flores, 2007; Reid & Moore, 2008).

In today's schools, teaching staffs do not reflect the changing demographics of the students they serve. One factor impacting college success is the systemic bias in K-12 teacher expectations of African American student potential. Non-black educators who subscribe to a deficit discourse were found to have lower achievement expectations of African American students than black teachers. In a survey investigating the causes for academic gaps between black-and-white students, almost 30% of teachers identified genetics as "somewhat to extremely" significant. Regrettably, they do not understand that the concept of race is a social construct, not a sound scientific principle that would govern learning and academic achievement.





Research has found that black students who have had at least one African American teacher in elementary school are less likely to drop out of high school and more likely to enroll in college. Over 82% of public-school educators are white, compared to 18% teachers of color. African American males account for only 2% of all educators. However, a teacher of any hue who is equity-minded and sincerely dedicated to personally guiding black and other marginalized students towards academic excellence makes a difference in their students' lives and help get them onto a college-bound pathway.

Opportunity gaps are present throughout American society, and they are more often than not driven by poverty and race. The effects of poverty can be further amplified by race. Fortunately, those factors are beginning to play a decreasing role in college admission and graduation.

College admission though, is not the first hurdle. College preparation is, and it should become a serious endeavor by the time a student enters middle school. Second, is understanding college enrollment and admission policies, as well as what is required academically and socio-emotionally to be successful in college, which is the purpose of the statistics presented in this Field Guide.

Students and parents should leverage this data-sharing information during their decision-making process (where, when, and how) for college planning and choosing from the different college sectors -- community college, four-year college or university, state college/university versus private university, a nonprofit versus for-profit college, as well as the various ways of financing a four-year college education. Higher education is certainly not the root of equity gaps impacting African Americans, but it should be seen as one of the best solutions. If you and your family are beginning to make college plans, digesting the different sets of statistics below.

### **General college statistics: Enrollment**

- US college enrollment peaked in 2010 at 21 million students.
- 66.2% of high school (or equivalent) graduates go on to postsecondary study
- Since 1960, the rate of enrollment among high school graduates increased 46.8% total (or just 0.8% annually). Among first-time, first-year college students, 83.0% are full-time students.
- 12 million or 60.9% of all students (graduate and undergraduate) are enrolled full-time.
- 21.8% of new HS graduates enroll in 2-year colleges; 44.4% enroll in 4-year programs. 14 million or 71.5% of all college students attend 4-year institutions.
- 27% of 4-year institutions had open-admissions policies.
- Among those accepted, 29% accepted at least 75% of their applicants.
- 30% accepted more than half of their applicants; 14% accepted less than half of their applicants.



### **General college statistics: College completion**

Once African American students are enrolled in college courses, institutions of higher learning need to make certain that faculty members are:

- (a) diverse, or
- (b) not hesitant to engage with students of color as mentors or advisors.

Research has demonstrated that, from kindergarten through graduate school, positive relationships with students have a positive influence on academic performance. Faculty members who believe in diversity, inclusion, and equity and are not only valuable resources to students, but they are beneficial to the institution's long-term future.

- The on-time graduation rate (approximately 4 years) is 36% at the most selective colleges and universities.
- For public colleges, the average time needed for college completion for a 4-year degree is 4.6 years.
- Just 41% of first-time, full-time freshman graduate four years after starting college. (NCES)

### **College dropouts**

- Among the dropouts, there is a fair percentage of students who did not meet their admission standards for a four-year school.
- In the U.S., the total dropout rate for undergraduate college students is 40%.
- 50% of students at public universities drop out.
- 40% of college dropouts have parents who did not complete their college.
- Full-time students are 55% less likely to drop out of college than students who go to school exclusively part-time.
- Students pursuing full-time courses are 55% less likely to drop out as compared to those who exclusively attend part-time school.
- The probability of students dropping out either at a 4-year or 2-year college is most likely for students between 20 and 29 years of age.
- 65.8% of people over age 21 do not have a four-year college degree.

The greatest social cost of being a college dropout is the increased probability of future unemployment. The greatest psychological costs are the low self-esteem and low confidence issues, which can also impact one's employability.

### **General college statistics: Students and race**

Some colleges and universities are beginning to embrace "holistic admissions" practices that consider the social and economic inequities that may have been experienced by applicants. While

some students have lived comfortable lives encountering very few obstacles and build a long list of extracurricular activities, others have been challenged in ways that made academic success elusive (attending under-resourced, minimal counseling, overcrowded schools with few advanced placement courses available), including part-time work to support the family.

However, when these two students apply for college admission with comparable academic backgrounds, the student who has overcome numerous challenges has already shown his/her commitment to learning in spite of the obstacles. When given a chance through admissions (and sometimes financial aid), these students are often stronger candidates for college completion.

- 54.3% of college students are white or Caucasian, and 72.6% of them are enrolled at 4-year institutions.
- As a percentage of the entire student population, non-white student college attendance has increased 191.1% since 1976.
- 2.3 million students are foreign-born.
- 33% of white Americans over the age of 25 hold a bachelor's degree compared to 19% of Black or African Americans and 16% of Hispanic Americans.

### **College statistics on African American students and other students of color**

- One educational report revealed that in the 2016-2017 school year, only 35% of black high school graduates were considered prepared for college (compared to 52% of whites).
- The extra time in college places black students in a financial bind since the longer one is in college, the more debt they often accumulate through student loans.
- Moreover, because of inferior K-12 educational preparation, often students of color are required to take remedial courses in college which consume both time and money. The education black students often receive in elementary, middle and high schools can affect their ability (a) to be admitted, (b) to keep up, and (c) to graduate from a four-year college.
- Research has shown evidence of systematic bias in teacher expectations for African American students and non-black teachers were found to have lower expectations of black students than black teachers.

### **Statistics on African American college students: Enrollment**

The enrollment deficits of African American students are not entirely caused by the students alone. K-university level educators need to pay more attention to the obstacles and institutional deficits impacting African American students' education well before they enter college.

Standardized SAT/ACT tests required for admission to many colleges often become barriers to college entrance for African American students. Sixty-one percent of black students who took the ACT test in 2015 met none of the four ACT college readiness benchmarks, which was almost twice the rate for all students combined (31%) taking the test that year. There has been some degree of acknowledgment that many standardized tests have built-in cultural and racial biases that favor majority students (white and middle-class). Poor students of all races perform worse on tests than



