California Community College Collaborative (C4)

What Does a Ten Percent Achievement Gap Really Mean? (And What Can We Do About It?)

The Complexity of Achievement and Opportunity at the California State Universities

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Introduction: The Complexity of Achievement and Opportunity

What is an Achievement Gap?

For several decades, policymakers, the media, and the general public have leveled ethical and economic critiques at colleges and universities because of disparities in student outcomes, especially those related to graduation and degree attainment. And, indeed, some classes of university and college students persist and earn bachelor's degrees at greater rates than others. For example, in the United States there is a history of enduring university and college achievement differences related to race: Whites and East Asians have relatively high academic performance relative to African Americans, Latinos, Native Americans, and Southeast Asian subgroups. This differentiation in student achievement is characterized by the term "achievement gap." The most telling and overt disparity concerns the category of race, as if *race* signifies a condition or characteristic. On the one hand, race serves as an historical emblem of discrimination and leads to notions of social reparations in the form of a debt. On the other hand, race is merely a way of categorizing people into groups that signify certain cultural, familial, or geographic attachments (regardless of how much or little individual members of those groups identify with them).

Nevertheless, when educators, policymakers, and legislators ponder over differences and gaps in performance, they typically focus on a number of salient, if simple, questions. For example, in the matter or racial differences: "Why do only 40% of African Americans at this university graduate within six years when 60% of Asian students complete within the same period?" Or, "Why do 68% of Latino students at University A graduate within six years but only 48% of Latinos at University B?" Similarly, for gender differences: "Why is the graduation rate for women at this university 8 percentage points higher than that for men?" These are all reasonable questions, although they seldom have straightforward or easy answers.

What causes Achievement Gaps?

Scholars from a variety of disciplines have investigated possible explanations for the achievement gap. Some attribute it to social stratification within U.S. society.[i] Others point to inequality in K-12 educational opportunities such as exposure to quality teaching, availability of resources, academic rigor, and so forth.[ii] In particular, students from races and ethnicities traditionally underrepresented in college are less likely to be exposed to K-12 environments that are associated with college readiness and success, which frequently results in them being under-prepared for college-level work. And because students who are academically prepared for college (based upon their high school background and grade point average) tend to outperform their less well-prepared peers,[iii] this can help to explain the achievement gap. However, this explanation is fraught with contingencies. For example, student motivation often determines whether or not similarly prepared students will graduate, and socioeconomic status has a higher correlation with persistence and graduation than student ability.[iv]

Indeed, citing numerous examples of low-income students graduating at lower rates than their middle- and high-income peers, researchers have identified financial hardship as a primary reason for the achievement gap.[v] However, this explanation can also be problematical. Although universities often rely on Pell-eligibility as a proxy for low-income status, the actual cutoff point between low- and middle-incomes is debatable and thus Pell and similar markers of socioeconomic status may not be optimal indicators.[vi] Furthermore, regardless of how socioeconomic status is classified, it does not differentiate among students who live at home with their parents, those who

are independent, and those who have children and/or other dependents of their own, despite the fact that these circumstances are relevant to students' ability to pay for college and other living expenses. As well, while some scholars argue that financial subsidies to low-income individuals are one of the few measures that can lead to closure of the achievement gap,[vii] efforts to bolster students' finances during college, while a rational choice, are likely paltry interventions as socioeconomic status is closely tied to other characteristics of capital (social, cultural, familial) over which institutions of higher education have little influence. Indeed, some researchers cite social and psychological factors such as cultural capital and stereotype threat—in which students feel themselves to be at risk of confirming negative stereotypes about their social group—as additional contributors to achievement gaps.[viii]

How Can We Better Understand Achievement Gaps?

Clearly, the question of why some groups—Whites and East Asians, for example—often graduate at higher rates than their African American, Latino, and Native American peers is complex and not conducive to the type of one-sentence answers typically demanded by policymakers and the general public. To better understand—and to better explain—achievement gaps, university leaders might move beyond basic racial/ethnic classifications and examine variations in achievement among other natural identity groups such as gender, as well as *attributed* identity groups, such as those relating to socioeconomic status.[ix] Furthermore, since racial categories are at best generalizations or proxies, university leaders might disaggregate them by breaking the race classification into types (e.g., disaggregating Asians into Chinese, Vietnamese, Indian, Filipino, Hmong, etc., as well as Latinos into those with Cuban origins and those with Mexican origins) or by combining various natural identities (i. e., bi-racial, multi-racial). Also useful would be examining achievement through different combinations of natural and attributed identities (e.g., low-income African American females), as scholars note that the intersections of various conceptualized classes advantage or disadvantage certain students, especially when it comes to baccalaureate attainment.[x]

Disaggregating and examining various combinations of natural and attributed identity groups may be the first step in better understanding achievement gaps and, in the process, working to improve persistence and attainment for all students. But what about those institutions where there is no achievement gap, or where there is a *negative* gap? Take, for example, majority-minority institutions (those in which minority students outnumber Whites and Asians). Leaders of universities such as these might point out that Latino students, for example, graduate at rates similar to the general population. Yet depending upon the percentage of Latinos in the student body, this could indeed be a cause for celebration, or it might simply reflect that Latinos are, for the most part, being compared to themselves. Similarly, a university might advertise that its minority students graduate at rates similar to Whites and Asians but neglect to mention that completion rates for all groups are well below peer group averages. Still other universities appear to have made great strides in closing their achievement gap, but a close look at the numbers shows that the so-called "progress" is driven more by from diminishing graduation rates among White and Asian students than by improved performance among Latinos, African Americans, or other underrepresented groups.

