

Martin Luther King Jr. Center Assessment Report, 2023-24

Who We Are

The MLK Center is a central hub for the exploration of African American heritage and culture. The overall Center is designed to foster an ethos of success that permeates the scholarly experience, the community and the world by setting a tone of change and lifelong improvement that inspires and fulfills the dream of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.

Points of Pride

- The MLK Center maintains a strong partnership with the Sacramento Black Chamber of Commerce through the Young Leadership Collaborative Program (YLC). The YLC is an entrepreneurial and leadership development initiative aimed at students aged 16 to 24. This program equips YLC scholars with the skills and knowledge necessary to become future business leaders in our region.

In 2024, the YLC program ran from January to June, accepting 18 scholars, the largest cohort since the program's inception in 2008. This year's group included 11 high school students and 7 college students. The scholars met every other Saturday at various locations across the Sacramento area, including UC Davis Health, Kaiser Permanente, Sacramento City College, Safe Credit Union Headquarters, and the Sacramento State Carlsen Center.

Each session featured a community business leader who facilitated a lesson in leadership or business, providing the scholars with essential tools to develop their business plans. As part of the program, the scholars presented their business plans to sponsors such as Wells Fargo, Safe Credit Union, UC Davis Health, SMUD, and PG&E.

To further support the YLC scholars, Dr. Marcellene Watson-Derbigny, the MLK Center Director, established a YLC mentoring program. This program pairs scholars with Sacramento State faculty and staff mentors throughout their participation in the YLC, ensuring they receive guidance and support as they develop their leadership and business skills.

- The MLK Center partnered with the Academic Advising Center, Peer Counselor Department, and Peer Academic Resource Center to utilize the liaison room as a dedicated support space for scholars. This central location within the MLK Center

provided a comfortable and accessible environment for students to seek academic and personal support. By offering a designated space where students felt at ease discussing their academic and personal issues, the MLK Center effectively enhanced the overall support system for scholars, contributing to their success and well-being. This initiative endeavors to increase student retention and graduation rates. The MLK Center's Canvas page is designed to keep students connected with the Center's diverse services throughout the year. This dynamic platform showcases our dedicated staff, highlights scholarship opportunities, and provides information on upcoming workshops and events, ensuring students have easy access to all the resources and support they need.

Signature Programs

- **MLK Black Joy:** The MLK Black Joy program provides our students the opportunity to build relationships and connections through a meaningful, cultural workshop that develops their personal development.
- **MLK Cultural and Consciousness Discussions:** The MLK Cultural and Consciousness program provides an open discussion on community and campus issues that affect our community and campus. The program opens up the discussion with MLK Scholars, campus and community partners, and staff/faculty.
- **MLK Financial Wellness:** The MLK Financial Wellness program provides financial information to our MLK Scholars on the best practices for managing money from a cultural standpoint and holistic view, from budgeting your scholarship, to maintaining credit scores, and investing in your future.
- **MLK Sankofa Mental Wellness:** The MLK Sankofa Mental Wellness is a partnership with the Sacramento State Student Health & Counseling Services. The MLK Center brings in trained counselors to promote mental wellness with our MLK Scholars and provide open discussion on best practices on how to deal with anxiety, self-confidence, and personal life issues. In our MLK Liaison Room, we have a counselor meet one-on-one with our students.

Additional Service Data

- The Center had 1,926 visits, serving 296 distinct students
- Number of outreach events: 31
 - Outreach events to Sacramento State students: 27
 - Outreach events to community: 4

MLK Center User Survey Outcomes

- A significant majority of scholars utilizing the MLK Center report positive experiences across various aspects of their engagement. Specifically, 71% of the scholars rate their overall experience with student engagement, resource advising, scholarship opportunities, and MLK workshops/events as excellent. Additionally, 77% of the scholars

have an excellent experience with the staff, 66% feel a strong connection with the staff, and 86% feel safe within the MLK Center.

- The scholar's comments about the MLK Center:
 - "Safe Space for everyone"
 - "The MLK Center makes me feel seen on campus as a black student"
 - "The MLK Center is my favorite place to be on campus!"

Pan-African Graduation Ceremony Survey

The MLK Center surveyed students at the Pan-African Graduation Ceremony to assess their experience as Black students at Sacramento State. 43 students completed the survey. The findings were as follows.

- **Question #1: How do you think the university can better address issues of diversity, equity, and inclusion moving forward?**
 - Approximately 37% of the responses discussed increasing activities and resources dedicated to the Black student experience and promoting more awareness of existing events and resources.
 - Around 20% of responses indicated that the university is doing a good job; nothing to improve.
 - About 17% of responses suggested hiring more diverse faculty and staff and providing training to faculty and staff to help students of color feel more welcomed.
 - Around 14% of students recommended building a campus culture that addresses issues of equity and inclusion head on, has honest conversations, and fosters mutual respect.
 - Approximately 11% of responses suggested asking the student body for their feedback and opinions.
- **Question #2: In your opinion, what initiatives or changes could the university implement to create a more inclusive campus environment for Black students?**
 - Around 29% of responses suggested providing more activities and events that cater to Black students or providing more funding for existing Black programs.
 - Approximately 26% of responses recommended improving communications and promotion about the existing resources for Black students on campus.
 - About 26% of the students felt the campus was already inclusive or had no suggestions for improvement.
 - Around 18% of respondents suggested hiring more Black faculty and staff.
- **Question #3: Do you have any advice or tips for incoming Black students to navigate their college experience effectively?**

Students wrote about staying positive, getting involved on campus (with specific mentions of the Black Student Union and the Cooper-Woodson College Enhancement Program), and finding your community. Some example quotes include:

- “Set your own standards high, because expectations will possibly be low. Work hard! Do NOT allow your professors to downplay your questions or concerns. Aim high! Believe in your[self]!”
- “find your people, don’t feel like you aren’t going to make connections in class just because you’re the only black student”
- “You might have to seek the resources on your own. But dont give up.”
- **Question #4: Were there any instances of discrimination or microaggressions that you experienced or witnessed?**
 - Yes: 24%
 - No: 76%

- **Question #5: How would you describe your experience as a Black student at our university?**

Approximately 79% of the respondents described their time at Sacramento State as positive, while 21% described it as lonely or hard. Some example quotes include:

- “I would describe my experience as a black student as inclusive. I was felt that my presence alongside that of my black peers was very strong.”
- “It was a lonely ride here as I transferred to Sac State. I didn’t have many Black [faculty], staff, and students [in my program]. I hope that will change if I return to Sac State for my Master's Program in the future.”

- **Question #6: Did you feel supported by faculty and staff during your time here?**

Response	Percent
Definitely Yes	49%
Probably Yes	35%
Neutral	12%
Probably Not	5%
Definitely Not	0%

- **Question #7: How would you rate your interactions with professors in terms of respect and understanding?**

Response	Percent
Extremely Comfortable	38%
Somewhat comfortable	45%
Neither comfortable nor uncomfortable	7%
Somewhat Uncomfortable	7%
Extremely Uncomfortable	2%