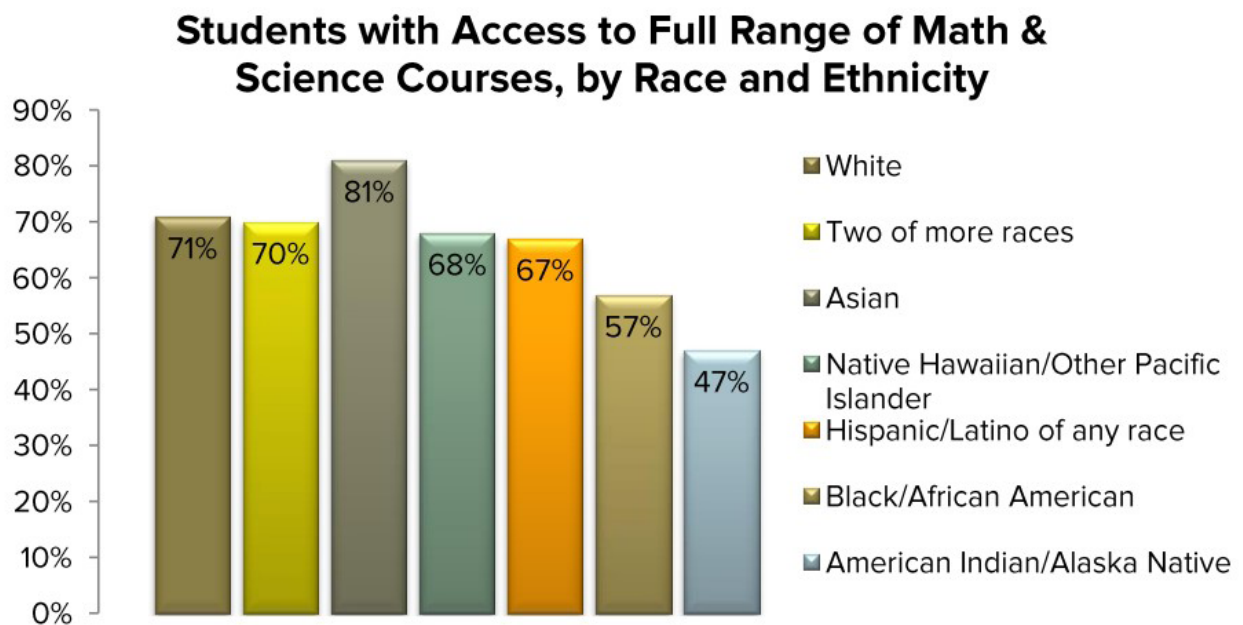
more-affluent students. Black and brown students are more likely than their white counterparts to be from low-income households.

Many high schools with large enrollments of students of color

- (a) have greater student enrollments,
- (b) have larger class sizes,
- (c) offer less access to high-quality curriculum, and
- (d) offer few advanced placement (AP) and honors courses that can increase a student's GPA and prepare them for the SAT/ACT exams.

When African Americans are enrolled in math courses, those classes are frequently low-level courses that do not contribute to their college preparation. African American students comprise only 8% of the high school enrollment in calculus. One report found that only 57% of African American students have access to the full range of math and science courses required for college readiness (whites were at 71% and Asians, 81%).

**Figure 1. Students with Access to Full Range of Math & Science Courses, by Race and Ethnicity**



Source: United States Department of Education, Office of Civil Rights. (2014). *Civil rights data collection data snapshot: College and career readiness.*

These schools seldom have SAT prep courses available to their students. Black and Latino students combined only represent 29% of students enrolled in at least one AP course. Their numbers are even lower in gifted and talented programs.



Often, African Americans who are first-generation college-bound students need mentors and/or more effective counselors in order to be aware of what courses they need get into college and succeed once they are enrolled. That counseling includes:

- academic planning
- college readiness
- extracurricular engagement
- the college exploration and selection process
- college affordability planning
- the college admissions process
- working closely with parents
- and SAT prep.

While some of these statistics may be viewed as sobering, they represent a significant improvement in closing the opportunity gap compared to the previous two generations of African Americans who were enrolled in higher education (including the HBCUs). One must remember that as late as the 1960s, African American and other students of color were seldom admitted to institutions of higher learning which served white students almost exclusively.

Bans on legalized segregation only began to have a significant effect in higher education in the mid-late 1970s. Today, college enrollments for students of color may experience a slight decline since affirmative action admission practices were condemned by the Trump administration.

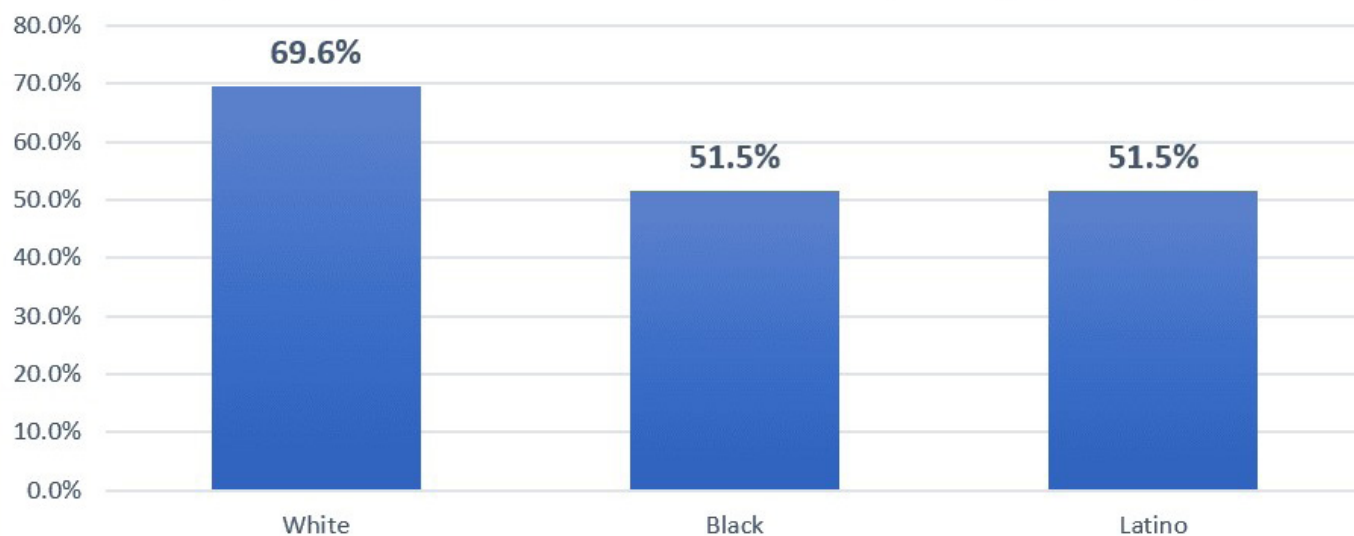
- The college enrollment rate for Black students who enter college immediately after completing high school (including GED recipients) was 57% in 2019, lower than in 2000 (66%).
- Between 2009 and 2019, the number of Black undergraduates who enrolled right after high school decreased from 2.5 million students to 2.1 million students.
- Of the 16.6 million total undergraduate students enrolled in the Fall of 2019, Black students made up 12.7% of the undergraduate population, but they were not equally represented at different higher education institution types.
- Black students made up
  - 12% of the student population at 4-year public institutions,
  - 13% of the student population at 4-year private nonprofit institutions,
  - 29% of the student population at 4-year private for-profit institutions.
- Between 2000 and 2010, total Black undergraduate enrollment increased by 73%.
- From 2000 to 2018, college enrollment rates among 18- to 24-year-old African Americans increased from 31% to 37%, while Hispanics increased from 22% to 36%.

- Only 15% of Black students attended a highly selective institution, and only 8% of Black students attended an elite research institution.

### Statistics on African American college students: College completion

While Black students are slowly catching up to their white counterparts in college enrollment, there has been less progress in closing the “degree attainment” gap. Among students of color who enter college with a 1200 or better score in the SAT/ACT, 57% of them graduate with an academic degree.