As these three examples illustrate, the absence of an achievement gap does not necessarily indicate that a university is serving its students successfully. Indeed, regardless of the magnitude or direction of a university's gap, data-driven efforts to better understand the complexity of student achievement will be necessary if institutions are to provide the opportunities and necessary support for all students in attaining a bachelor's degree.

What is the Connection between Achievement and Opportunity?

The literature suggests that students' experiences are seminal in persistence and achievement. For example, students with negative experiences in college do not persist to the same degree as those with positive experiences. Students who are isolated, lonely, or out of their comfort zone, as well as those who are assaulted or bullied, are challenged to complete degrees.[xi] Yet none of these factors are typically included in policy discussions about the achievement gap.

Furthermore, the term *achievement* is itself problematical, both for its connotations of merit and for its policy use in recent decades (e.g., the assumption that graduation is the only meaningful achievement).[xii] Indeed, some critics suggest that *opportunity* is a more appropriate term.[xiii] However, if opportunity is viewed as the development of individuals' capabilities,[xiv] then outcomes such as attainment of baccalaureate degrees, advancement to further education, or preparation for employment are irrelevant. Yet, if opportunity refers to a future condition such as employability or possession of the skills necessary to participate meaningfully in society, then the lack of a baccalaureate degree is highly relevant and suggests a failure of opportunity to a number of possible futures (e.g., fulfilling employment, further education). In a more specific way, if opportunity refers to a future condition, then the quality of the university experience and the value of that experience (economically, socially, personally) are highly relevant. This suggests that within the university there are different experiences and outcomes—such as limited learning, low grades, and restricted student development—and that all of these experiences and outcomes (without regard to race, gender, or socioeconomic status) qualify opportunity.

In addition, while the term *achievement gap* necessarily focuses on students (pointing out which groups are performing better or worse than others), it is the *institution* that must modify its goals and practices, and the institution that is judged on its performance. Student learning, student development, and student experiences are seldom part of the achievement discourse.

How Can We Begin to Close Achievement Gaps?

Shifting from a rhetoric of achievement to one of opportunity is thus more consequential than it may seem, for if colleges and universities maintain a focus on achievement based on the graduation rates of various groups of students, history shows that there seems to be little that institutions can do to close the gap(s). Indeed, at many universities, achievement gaps have widened in recent years, despite improved graduation rates among all or most populations. And at universities where achievement gaps have begun to close, one can often point to increased selectivity at entry or drops in overall graduation rates as a primary cause.

The challenge, then, is for colleges and universities to contextualize student achievement and opportunity, without relying too much on the rhetoric of a "gap." Contextualization may require more nuanced characterizations of students and their various natural and attributed identity groups, including their native or domestic language, their academic backgrounds, their gender, and their socioeconomic status. It may also require characterization of the specific university—its selectivity, its mission and purposes, its history, its human and cultural geography (e.g., rural agricultural, suburban bedroom, or high tech community, as well as its immigration history), and its faculty (e.g., ethnic makeup, professional orientation toward teaching or research, and predominance of full-time, part-time, tenured, or non-tenure track faculty).

From contextualization, university leaders can make assertions about expectations and outcomes related to student achievement. For example, "Given the high level of research activity carried on at

this university, the relatively high selectivity of students, and the history and reputation of this campus as strong in academics, even with a large Latino student population, our expectation is that six-year graduation rates will be well-above the national average and that there will be minimal disparities in graduation rates among students, regardless of their race, gender, socioeconomic status, or level of prior academic preparation." Or, for a very different type of institution, "Given that a vast and growing majority of our students have high levels of financial need, hail predominantly from underserved communities, and require remediation in Math and/or English, we are proud to announce that six-year graduation rates among all types of students have steadily improved over the last five years. Over the next five years we will work tirelessly to improve opportunity and achievement for all students, particularly those who face the greatest challenges in degree completion."

The second matter for colleges and universities to examine relates to student experiences and outcomes within both the institution in general and in specific programs. At minimum, this might entail in-depth examinations of departmental conditions—such as faculty accessibility, frequency of faculty-student interactions, academic support, grading practices, and/or peer relations—that may have disproportionate effects on certain students. Taken further, this information might lead university leaders to consider the idea of "person-environment fit"[xv] and the notion that persistence and degree attainment may be substantially improved if students with particular characteristics, interests, and abilities are encouraged to enroll in departments or programs that are compatible with those characteristics, interests, and abilities.[xvi] While critics of "matching," as this practice is known, argue that it could be a slippery slope leading to racial profiling and educational tracking, other scholars point to the fact that "departmental culture and climate [affect] student learning, satisfaction, and persistence,"[xvii] and that without attention to the experiences and conditions that affect student opportunity, gaps in achievement may persist indefinitely.

Achievement gaps have thus far persisted at U.S. colleges and universities because of imperfect definitions of achievement, but also because of institutional habits and behaviors. For example, enrollment management practices continue to rely upon criteria that reflect academic potential but not probability for student persistence or graduation. Low-income students are required to work but pressured to carry a full load of courses. Students with academic deficiencies are expected to remediate in short order or be set adrift. Faculty and departmental demographics have not altered substantially over the decades. And where demographics have altered—for example in ethnicity or gender—these are typically in select areas (e.g., social sciences and humanities). Thus, efforts to close achievement gaps, defined in the traditional sense, have had little success.

Attention to a race-based achievement gap within the California State University (CSU) system is not likely to dissipate in the coming years. Indeed, the CSU Chancellor's Office has set firm goals for 2025 related to closing achievement gaps, both at each university and across the system. To meet these goals, however, the universities will need to dig deeper into their persistence and graduation data and ask questions such as:

1. "Which identity groups (or combination of groups) are driving the achievement gap at my institution?"

2. "What demographic and/or enrollment shifts may be affecting the performance of various groups?"

3. "How do non-identity-based factors such as socioeconomic status and academic preparation factor into the achievement gap?"

4. "How might we move from a deficit model of thinking—where the social and cultural capital associated with non-White students is viewed as a challenge to their academic success—to one that focuses on and strengthens the assets these students bring to college?"

5. "Moving beyond individual determinants of college completion, which institutional programs and policies improve opportunity and achievement among various categories of lower-performing students, and which may perpetuate the achievement gap?"

The pages that follow provide initial, top-level responses to questions such as these for each of the 23 universities in the CSU system. They emerged from in-depth analyses of graduation rates and trends at each institution, and are intended to provoke discussion about the nuances and complexity of achievement gaps at each university, as well as new thinking about how faculty and administrators might work to improve opportunity and achievement for all students, especially those that face the greatest challenges in degree completion. The paper concludes with a brief analysis of achievement and opportunity at the system level, as well as a look to the future.

California State University, Bakersfield

Demographic Shifts

California State University, Bakersfield (CSUB) has grown substantially over the past 15 years; its 2013 freshmen cohort was nearly 150% larger than the same cohort in 2000. Latinos account for much of this growth; this group made up 60% of the 2013 freshmen cohort (up from 36% in 2000). In contrast, the African American population at CSUB has declined slightly in terms of its share of incoming students—from 8% in 2000 to less than 7% in 2013 (actual numbers varied from 43 to 105).

The Achievement Gap at a Glance

At CSUB, six-year graduation rates among Underrepresented Minorities (URMs) have increased since 2000 (from 38-46%), but among Whites and Asians (Non-URMs) graduation rates have fallen (from 45 to 37%). CSUB's achievement gap in 2008 was thus negative (URMs outperformed Non-URMs).

Comparison with Peer Institutions

In comparison to its national peers (national peers and accompanying data are from www.collegeresults.org), CSUB's URM graduation rate (46%) is the second highest among peer institutions. However, graduation rates among Non-URMs at CSUB (37%) are among the lowest. As a result, CSUB's achievement gap of -9% is the largest negative gap in the group.

What Drives the Achievement Gap and What Can be Done About It?

Because Latinos make up the vast majority of URM students at CSUB, rising graduation rates among these students have contributed to the elimination and reversal of CSUB's achievement gap. However, *the major drivers of CSUB's negative achievement gap are lower graduation rates among Whites and Asians.* Furthermore, not all URM students are demonstrating improved completion rates. African Americans, for example, are less likely than all other groups to graduate within 6 years (only 17% of African Americans in the 2008 cohort graduated, down from 21% in 2000). Targeted interventions for African Americans, as well as for Non-URM students—the minority at CSUB—may be necessary if CSUB is to improve graduation rates for all students.

Improved graduation rates among male students in the 2008 cohort may have also contributed to the recent negative achievement gap. Indeed, although males have typically graduated at rates between 8 and 14% lower than females, in 2008 the gender achievement gap was negligible. CSUB may be well advised to investigate the programs and support services that have contributed to rising graduation rates among males and to develop or expand those that show promise. In addition, it may be useful to examine intersection of gender and race as it relates to degree completion.

Academic preparation may also be related to variations in achievement among CSUB students, although the direction of the association is not clear. For example, measures of educational preparedness (i. e., SAT scores and high school GPA) among incoming students at CSUB have fallen slightly over the past decade, and average SAT scores among URMs remain between 100 and 125 points lower than for Non-URMs (average GPAs among URMs are slightly lower). Furthermore,

while the percentage of students deemed proficient at entry has increased across the board since 2000, in 2013 only 35% of incoming URMs were prepared for college-level work, compared to 43% of the overall cohort. Clearly, URMs at CSUB display lower levels of academic preparedness than their White and Asian peers. So why are their completion rates rising, while those for Non-URMs are falling? It is possible that the support and advisement URMs receive in developmental sequences may contribute to improved persistence and completion. It is also possible that Non-URMs don't receive or don't benefit equally from that same support. As a next step toward improving graduation rates for all students, CSUB may want to consider how developmental experiences qualify or boost opportunity for less-well-prepared students—both URM and Non-URM—and subsequently target interventions to these areas.