**Figure 1: 6-year Graduation Rate by Race/Ethnicity**



- Slightly more than half of Black and Latino (51.5%) students earned a degree after six years, compared with almost 70% of white students. That constitutes a graduation rate gap of approximately 18-percentage points.
- Nationally, white students at public colleges are 2½ times more likely to graduate than Black students, and 60% more likely to graduate than Latinx students.
- The college graduation rate for African American women is 46%, which represents one of the highest demographic success stories for people of color. Remarkably, 47% of black women in college are also parents, which adds to the degree attainment challenge.
- Around 38% of whites drop out of college, while 62% of African Americans and 54.8% of Hispanics drop out within 6 years of enrollment.
- In 2019, 29% of the Black population aged 25 to 29 held a bachelor’s degree or higher, which was an 11-percentage point increase from 18% in 2000. The white population in the same age range was 45%. Bachelor’s degree attainment for Black people aged 25 to 29 has increased more slowly than among white people.
- It is encouraging that over the past 7 years, the black student graduation rate has improved at almost all of the nation’s highest-ranked universities.
- Black students earned 14% of all bachelor’s degrees, 7% of all master’s degrees,

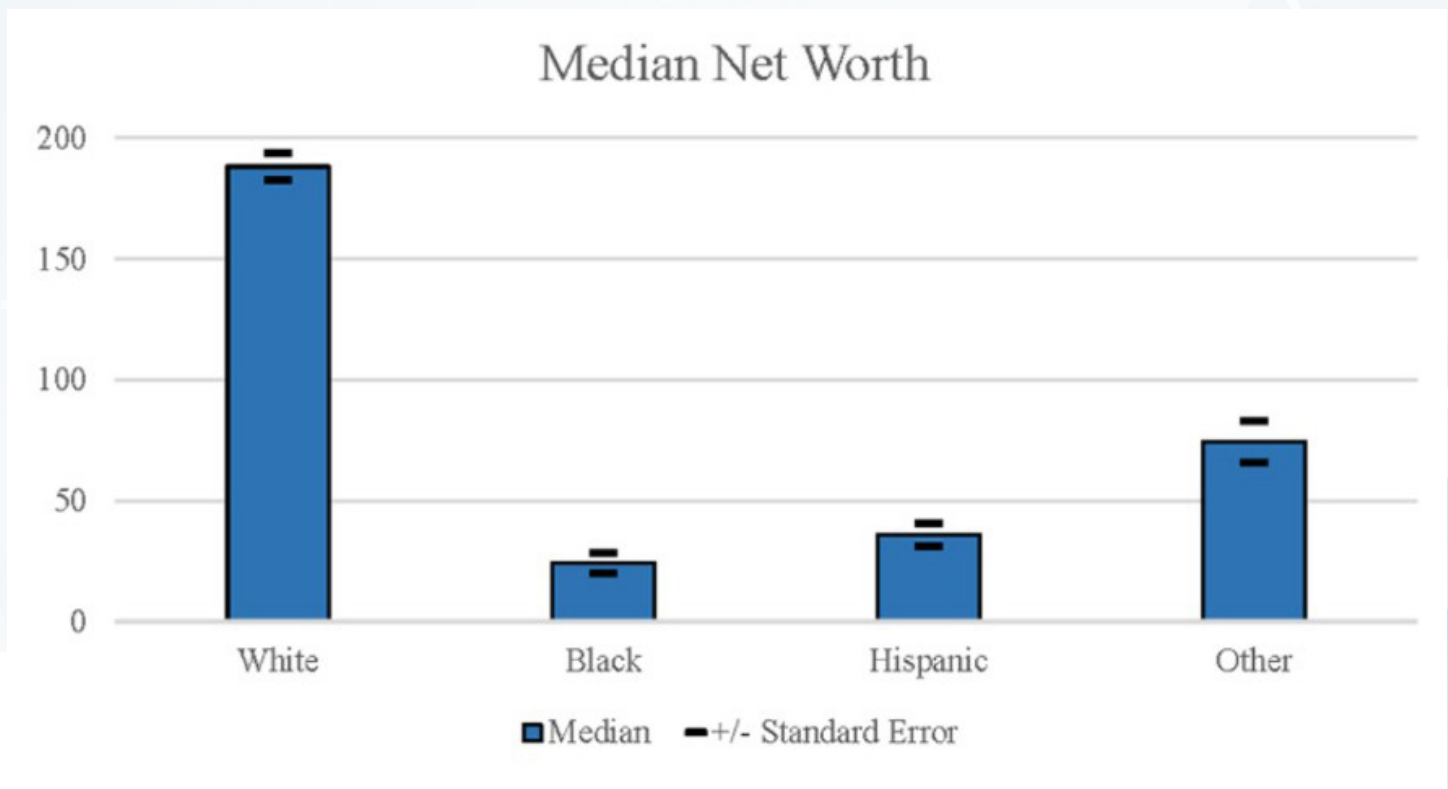


and 5% of all doctoral degrees conferred in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) fields in the 2018-19 academic year.

- The presence of a strong and relatively large core of black students on campus is important to college success and graduation for African American students.
- Asian students exhibit the least tendency to drop out.
- According to the U.S census about 43.8 percent of African immigrants achieved the most college degrees, compared to 42.5 percent of Asian Americans, 28.9 percent for immigrants from Europe, Russia and Canada and 23.1 percent of the U.S. population as a whole.

### **Statistics on African American college students: College debt**

Black students and their families are less likely than white students to have college money set aside, which means they are more likely to accumulate college debt. White families typically have significantly more wealth accumulated over multiple generations than families of color (2019, SCF).



### **In a 2019 survey:**

- White families had the highest level of median and mean family wealth (\$188,200 and \$983,400, respectively).
- Black and Hispanic families had considerably less accumulated wealth than white families. Black families' median and mean wealth is less than 15% of white families (\$24,100 and \$142,500, respectively).

- Hispanic families' median and mean wealth stood at \$36,100 and \$165,500, respectively.

For many families, housing comprises the largest component of accumulated wealth. The relationship between housing, race, family wealth is part of a complex and troubled history of federal policies, banking practices, and inequities. Combined, they resulted in segregated housing, beginning with the G.I. Bill, which set the stage for the large transfers of intergenerational wealth in white families. It would take the average black family 228 years to obtain the same wealth as the typical white family in America.

Over the last five decades, young African Americans have been also more likely to be cut off financially by their parents during their early adult years. Not every Black family wishes to stop supporting their child financially during his/her college years, but it is most frequently a result of necessity rather than desire.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, black families were more likely to experience food insecurity, housing insecurity, financial instability, and were forced to use any family savings to make ends meet. Consequently, many students who leave college (with or without earning a college degree) are often financially suffocated by sizable debts from their student loans.

- 72% of Black students received federal loans, compared with 34% of white students according to the National Center for Educational Statistics. The average award was for \$5000.
- Black students are also more likely to receive Pell Grants and take out federal student loans.
- In the 2015-16 academic year, black students took out larger federal loans on average (\$11,140) than Hispanic (\$10,500), Asian (\$10,940), and American Indian/Alaska Native (\$9,210) students. On average, white students (\$12,100) and Pacific Islander students (\$12,560) took out slightly higher loan amounts than Black students
- The student loan default rates are almost six times higher among Black graduates and 2.5 times higher among Latino graduates than they are among white graduates.
- Approximately, \$120 billion is spent per year on student grants and loans. In 2019, student loan debt amounted to US\$1.5 trillion, with over 2 million borrowers defaulting on their loans in the last six years.

### **First generation college students**

Students with parents who are middle-class, college-educated, and live in homes where there are large numbers of books, journals, and magazines, are often positioned to succeed in college more so than students who come from homes where these features are absent.

While some African Americans are first in their families to ever attend college, still larger numbers will be the first to complete a four-year college degree. Unfortunately, the dropout rate for African Americans has been relatively high, rendering the completion figures lower than desirable.



- The U.S. Department of Education classified 41% of African American students to be first generation (the first in their families to attend college).
- 89% of low-income first-generation students drop out, which is four times higher than second-generation students.
- The family success of these graduates will determine their social mobility and access to a middle-class life.

### Community college statistics

- Black and Hispanic students enroll in higher numbers in community colleges (and less-selective four-year institutions)
- Among African American high school graduates with a 3.5 GPA or better, nearly 33% still attend community college, often for financial reasons.
- Only 13% of students graduate in two years from community colleges.
- The average completion time for a two-year degree at a public college (with an enrollment rate of 29%) is more than 2 years. More than 85% of students take more than 2 years to graduate, approximately 22% graduate within three years, and 28% within four years. Many African Americans students attend community colleges as result of inferior preparation at the case 12 school systems. More than 40% of students attending community colleges enroll in a remedial class.
- 69% of the college dropouts were enrolled in a public community college. Two-year colleges have the highest dropout rate. The primary reasons include the following:
  - costs of college too high
  - living expenses were too high
  - exhausted financial aid eligibility
  - unpredictable schedules (including the responsibilities of parenting)
  - students lack key information (courses needed to graduate, advising, counseling, etc.)
  - miscommunication about student status
  - health emergencies (particularly for older students)
  - employment issues (lost a job or recently became employed)
  - difficult coursework (particularly math and science courses)
  - did not feel connected to the campus (feeling friendless and unwelcome)
- In 2019, approximately 40% of Black adults aged 25 to 29 had at least a two-year college degree, an increase from 26% in 2000.
- approximately 10% of students who leave college without a degree are only a few credits shy of graduation.

- community college students earn 30% more in income than those with only a high school degree.
- A college dropout earns 35% or \$21,000 less each year than a college graduate and dropouts may find it extremely difficult to make a living, support their families, and remain above the poverty level in the U.S.

### **School Funding leads to inequality**

Unfortunately, individuals who lack a deep knowledge of American history tend to hold African Americans responsible for disparities in educational outcomes. With mountains of research available on America's past, naïveté or ignorance are no longer acceptable excuses for insensitivity, not only to African Americans, but to the well-documented and readily available information on historical reality. Color lines may have been slightly blurred, but they still divide us in important ways.



These disparities did not emerge in a vacuum. Systemic inequalities were created and determinedly enforced with specific outcomes in mind. Victims should seldom be held accountable for their victimization. The troublesome war on black education began centuries ago. Although it has recently eased to a degree, it would be folly to optimistically celebrate a premature cease-fire.

- The wealthiest 10% of school districts in the United States spend nearly 10 times more than the poorest 10%.
- Poor students and students of color are often concentrated in the lowest-funded schools, most of which are located in central cities and funded at levels substantially below those of suburban districts right next door.
- Schools serving greater numbers of students of color have significantly fewer resources than predominantly white schools.
- Funding systems allocate fewer resources to poor urban districts than to their suburban neighbors, but studies consistently show that, within these districts, schools with high concentrations of low-income and "minority" students unconscionably receive fewer instructional resources than others inside the same district.

These statistical categories and the information subsumed under each of them should inform parents and students that attending and graduating from college may be challenging, but it will be extremely beneficial in the long run. However, unlike high school, college degrees are not handed out generously without completing the required coursework. This means personal discipline and dedication in pursuing this goal is important.



During the 1960s Civil Rights Movement, the phrase, “Keep your eyes on the prize,” became a popular slogan. For African American college students and other students of color, these words can serve as a powerful personal mantra during the college years.

## The How

Other than purchasing a family home, a college degree is often the first and largest investment that a student will make in his/her entire life. Earning a college degree, opens doors to lucrative jobs, stable careers, a comfortable lifestyle, employment satisfaction, and long-term personal finances that allow a family to move up the socioeconomic ladder.

Going off to college can be the most exciting time in a young person’s life, but the transition can also make it the most stressful. Academic success in high school accompanied by high SAT scores may deem an African American student “highly qualified” for admission to the most selective institutions of higher education. However, what if the student is ready for the university, but the climate or culture at the university is not welcoming or inclusive to the student?

Researchers have found that among the most striking differences between high school and college are (1) the lack of feedback in class – an academic challenge, and (2) feeling virtually “invisible” in enormous classrooms on a massive campus with few social connections -- the social psychological obstacle.

Students who come from schools and environments that are predominantly African American find walking into a classroom filled almost exclusively white and Asian students overwhelming. For African Americans with just a modest number of close multicultural relationships, transitioning to college life at predominately white institutions (PWIs) can be unsettling initially.

Seeing very few people who “look like me” during the course of an entire day often requires a major adjustment, let alone having few opportunities to actually speak with individuals from one’s own affinity group. Additionally, it is not uncommon to sit among 700 classmates in a large undergraduate class in a massive lecture hall which contributes to the feeling of being completely unnoticed on campus. Without a strong support system, the first several months on a college campus can be the most challenging, and they constitute one period during which new students are most prone to drop out of college.

The universal context of racism (UCR) is a race-based theory which suggests that individuals who are the historical targets of racism and racial discrimination are constantly sensitized to the possibility that their racial status may prompt unjust out-comes and experiences (Jones, 2003). For some individuals, the UCR recognition fosters ego resiliency, while for others, the negative feelings are internalized leading to depression. Today, depression is a widely common experience for African American students who find themselves “invisible” on large PWI college campuses. Depression affects “Dean’s list” students just as much as it does “struggling” college students. There is an emotional toll on students who feel vulnerable to micro-aggressions and more overt race-relevant events on campus that make their campus feel unwelcoming, and occasionally explicitly hostile. College success and college satisfaction have different meanings. When selecting a college campus, its reputation for “college life” for students of color warrants consideration.

As the COVID-19 pandemic begins to subside, more college tours and parent orientation visits have become available again. Most campuses offer interactive virtual tours that one can participate in via the Internet. All can be extremely helpful in narrowing down your college choices and in making a final college selection.

Although many colleges show a great amount of diversity in their online portrayal and print advertisements, a physical visit to their campus will often confirm

- (1) the genuine degree of diversity,
- (2) the level of real inclusion for students of color in campus life,
- (3) how welcoming the environment actually is, and
- (4) whether the campus might be a good personal “fit” or not.

Half of these assessments are quantifiable, while the other two are intuitive, but nonetheless informative and useful.

When referring to “student success” in college, the term takes on multiple meanings. It can indicate any of the following metrics:

- The number of high school students who are adequately prepared to transition from high school to a four-year college or university where they will graduate within the prescribed time.
- A substantial portion of students returning to their college each year to make reasonable progress towards earning a college degree
- A significant percentage of a community college’s students transferring to a four-year institution.
- A high percentage of students on campus who complete their four-year college coursework by the end (approximately) of their senior year.

These are the general college goals customarily summarized as “admission, retention, transfer, and graduation.”