Finally, CSUB may want to consider how socioeconomic status affects persistence and completion among various groups of students. At CSUB, URMs are more likely than Whites and Asians to be from low-income backgrounds. Indeed, 76% of URMs are Pell-eligible, compared to 64-67% of each overall cohort. Given the literature that describes the additional obstacles low-income students face in completing postsecondary degrees, one might expect the relatively high incidence of Pell-eligibility among URM students to result in lower graduation rates. As this is no longer the case at CSUB, at least for Latinos, the university might investigate whether and how financial subsidies and/or attention to the social, cultural, and familial capital associated with lower-income groups have affected graduation rates.

Priority Considerations for Closing Achievement Gaps at CSUB

- Identify the departments and/or programs in which completion rates among Whites and Asians have fallen, as well as those were graduation rates have remained steady or improved. What support services (if any) are targeted to Non-URM students? What lessons or best practices can be shared to improve completion among Non-URMs in the future?

- Identify the departments and/or programs in which completion rates among Latinos have risen, as well as those where URM students may not be showing as much improvement. What might account for these differences? What lessons or best practices can be shared to improve completion among Latinos and African Americans in the future?

- Investigate the factors leading to an almost negligible achievement gap between females and males in the 2008 cohort. What might account for the dramatic improvement in male graduation rates, as well as the slight decrease in female graduation rates? Are there large variations in the gender achievement gap among departments and/or programs of study? What programs or services could be put in place to better support both male and female students at CSUB?

- Examine persistence within developmental sequences, in particular differences among URM and Non-URM students. How might the experiences of academically unprepared students affect their likelihood of graduating, and how might these experiences differ between URM and Non-URM students?

- Consider the connection between Pell-eligibility and completion. What financial subsidies or supports are or can be targeted to low-income students? Do these affect URM and Non-URM students in the same ways? How might attention to other factors (e.g., cultural capital or stereotype threat) help to improve graduation rates among low-income students?

California State University, Channel Islands

Demographic Shifts

California State University, Channel Islands (CI) has grown substantially over the past 15 years; its 2013 freshmen cohort was nearly 300% larger than it was in 2000. Latinos account for much of this growth; this group made up 53% of the 2013 freshmen cohort (up from 23% in 2000). The African American population at CI has also increased (from 16 to 21 students) but African Americans make up only 2-5% of each freshmen cohort.

The Achievement Gap at a Glance

At CI, six-year graduation rates among both Underrepresented Minorities (URMs) and Whites and Asians (Non-URMs) are relatively high and have increased since 2000 (from 51-63% and 53-61%, respectively). As such, CI's historically small achievement gap was negative for the 2008 cohort (URMs outperformed Non-URMs).

Comparison with Peer Institutions

In comparison to its national peers (national peers and accompanying data are from www.collegeresults.org), CI has the highest six-year graduation rates for both URMs and Non-URMs.

What Drives the Achievement Gap and What Can be Done About It?

Because Latinos make up the vast majority of URM students at CI, rising graduation rates among these students are the major drivers in the elimination and reversal of CI's achievement gap. Six-year graduation rates among African Americans have also improved substantially, but because of the low number of African Americans in each cohort, the achievement gap between these students and Whites and Asians has ranged from negligible to nearly 30%. Targeted interventions for African Americans may be necessary if CI is to further improve graduation rates for these students.

Improved graduation rates among male students in the 2008 cohort may have also contributed to the recent negative achievement gap. Indeed, males in the 2006 and 2007 cohorts graduated at a rate roughly 8% lower than females, but in 2008 the gender achievement gap was only 2%. CI may be well advised to investigate the programs and support services that have contributed to rising graduation rates among males and develop or expand those that show promise. In addition, it may be useful to examine intersection of gender and race as it relates to degree completion.

Academic preparation may also be related to variations in achievement among CI students, although the direction of the association is not clear. For example, measures of educational preparedness (i. e., SAT scores and high school GPA) among incoming students at CI have fallen slightly over the past decade, and average SAT scores among URMs remain between 60 and 130 points lower than for Non-URMs (average GPAs among URMs are slightly lower). Furthermore, while the percentage of students deemed proficient at entry has increased across the board since 2000, in 2013 only 27% of incoming URMs were prepared for college-level work, compared to 39% of the overall cohort. Clearly, URMs at CI display lower levels of academic preparedness than their White and Asian peers. So what accounts for the fact that they are now graduating at rates similar to or higher than their Non-URM peers? It is possible that the support and advisement URMs

receive in developmental sequences may contribute to improved persistence and completion. As a next step toward improving graduation rates for all students, CSUB may want to consider how developmental experiences qualify or boost opportunity for less-well-prepared students—both URM and Non-URM—and subsequently target interventions to these areas.

Finally, CI may want to examine how socioeconomic status affects persistence and completion among various groups of students. At CI, URMs are more likely than Whites and Asians to be from low-income backgrounds. Indeed, 64% of URMs are Pell-eligible, compared to 42-48% of each overall cohort. Given the literature that describes the additional obstacles low-income students face in completing postsecondary degrees, one might expect the relatively high incidence of Pell-eligibility among URM students to result in lower graduation rates. As this is no longer the case at CI, at least for Latinos, the university might investigate whether and how financial subsidies and/or attention to the social, cultural, and familial capital associated with lower-income groups have affected graduation rates.