For K-12 school districts, the mission is typically graduation and students moving on to college. For college and university administrators, the essential yard sticks are college completion and degrees awarded. However, in today’s world, many college students attend to earn a specific certificate, credential, or to take a limited number of courses that will permit them to enter or advance in an occupation or trade (or keep their current job). This route is particularly popular for students of color who are attending community colleges with a targeted goal in mind. Regardless of the objectives though, adequate preparation during the K-12 school years is essential for success in any college or university.



The current data tell us that a significant number of college students drop out before their graduation. In the United States, the annual undergraduate dropout rate stands at approximately 33% of students enrolled in college. That figure is somewhat higher for African American students. According to data from the NCES, only 9% of the bachelor's degrees earned by U.S. male students in 2016 were earned by Black men, while 67% were awarded to white men, and nearly 12% to Hispanic men. African American women earned 11.8% of the degrees conferred to women. Data from several universities indicate that African American male students (1) earn better grades, and (2) graduate at higher rates when they are able to participate in peer-support programs (a significant social psychological factor in one's college experience).

Retention is the other important college measurement. Approximately 28% of college freshmen leave college before their sophomore year begins. Four-year institutions see 57% of the students drop out of their home programs during the first six years. Unfortunately, the highest rate of college dropouts currently is 54%, which is for African American students.





As we dissect the many reasons why students do not complete their college coursework, the data from College Stats.org and other resources offer several of the most common explanations including:

1. The cost of higher education (31% of students leave college due to the financial challenges that well beyond merely paying tuition)
2. Being unprepared or under-prepared by their K-12 school systems and, subsequently, cannot meet the academic rigors of college. (13% of 4-year college dropouts re-enroll in a community college.)
3. A lack of personal discipline (too much freedom, too many friends, too much fun, and too little time for schoolwork).
4. No feeling of “belongingness” to the college or little/no involvement in campus life *(leading to an overall unhappiness with the college experience and feelings of isolation)*.
5. Interference from personal issues or family problems
6. Selected the wrong major and later attempting to start over
7. Very little or no guidance/individual attention from faculty members and college advisors *(no mentorship; feeling “invisible” on campus)*
8. Working part-time or full-time (in order to meet one’s personal financial commitments)
9. Boredom and/or academic burnout *(failing courses)*
10. No longer see the long-term benefit of investing time and money into a college or university degree.

While many of these exit motives may be justifiable, some also have a viable solution including the following.

- College costs: Seek scholarships, loans, and grants that are often available to financially strapped students.
- Feeling isolated: Meet with classmates, professors, and mentors. A certain degree of isolation is sometimes self-imposed.
- No guidance: College faculty members extend office hours where students can talk with and stay in touch with professors several times a week *(sometimes more often, if necessary)*.
- Academically challenged:
  - join a study group *(a great way to learn, to check your understanding of content/concepts, as well as to make new friends)*
  - find/hire a tutor *(some are sponsored by the university)*
  - learn how to manage personal time more efficiently
  - pay closer attention to due dates, announced quizzes, tests and assignments



- take better notes (*or take a crash course on notetaking*)
- do not cram for exams or wait till the last minute to write papers (*maintain effective study habits*)
- carefully monitor the time devoted to entertainment, video games, and nonproductive extracurricular activities. (*Calendarize your days and weeks, since there is only a finite amount of time available to master new content*).
- No feeling of “belongingness”: Some colleges have a well-earned reputation for being inhospitable to students of color. Regardless of their stellar academic reputations, these institutions may not improve their retention and graduation rates for students of color until the campus culture changes significantly and the college genuinely embraces diversity. Despite the rhetoric of “inclusion,” a hostile campus environment is demotivating which quickly impacts learning. Feeling invisible takes an emotional toll on African American students enrolled in predominantly white institutions (PWIs). (Many college students tend to “dropout,” because no one on campus seems to acknowledge that they had ever “dropped in.”) Consider transferring to a different college. Twelve percent of students opt for another college before or during their sophomore year.
- Interference from personal issues and: When life situations (school, jobs, and family) and other external demands stand in the way of college success, make an appointment to see a psychologist on campus immediately. Mental health challenges are not uncommon matters among college students. Take a quarter/semester off, or contemplate taking a gap year (but engage in something productive and continue to read voraciously). Students who take a gap year actually have a higher graduation rate than the general student enrollment.
- Wrong major: take general education courses that fit the requirements for almost any major during the first two years of college. Make an appointment to speak to a faculty advisor early.
- No longer see the value of college: Make arrangements to talk with a college advisor/counselor about career goals and realities. Ignore the “success stories” of individuals like Bill Gates and Mark Zuckerberg. Yes, there are a few college dropouts who become enormously successful, but they are far from the norm. Instead, remember that:
  - 94% of America’s wealthiest and most influential individuals are college graduates.
  - People with only a high school diploma have triple the rate of unemployment that college grads do.
  - College degree holders earn well over \$1 million dollars more over their lifetime careers than those who either did not attend or did not finish college.
  - College grads average \$17,500 more per year in earnings than high school grads, which can change one’s lifestyle significantly.



## Recommendations

Increasing the number of African American students who (1) are well prepared for college, (2) complete their college coursework, and (3) receive their college degrees requires closing the opportunity and equity gaps by doing the following:

### During the early years

- Fund nutrition programs that sponsor healthy early brain development from birth to 5 years of age
- Invest in universal preschool and Early Childhood Education programs (school districts).
- Provide transitional kindergarten (TK) programs for all California students (school districts). How school districts can make a difference
- Reverse the trend of new teacher assignments - send highly qualified new teachers to schools with high enrollments of students of color and send the less-credentialed teachers to the less-challenging school sites. (Deploy teachers with the greatest skills to the schools with the greatest need).
- Provide more teacher training on trauma-informed instruction and how to meet the academic needs of students of poverty more effectively.
- Implement high-quality counseling programs focused on college readiness beginning the first year of middle school.
- Maintain a low student-to-counselor ratio (no greater than 250-to-1).



## What should students do?

### During your middle school years:

- Establish good study habits.
- Enroll in challenging math, language, and science courses.
- Talk to counselor about your college aspirations.
- Begin a college savings account and ask relatives to contribute to the account as Christmas and birthday presents during the next six years.

### During your sophomore year of high school:

- Begin accumulating a list of extracurricular activities (school clubs and student government offices) including service learning (volunteer work) in the community.
- Talk to college graduates (parents, relatives, neighbors, etc.) about what it takes to qualify for admission and to succeed at a college or university.
- Keep track of accomplishments, awards, and recognitions that can be included when filling out college applications.
- Meet often with a counselor to discuss college plans.
- Develop effective time management skills.
- Take classes that will prepare you for college including AP and honors classes.
- Prepare for the PSAT and SAT exams.
- Maintain a high GPA.

### During your junior year of high school:

- Attend in-person or online college fairs and speak with college recruiters to refine college planning and entrance requirements.
- Meet with a counselor to make certain that you are on track for completing all of the academic requirements for college admission (including foreign language).
- Take SAT/ACT prep courses (some are free).
- Identify personal interests and match them with potential careers, along with the college majors available that align with those interests.
- Start preparing a list of teachers, administrators, community leaders, etc. from whom you will ask for letters of recommendation
- Identify your "safety schools," your "target schools," and your "dream" colleges (*investigate the positive and negative aspects of "public or private" colleges? "In-state or out-of-state" colleges? along with their associated costs*).
- Begin writing your college essay.