Priority Considerations for Closing Achievement Gaps at CI

- Identify the departments and/or programs in which completion rates among various racial groups have risen, as well as those where students may not be showing as much improvement. What might account for these differences? What lessons or best practices can be shared to continue improving completion among both URMs and Non-URMs?

- Investigate the factors leading to a smaller gender achievement gap in the 2008 cohort. What might account for the improvement in male graduation rates? Are there variations in the gender achievement gap among departments and/or programs of study? What programs or services could be put in place or expanded to better support both male and female students at CI?

- Examine persistence within developmental sequences, in particular differences among URM and Non-URM students. How might the experiences of academically unprepared students affect their likelihood of graduating, and how might these experiences differ between URM and Non-URM students?

- Consider the connection between Pell-eligibility and completion. What financial subsidies or supports are or can be targeted to low-income students? Do these affect URM and Non-URM students in the same ways? How might attention to other factors (e.g., cultural capital or stereotype threat) help to improve graduation rates among low-income students?

California State University – Chico

Demographic Shifts

California State University – Chico has grown over the past decade, with entering freshmen cohorts roughly 20% larger in 2013 than in 2000. Latinos account for much of this growth; this group made up 34% of the 2013 freshmen cohort (up from 10% in 2000). The African American population at Chico has increased slightly, averaging 2% of each freshmen cohort.

The Achievement Gap at a Glance

Six-year graduation rates at Chico differ substantially between Underrepresented Minorities (URMs) and Whites and Asians (Non-URMs). Despite increased graduation rates among both groups (from 38% to 47% for URMs, and 56% to 62% for Non-URMs), Whites and Asians continue to complete at higher rates than their URM peers, leading to an achievement gap of nearly 16% for the 2008 cohort.

Comparison with National Peers

In comparison to national peer institutions (national peers and accompanying data are from www.collegeresults.org), URM graduation rates at Chico are about average, although graduation rates among Non-URM students are among the highest. As such, Chico's 16% achievement gap is one of the highest in the peer group.

What Drives the Achievement Gap and What Can be Done about It?

Latinos make up the majority of URM students at Chico, and thus drive the achievement gap between URM and Non-URM students. Academic support and advisement targeted to this population may be necessary if Chico is to substantially improve Latino graduation rates. Completion rates among African Americans are even lower than those for Latinos, however. Because these students comprise such small percentages of incoming freshmen cohorts, it is possible that African Americans face considerable pressures, resulting in higher likelihood of attrition. Yet because there are only 55-60 African Americans in each cohort, providing intrusive academic support and advisement to this population may be feasible and yield substantial benefits.

Lower graduation rates among males may also be a driver of Chico's achievement gap. Although six-year graduation rates among both males and females have improved since 2000, the gender achievement gap has hovered around 11% (53% of males in the 2008 cohort graduated within 6 years, compared to 66% of females). Given that males, Latinos, and African Americans all graduate at rates substantially lower than their comparison groups, Chico may be well advised to focus its retention and academic support efforts on men of color.

 Academic preparation is another major driver of Chico's achievement gap. Although measures of educational preparedness (i. e., SAT scores and high school GPA) among incoming students at Chico have risen slightly over the past decade, average SAT scores among URMs remain around 100 points lower than those for Non-URMs, and average GPAs are slightly lower. Furthermore, while the percentage of students deemed proficient at entry has increased across the board since 2000, in 2013 only half of URMs were prepared for college-level work when they arrived on campus, compared to 60-63% of the overall cohort. Clearly, URM students arrive at Chico with lower levels

of academic preparedness than their White and Asian peers. As such, they may spend more time in developmental sequences, earn lower grades in courses, and require more intensive academic support. As a next step toward closing the achievement gap, Chico may want to consider how these experiences qualify opportunity for less-well-prepared students and subsequently target interventions in these areas.

Finally, while many Chico students are from low-income backgrounds, 65% of URM students are Pell-eligible, compared to 37-42% of each overall cohort. Given the literature describing the additional obstacles low-income students face in completing postsecondary degrees, the high proportion of Pell-eligible URM students at Chico does much to explain the achievement gap. The incorporation of additional financial subsidies or support targeted to low-income URM students may help to raise graduation rates overall *and* close the achievement gap, although attention to the social, cultural, and familial capital associated with lower-income groups may also be necessary.

Priority Considerations for Closing Achievement Gaps at Chico

- Identify the departments and/or programs in which completion rates among Latinos and African Americans have risen, as well as those where URM students may not be showing as much improvement. What might account for these differences? What lessons or best practices can be shared to improve completion across the university? Which support services are most effective for African American students, and which work best with Latinos?

- Further investigate achievement gaps between female and male students. Are there large variations in the gender achievement gap among departments and/or programs of study? What programs or services could be put in place to better support men, especially men of color, at Chico?

- Examine persistence within developmental sequences, especially for URM students. How might the experiences of academically unprepared students affect their likelihood of graduating, and how might these experiences differ between URM and Non-URM students?

- Consider the connection between Pell-eligibility and the achievement gap. What financial subsidies or supports are or can be targeted to low-income URM students? In what ways might attention to other factors (e.g., cultural capital or stereotype threat) help to close the achievement gap between low-income students and their middle- and higher-income peers?

California State University – Dominguez Hills

Demographic Shifts

California State University – Dominguez Hills (CSUDH) has grown considerably over the past decade, with entering freshmen cohorts roughly three times larger in 2013 than in 2000. Latinos account for much of this growth; this group made up 72% of the 2013 freshmen cohort (up from 29% in 2000). In contrast, the African American population at CSUDH has declined substantially in terms of its share of incoming students; African Americans made up 42% of the 2000 freshmen cohort but only 14% of freshmen in 2013 (actual numbers remained about the same at just over 200).

The Achievement Gap at a Glance

Six-year graduation rates at CSUDH are low across the board, but analyses of the achievement gap between Underrepresented Minorities (URMs) and Whites and Asians (Non-URMs) show an even more troubling trend. Despite an increase in graduation rates among Non-URMs (from 29 to 39% for the 2000 - 2008 cohorts), graduation rates among URMs have *fallen*. Indeed, 34% of URMs in the 2000 cohort graduated within 6 years, compared to 31% in the 2008 cohort (some cohorts in between showed graduation rates as low as 24%).

As a result, CSUDH's achievement gap between URMs and Non-URMs has gone from negligible (or even negative) to 8% for the 2008 cohort.

Comparison with National Peers

In comparison to national peer institutions (national peers and accompanying data are from www.collegeresults.org), URM graduation rates at CSUDH are among the lowest (Non-URM graduation rates are on-par with peer institutions). As such, CSUDH's 8% achievement gap is one of the highest in the peer group. Indeed, many of CSUDH's peers display negative achievement gaps; in other words, URMs at these institutions out-perform their Non-URM peers, likely because URMs make up the majority of the student body at many of these universities. While CSUDH is also a majority-minority institution, declining URM graduation rates have driven the university's achievement gap from 0 to 8% in four years.

What Drives the Achievement Gap and What Can be Done about It?

Although Latinos make up a majority of URM students at CSUDH, extremely low and declining graduation rates among African Americans are a major driver of the current 8% achievement gap. Currently, fewer than one-quarter of African Americans graduate from CSUDH within six years. As these students have comprised smaller and smaller percentages of incoming freshmen cohorts, it is possible that African Americans have faced considerable pressures, resulting in higher likelihood of attrition. However, because there are only 200 or so African Americans in each cohort, academic support and advisement targeted to this population may be feasible and have a disproportionate impact on the overall achievement gap.

Diminishing graduation rates among males is another likely driver of CSUDH's achievement gap. Among the 2000 cohort, males and females graduated at similar rates (34% for males, 32% for females). Since then, graduation rates among males have declined and now lag substantially behind

those for females. Given the parallel trends toward lower graduation rates among males, Latinos, and African Americans, CSUDH may be well advised to focus its retention and academic support efforts on men of color.

Academic preparation is another major driver of CSUDH's achievement gap. Although measures of educational preparedness (i. e., SAT scores and high school GPA) among incoming students at CSUDH have risen slightly over the past decade, average SAT scores among URMs remain between 60 and 100 points lower than those for Non-URMs (average GPAs are similar among the two groups). Furthermore, while the percentage of students deemed proficient at entry has increased across the board since 2000, in 2013 only 16% of URMs were prepared for college-level work when they arrived on campus. Clearly, URM students arrive at CSUDH with lower levels of academic preparedness than their White and Asian peers. As such, they may spend more time in developmental sequences, earn lower grades in courses, and require more intensive academic support. As a next step toward closing the achievement gap, CSUDH may want to consider how these experiences qualify opportunity for less-well-prepared students and subsequently target interventions in these areas.

Finally, while the vast majority of CSUDH students are from low-income backgrounds, 77-79% of URM students are Pell-eligible. Given the literature describing the additional obstacles low-income students face in completing postsecondary degrees, the high proportion of Pell-eligible students at CSUDH does much to explain the university's low graduation rates overall, as well as the achievement gap between URM and Non-URM students.   The incorporation of additional financial subsidies or support targeted to low-income URM students may help to raise graduation rates overall *and* close the achievement gap, although attention to the social, cultural, and familial capital associated with lower-income groups may also be necessary.

Priority Considerations for Closing Achievement Gaps at CSUDH

- Examine why completion rates among African Americans and Latinos have fallen in recent years. What programs are or could be put in place to better support these students through graduation?

- Investigate falling graduation rates among males, especially those from African American and Latino backgrounds. What programs are or could be put in place to better support men, particularly men of color, at CSUDH?

- Examine persistence within developmental sequences, especially for URM students. How might the experiences of academically unprepared students affect their likelihood of graduating, and how might these experiences differ between URM and Non-URM students?

- Consider the connection between Pell-eligibility and the achievement gap. What financial subsidies or supports are or can be targeted to low-income URM students? In what ways might attention to other factors (e.g., cultural capital or stereotype threat) help to close the achievement gap between low-income students and their middle- and higher-income peers?

California State University, East Bay

Demographic Shifts

California State University, East Bay (CSUEB) has grown substantially over the past 15 years; its 2013 freshmen cohort was more than twice the size of the same cohort in 2000. Latinos account for much of this growth; this group made up 42% of the 2013 freshmen cohort (up from 16% in 2000). While smaller in number, the African American population at CSUEB has also increased—from 11% in 2000 to 15% in 2013 (actual numbers grew from 70 to 223).