- Investigate scholarship and endowment websites.
- Register for college exams including the PSAT, ACT, and SAT.
- Get on the mailing list for preferred colleges for information.
- Maintain a strong GPA.

### **During your senior year of high school:**

- Meet with the counselor about meeting both high school graduation requirements and college admission requirements for selected colleges or universities. Counselors can help with completing college applications, filling out financial-aid applications, and identifying scholarships.
- Retake the SAT/ACT test for a higher score.
- Apply early. Check the dates for when your preferred colleges begin accepting applications (some are as early as August 1).
- Review college financial aid options. (Go to [www.fafsa.ed.gov](http://www.fafsa.ed.gov) to apply for financial aid, academic and athletic scholarships, loans, grants, endowments, etc.)
- Apply to your preferred colleges (top 10) well before the deadlines.
- Make a college visit to campuses on your “short list” (your top three college choices, or more if time, school schedules, and funds permit).

### **What can colleges and universities do?**

Make free comprehensive counseling and mental health services readily available to African American students of color preferably with a black psychologist (or a member of the Association of Black Psychologists.). In addition to the culture shock associated with attending a PWI, African American students often experience various forms of stress from racism and prejudice, financial worries, the pressure to achieve, feelings of isolation. According to a Pew Research report, African Americans are more likely to report that they have faced discrimination in college because of their race. Even black students who are successful academically suffer psychologically including those tormented by the “imposter syndrome,” feeling that their brilliance and academic success will suddenly be revealed as unreal/fake. Students of color report higher rates of emotional distress during their first year of college. Seventy-five percent of African American college students say that they keep their feelings about how difficult college is to themselves. They are only half as likely to seek treatment for mental health issues as other students).

- Impose a zero-tolerance policy for acts of overt racism on campus or with-in the campus community.
- Create a welcoming environment for students of color.
- Recruit and hire more faculty members, student advisors, and administrative officials who come from communities of color.



- Establish an affinity group for students of color (Black Student Union, Asian Student Alliance, etc.) on every campus.
- Many of the colleges and universities with high black student graduation rates have set in place orientation and retention programs to help black students adapt to the culture on PWIs.
- Establish a mentoring program for first-year African American students using upperclassmen as peer mentors, as well as college staff or faculty members of color (*not necessarily African American due to modest numbers of black faculty members*).
- Make certain that the student is connected to a support system composed of students and university staff members.
- Do not invalidate an African American student's perceptions of overt and covert forms of racism or feelings of alienation. Address them for thorough meaningful discussions and investigations if necessary. Perceived racial discrimination is an important factor that can affect psychological well-being for African Americans, consequently affecting their college satisfaction and entire college experience.
- Offer classes and/or conduct campus discussions on the history of policies and practices that have:
  - (1) fortified white privilege
  - (2) fostered inequities (*social, economic, legal, educational, housing, etc.*) that have negatively impacted the lives of people of color including the students on campus and their families.

Do not restrict these crucial conversations to Black History Month. Instead, they should be ongoing educational experiences where all students learn about the pernicious effects of historical race-based practices, whether they came by way of law or enforced customs. These behaviors have plainly run counter to ethics, the "golden rule," as well as operating against the spirit, and the letter of the US Constitution. College efforts aimed at promoting diversity, equity, and inclusion run hollow without candid discussions of the origins of structural and institutional inequities. Posting ant-racist slogans around the college campus is as fruitless as treating a traumatic brain injury with a Band-Aid.

**Field Guide #9: Preparing  
African American Students (and  
Other Students of Color) to  
Succeed in College**

**“Lifting our Voices”**

It is our job as educators, administrators, and parents to help African American children identify their strengths and assets in order to maximize their academic achievement. Although obstacles abound, the support we can give our students of color is boundless.



**Introduction  
to the  
Voices Videos**

**Dr. Theresa Price**

*Founder*

**National College Resource Foundation**

**Click to Play**

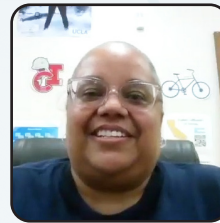
**Interviewees**



JoAndrea **Miller**  
*Parent*



Ms. **Haywood**  
*Teacher*



Ms. **Wilcoxson**  
*Teacher*



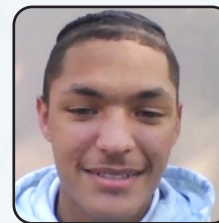
Mr. **Hood**  
*Teacher*



Desi  
*Student*



Jade  
*Student*



Lonnie  
*Student*

**What to look for in each of the interviews:**

What are the lingering effects of race felt by students in today's classrooms?

**Video #1** - How do we get more African American students “college ready”?

**Click to Play** - <http://bit.ly/fg9video01>

**Video #2** - Recommendations for parents

**Click to Play** - <https://bit.ly/fg9video2>

**Video #3** - Increasing the numbers of African American students moving towards college

**Click to Play** - <https://bit.ly/fg9video3>



#### **Video #4** - The role of counselors

**Click to Play** - <https://bit.ly/fq9video4>

#### **Video #5** - Belongingness: Your college must be a good fit

**Click to Play** - <https://bit.ly/fq9video5>

### **Professional Learning: Participant Responses**

- a. What are some of the unique needs that schools should focus on when preparing African American students for college?
- b. What is the most important role a teacher can play in helping to increase the number of African American students who are “college-ready”?
- c. As an educator, when would you say that “college preparation” begins?
- d. If you could send home an annual list of recommendations for college preparation with specific ways that parents could help African American students, what would appear on your list?
- e. Which of the following areas might help increase the number of black students going to college? Please elaborate on “why.”
  - more social-emotional support
  - better academic preparation
  - more AP and Honors courses available
  - ACT/SAT prep courses
  - financial support (grants, loans, scholarships, etc.)
  - peer support from college-bound peers.
  - needs of African American students in your educational school setting?
- f. Many African American students do not feel a sense of belongingness on their college campuses. What can/should be done to address this frequent perception?
- g. What have you communicated to your child about the importance and value of a college degree?
- h. What does your school do in particular to prepare African American students and other students of color for college?
- i. Does your school provide grade level appropriate information on the long-term goals of preparing for college? If so, when does it begin?
- j. If you could share with administrators a list of specific efforts that schools could make to support the college preparation needs of African American students, what would be the first five items included on your list?

## Reflections and Applications

- a. During the pandemic while schools were closed, what challenged your students the most academically? Did it interfere with their college plans?
- b. Does your school offer a wide range of honors and AP courses? Are significant numbers of African American students taking those courses? If not, why not?
- c. Does your school provide college visits for students? Does it provide visits by college faculty members or staff for recruitment and discussions on college planning?
- d. Does your school have dedicated counselors who direct African American students towards college?
- e. Many African American students do not feel a sense of belongingness once they arrive on a college campus. What can be done to remedy this feeling?
- f. College costs are skyrocketing. What would you say to students who are reluctant to enroll in college because of the high costs?
- g. The college success rates for African American men is considerably below the norm. How would you encourage more African American men to enroll in college and complete the college coursework?
- h. There are numerous opportunity gaps that present obstacles to African American students that move them off the track towards college. What are some of those obstacles that you learned of in this field guide?