The Achievement Gap at a Glance

At CSUEB, six-year graduation rates among Underrepresented Minorities (URMs) increased between 2000 and 2004, but have since fallen. Similarly, graduation rates among Whites and Asians (Non-URMs) increased between 2000 and 2007 before falling. Among both groups, graduation rates for the 2008 cohort were lower than in 2000. Thirty-one percent of URMs and 44% of Non-URMs in CSUEB's 2008 cohort graduated within 6 years, leading to an achievement gap of 12%.

Comparison with Peer Institutions

In comparison to its national peers (national peers and accompanying data are from www.collegeresults.org), CSUEB's graduation rates for both URM and Non-URM students are similar to the average. However, CSUEB is the only institution in its peer group to display falling graduation rates, and its achievement gap of 12% is among the largest.

What Drives the Achievement Gap and What Can be Done About It?

CSUEB's achievement gap of 12% for the 2008 cohort is smaller than those was for the two previous cohorts (23% and 17%, respectively). However, it would be spurious to claim that the achievement gap has narrowed due to improved performance among URMs. Indeed, graduation rates among all groups have *fallen* in recent years; the smaller achievement gap simply reflects the fact that Non-URM graduation rates began their decline a few years after those for URMs.

Because Latinos make up the majority of URM students at CSUEB, the fact that they graduate at lower rates (34%) than their Non-URM peers (44%) is a major driver of the achievement gap. However, while African Americans only comprise 15% of each freshmen cohort, the fact that they graduate at even lower rates (27%) is also a contributor. Targeted and intrusive academic support and advisement for Latinos and African Americans may be necessary if CSUEB is to further close the gap. However, falling graduation rates among Whites and Asians are also concerning and deserve further attention.

Unlike many of its peer institutions, male students at CSUEB graduate at rates only slightly lower than their female counterparts, although graduation rates among both groups have declined in recent years. Thus, the gender achievement gap (3% for the 2008 cohort) may not be a major contributor to the race-based achievement gap. However, it may still be useful to examine intersection of gender and race as it relates to degree completion.

Academic preparation, on the other hand, is almost certainly a contributor to the achievement gap. For example, although measures of educational preparedness (i. e., SAT scores and high school

GPA) among URM students at CSUEB have increased slightly since 2000, average SAT scores among URMs remain between 70 and 90 points lower than for Non-URMs (average GPAs among URMs are also lower). Furthermore, while the percentage of students deemed proficient at entry has increased across the board since 2000, in 2013 only 27% of incoming URMs were prepared for college-level work, compared to 33% of the overall cohort. Clearly, URMs at CSUEB display lower levels of academic preparedness than their White and Asian peers. As such, they may spend more time in developmental sequences, earn lower grades in courses, and require more intensive academic support. As a next step toward improving graduation rates for all students, CSUEB may want to consider how developmental experiences qualify or boost opportunity for less-well-prepared students and subsequently target interventions to these areas.

Finally, CSUEB may want to consider how socioeconomic status affects persistence and completion among various groups of students. At CSUEB, URMs are more likely than Whites and Asians to be from low-income backgrounds. Indeed, 70% of URMs are Pell-eligible, compared to 55-57% of each overall cohort. Given the literature that describes the additional obstacles low-income students face in completing postsecondary degrees, the high incidence of Pell-eligibility among URM students does much to explain lower graduation rates among Latinos and African Americans. The incorporation of additional financial subsidies or support targeted to these students may help to close the achievement gap, although attention to the social, cultural, and familial capital associated with lower-income groups may also be necessary.

Priority Considerations for Closing Achievement Gaps at CSUEB

- Identify the departments and/or programs in which completion rates among Latinos and/or African Americans have fallen, as well as those where graduation rates have remained steady or improved. What might account for these differences? What support services are targeted to URM students, and are these targeted to URMs in general or specific racial groups? What lessons or best practices can be shared to improve completion among URMs in the future?

- Identify the departments and/or programs in which completion rates among Whites and Asians have fallen, as well as those where graduation rates have remained steady or improved. What support services (if any) are targeted to Non-URM students? What lessons or best practices can be shared to improve completion among Non-URMs in the future?

- Examine persistence within developmental sequences, in particular differences among URM and Non-URM students. How might the experiences of academically unprepared students affect their likelihood of graduating, and how might these experiences differ between URM and Non-URM students?

- Consider the connection between Pell-eligibility and completion. What financial subsidies or supports are or can be targeted to low-income students? Do these affect URM and Non-URM students in the same ways? How might attention to other factors (e.g., cultural capital or stereotype threat) help to improve graduation rates among low-income students?

Fresno State University

Demographic Shifts

Fresno State University has grown over the past decade, with entering freshmen cohorts nearly 70% larger in 2013 than in 2000. Latinos account for much of this growth; this group made up more than half of the 2013 freshmen cohort (up from 31% in 2000). The African American population, on the other hand, has decreased, both in numbers and as a share of incoming freshmen cohorts (African Americans comprised 8% of the 2000 cohort but only 3% of the 2013 cohort).