**Excerpts from Session #14:**  
**Keeping Your Students on**  
**Track and Motivated to Win:**  
**Virtual College Tours, AP/SAT**  
**Prep, Online Career Training**  
**conducted by Dr. Theresa Price,**  
**Founder of the National College**  
**Resources Foundation.**

**Segment #1:**

**Timestamp: 0:30 to 1:14**

### **The parents' role in college readiness**

**Synchronous Professional Learning:** Discuss the following questions in your small group and report out to the larger body when you reconvene.

**Asynchronous Professional Learning:** Write your individual answers to each of the following questions.



# LESSONS LEARNED

**Dr. Theresa Price**  
Founder  
National College Resource Foundation

[Click to Play](#)



- What are some of the important roles that a parent can play in helping us to become college-bound?
- Once a child has decided to go on to college, how can a parent help?
- Navigating life and navigating college are quite different. How does a parent help with both?
- There is a self-confidence aspect of college preparation. What can parents do to boost a child's self-confidence in school?

**Segment #2: *Timestamp: 1:15 to 4:51***

### ***Distinguishing college planning from college readiness***

***Synchronous Professional Learning:*** Discuss the following questions in your small group and report out to the larger body when you reconvene.

***Asynchronous Professional Learning:*** Write your individual answers to each of the following questions.

- What are some of the most important distinctions between college planning and college readiness?
- What is the role of parents in college planning?
- What crucial role do K-12 schools play in college planning for African American students?
- What can be done to improve the concerted effort?
- Crafting the best personal plan for college is important. However, if a high school does not prepare a student well for college, what are the likely consequences?

**Segment #3: *Timestamp: 4:52 to 10:25***

### ***What is the difference between community colleges and four-year institutions?***

***Synchronous Professional Learning:*** Discuss the following questions in your small group and report out to the larger body when you reconvene.

***Asynchronous Professional Learning:*** Write your individual answers to each of the following questions.

- How would you distinguish community colleges from four-year institutions of higher education?
- What are some of the financial benefits of attending community college for the first two years of one's college education?
- What are the academic advantages/disadvantages of attending a community college?
- What role does part-time work play in attending either a community college or four-year institution?

**Segment #4: Timestamp: 10:27 to 12:55**

**Deciding on a college major**

**Synchronous Professional Learning:** Discuss the following questions in your small group and report out to the larger body when you reconvene.

**Asynchronous Professional Learning:** Write your individual answers to each of the following questions.

- Why does your college major matter?
- How might the quality of information from of a college advisor make a difference in selecting a major?
- What are some of the drawbacks of changing majors?
- If you were advising a high potential African American student on selecting a major, what would your advice be?

**Segment #5: Timestamp: 12:57 to 13:31**

**What does it take to get into college?**

**Synchronous Professional Learning:** Discuss the following questions in your small group and report out to the larger body when you reconvene.

**Asynchronous Professional Learning:** Write your individual answers to each of the following questions.

- If you were to highlight two mandatory focus points that a student should have each year between grades six and eight, what would they be?
- If you identified two mandatory focus points for a student's freshman and sophomore years of high school, what would they be?
- The final two years of high school are critical. What would you suggest every high school student do in his junior and senior year of high school?
- What is the role of the school counselor during these years?
- What guidance should parents give their child during the middle and high school years?

**Segment #6: Timestamp: 13:33 to 15:17**

**Starting college planning early**

**Synchronous Professional Learning:** Discuss the following questions in your small group and report out to the larger body when you reconvene.

**Asynchronous Professional Learning:** Write your individual answers to each of the following questions.

- Based on what appears in this field guide and the recommendations from the webinar, when would you suggest a student/family begin their college planning?







- Financing college is an important obstacle to many African American families. What measures can be taken to address this challenge?
- Many neuroscientists would say that college preparation begins before kindergarten. Why might this be so? What evidence have you seen?
- K-12 educators have a professional commitment to prepare every child for college. What are some of the difficulties facing educators in urban settings?

## **The Conclusion to Field Guide #9:**

We often say that we “stand on the shoulders of giants” who paved the way for today’s success of African Americans. However, along the way there were numerous individuals playing lesser roles who collectively made enormous contributions to contemporary educational opportunities for our students of color. While some marched for equality in education, others studied quietly and diligently and became examples for others to strive towards. Former Surgeon General Joycelyn Elders said, “You can’t be what you don’t see. I didn’t think about being a doctor. I didn’t even think about being a clerk in the store, because I’d never even seen a black clerk in a clothing store.”

Some people led civil rights marches, some led legal teams that brought down the walls of school segregation, and still others merely led by example. All played a critical role in positioning African American students for success in higher education today. Whether the role you play is that of an educator, a parent, a counselor, a school administrator or a community member, it is a crucial role that can contribute to an increase in the number of African American students who are well-prepared for college in the future and graduate from their chosen institutions. It truly does take a village to prepare each young child for success as an adult.

The value of strong academic preparation for African American students cannot be understated, but neither can the emotional and psychological support that every person in a child’s constellation contributes to that child’s development. Psychologists and educators underscore the importance of developing a “whole child” today rather than one who demonstrates academic promise alone. Our goal is not just to prepare them for college, but to prepare them for life. An emotional deficit can be just as incapacitating as an educational deficit. The most recent statistics on depression in African American students suggest that our efforts must go beyond assisting their academic preparation, but also their preparation for the challenges imposed by micro-aggressions, covert and overt forms of racism, as well as life itself.

Teaching young students about the monumental educational barriers to higher education imposed on African Americans just two generations ago through racial caste systems, can be one of the most essential lessons contemporary students can learn. Earning their degrees was a Herculean task, particularly when attending institutions that were subtly (and overtly) under-mining the success of African American students. The struggles and sacrifices made by our fathers and grandfathers, mothers and grandmothers, friends and allies brought us to a point today where success in higher education can be a promise we make to every African American child. However, each of us, regardless of color, plays an important role in transforming that promise into a reality.



## Resources:

- Black Voices: Black first generation college students share struggles, success stories  
<https://www.idsnews.com/article/2021/11/black-college-students-share-struggles-success-stories-us-dept-education>
- Campus climate comparisons in academic pursuits: How race still matters for African American college students. (2019). Sage Publications.  
<https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/full/10.1177/1368430218823065>
- Fact sheets: Black students. (2022). Post-Secondary National Policy Institute.  
<https://pnpi.org/black-students/>
- New Study: Cause Degree Carries Big Earnings Premium, but Other Factors Matter Too. October 2021. Forbes magazine.  
<https://www.forbes.com/sites/michaelnietzel/2021/10/11/new-study-college-degree-carries-big-earnings-premium-but-other-factors-matter-too/?sh=5404afab35cd>
- The Condition of College and Career Readiness 2013: African American Students. ACT. (2013). Retrieved From <http://www.Act.Org/Newsroom/Data/2013/States/Pdf/Af>
- The Emotional Toll of Racism  
<https://www.insidehighered.com/news/2020/10/23/racism-fuels-poor-mental-health-outcomes-black-students>
- The National College Resources Foundation <https://www.thecollegeexpo.org/>
- The Neglected College Race Gap: Racial Disparities Among College Completers  
<https://www.americanprogress.org/article/neglected-college-race-gap-racial-disparities-among-college-completers/>
- Unequal Opportunity: Race and Education  
<https://www.brookings.edu/articles/unequal-opportunity-race-and-education/>
- Why white students are 250% more likely to graduate than Black students  
<https://hechingerreport.org/%e2%80%8b%e2%80%8bwhy-white-students-are-250-more-likely-to-graduate-than-black-students-at-public-universities/>

## References:

- African American College Students' Experience of Racial Discrimination and the Role of College Hassles  
[https://www.researchgate.net/publication/228389593\\_African\\_American\\_College\\_Students'\\_Experience\\_of\\_Racial\\_Discrimination\\_and\\_the\\_Role\\_of\\_College\\_Hassles](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/228389593_African_American_College_Students'_Experience_of_Racial_Discrimination_and_the_Role_of_College_Hassles)
- Black Students and Mental Health: An Emerging, Unseen Crisis  
<https://www.insightintodiversity.com/black-students-and-mental-health-an-emerging-unseen-crisis/>
- Black Students in Higher Education <https://pnpi.org/black-students/>
- Black Workers Still Earn Less than Their White Counterparts  
<https://www.shrm.org/resourcesandtools/hr-topics/compensation/pages/racial-wage-gaps-persistence-poses-challenge.aspx>

- Campus climate comparisons in academic pursuits: How race still matters for African American college students <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/full/10.1177/1368430218823065>
- College Enrollment Rates [https://nces.ed.gov/programs/coe/pdf/coe\\_cpb.pdf](https://nces.ed.gov/programs/coe/pdf/coe_cpb.pdf)
- College Preparation for African American Students: Gaps in the High School Educational Experience. (2015). CLASP.  
<https://cdn.uncf.org/wp-content/uploads/PDFs/College-readiness2-2.pdf>
- Graduation Rates Don't Tell the Full Story: Racial Gaps in College Success Are Larger Than We Think  
<https://edtrust.org/resource/graduation-rates-dont-tell-the-full-story-racial-gaps-in-college-success-are-larger-than-we-think/>
- Growing up as a Black Male Student in White Suburbia: What I learned  
<https://www.brookings.edu/blog/how-we-rise/2021/11/24/growing-up-as-a-black-male-student-in-white-suburbia-what-i-learned/>
- K-12 Disparity Facts and Statistics <https://uncf.org/pages/k-12-disparity-facts-and-stats>
- Mental Health in College Students  
[https://mhttcnetwork.org/sites/default/files/2020-02/Mental%20Health%20in%20Black%20College%20Students%20Fact%20Sheet\\_2.pdf](https://mhttcnetwork.org/sites/default/files/2020-02/Mental%20Health%20in%20Black%20College%20Students%20Fact%20Sheet_2.pdf)
- The condition of college and career readiness 2013: African American students. ACT. (2013). Retrieved from <http://www.act.org/newsroom/data/2013/states/pdf/AfricanAmerican.pdf>
- What Happens Before College Matters  
<https://www.insidehighered.com/news/2020/10/20/black-students-need-changes-policies-and-structures-beyond-higher-education>
- What to Know About Depression in Black College Students  
<https://psychcentral.com/depression/what-to-know-about-depression-in-black-college-students>
- Why Black students experience depression  
<https://psychcentral.com/depression/what-to-know-about-depression-in-black-college-students#causes>
- Where to Find Scholarships for Black Students  
<https://www.usnews.com/education/best-colleges/paying-for-college/articles/where-to-find-scholarships-for-black-students>
- Who's to Blame for the Black-White Achievement Gap?  
<https://www.edweek.org/teaching-learning/whos-to-blame-for-the-black-white-achievement-gap/2020/01>
- Why Do Black College Graduates Have a Lower Homeownership Rate Than White People Who Dropped Out of High School?  
<https://www.urban.org/urban-wire/why-do-black-college-graduates-have-lower-homeownership-rate-white-people-who-dropped-out-high-school>

## Evaluation-Survey for Field Guide #9

<https://forms.gle/qRkg3h29bX5PL4ps7>





CAAASA presents:

# *Lifting Our Voices:*

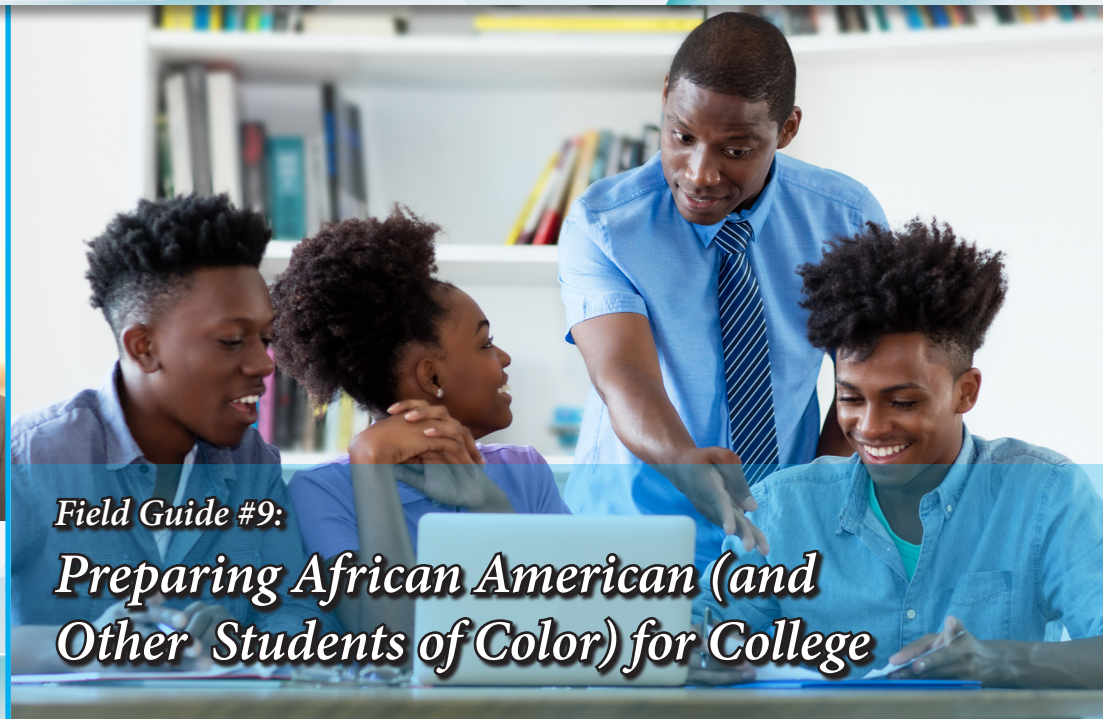


Presenter:

**Dr. Theresa Price**

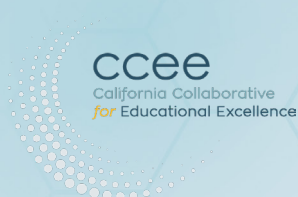
**Founder**

National College Resources Foundation



*Field Guide #9:*

*Preparing African American (and Other Students of Color) for College*



*School Re-orientation for Post-COVID Learning:  
What to Know, Do, and Expect  
as In-Person Instruction Resumes*

Sponsored by:

**California Collaborative for Educational Excellence (CCEE)**



California Association of African-American  
Superintendents & Administrators