The Achievement Gap at a Glance

At Fresno State, six-year graduation rates among both Underrepresented Minorities (URMs) and Whites and Asians (Non-URMs) have improved since 2000, from 38-47% for URMs and from 50-57% among Non-URMs. Although the achievement gap has somewhat decreased from its high of 15% in 2001, Whites and Asians continue to complete at higher rates than their URM peers, leading to an achievement gap of nearly 10% for the 2008 cohort.

Comparison with National Peers

In comparison to national peer institutions (national peers and accompanying data are from www.collegeresults.org), six-year graduation rates among both URMs and Non-URMs at Fresno State are among the highest, and its achievement gap is on par with the other institutions. However, Fresno State is one of only 4 universities in its peer group to narrow its achievement gap between 2000 and 2008.

What Drives the Achievement Gap and What Can be Done about It?

Latinos make up the majority of URM students at Fresno State. As such, lower graduation rates among Latinos (49% for the 2008 cohort) drive the achievement gap between URM and Non-URM students. However, African Americans graduate at even lower rates (39% for the 2008 cohort), which also contributes to the achievement gap. Academic support and advisement targeted to these populations may be necessary if Fresno State is to improve URM graduation rates to the point at which they are on par with those for Whites and Asians.

Lower graduation rates among males may also be a driver of Fresno State's achievement gap. Although six-year graduation rates among both males and females have improved since 2000, the gender achievement gap has hovered around 8-9% (47% of males in the 2008 cohort graduated within 6 years, compared to 56% of females). Given that males, Latinos, and African Americans all graduate at rates substantially lower than their comparison groups, Fresno State may be well advised to focus its retention and academic support efforts on men of color.

Academic preparation may be a factor in the narrowing of Fresno State's achievement gap. For example, measures of educational preparedness (i. e., SAT scores and high school GPA) among incoming URM students have risen over the past decade, while those for Non-URM students have remained about the same. Higher levels of academic preparedness among incoming URMs may thus contribute to the narrowing of Fresno State's achievement gap.

However, despite rising levels of academic preparation among URMs, average SAT scores for these students remain around 75-100 points lower than those for Non-URMs, and average GPAs are also lower. Furthermore, while the percentage of students deemed proficient at entry has increased across the board since 2000, in 2013 between 35-37% of URMs were prepared for college-level work when they arrived on campus, compared to 42-44% of the overall cohort. Clearly, URM students arrive at Fresno State with lower levels of academic preparedness than their White and Asian peers. As such, they may spend more time in developmental sequences, earn lower grades in courses, and require more intensive academic support. As a next step toward closing the achievement gap, Fresno State may want to consider how these experiences qualify opportunity for less-well-prepared students and subsequently target interventions in these areas.

Finally, while many Fresno State students are from low-income backgrounds, 72-74% of URM students are Pell-eligible, compared to 61-63% of each overall cohort. Given the literature describing the additional obstacles low-income students face in completing postsecondary degrees, the high proportion of Pell-eligible URM students at Fresno State does much to explain the achievement gap. The incorporation of additional financial subsidies or support targeted to low-income URM students may help to raise graduation rates overall *and* close the achievement gap, although attention to the social, cultural, and familial capital associated with lower-income groups may also be necessary.

Priority Considerations for Closing Achievement Gaps at Fresno State

- Identify the departments and/or programs in which completion rates among Latinos and African Americans have risen, as well as those where URM students may not be showing as much improvement. What might account for these differences? What lessons or best practices can be shared to improve completion across the university? Which support services are most effective for African American students, and which work best with Latinos?

- Investigate the possible connection between increased levels of academic preparation among URMs and the narrowing of the achievement gap. If there is a connection, what implications might there be for how Fresno State faculty and administrators view the achievement gap and/or the services currently in place to support URM students?

- Further investigate achievement gaps between female and male students. Are there large variations in the gender achievement gap among departments and/or programs of study? What programs or services could be put in place to better support men, especially men of color, at Fresno State?

- Examine persistence within developmental sequences, especially for URM students. How might the experiences of academically unprepared students affect their likelihood of graduating, and how might these experiences differ between URM and Non-URM students?

- Consider the connection between Pell-eligibility and the achievement gap. What financial subsidies or supports are or can be targeted to low-income URM students? In what ways might attention to other factors (e.g., cultural capital or stereotype threat) help to close the achievement gap between low-income students and their middle- and higher-income peers?

California State University – Fullerton

Demographic Shifts

California State University – Fullerton has grown substantially over the past decade, with entering freshmen cohorts roughly 70% larger in 2013 than in 2000. Latinos account for much of this growth; this group made up 47% of the 2013 freshmen cohort (up from 28% in 2000). The African American population at Fullerton doubled in size between 2000 and 2007 (from 107 to 218), but since then has dropped back down to 108. As such, African Americans make up for a smaller percentage of incoming freshmen now (2%) than they did in 2000 (4%).

The Achievement Gap at a Glance

At Fullerton, six-year graduation rates among both Underrepresented Minorities (URMs) and Whites and Asians (Non-URMs) have improved since 2000, from 44-49% for URMs and from 52-61% among Non-URMs. However, Whites and Asians continue to complete at higher rates than their URM peers, leading to an achievement gap of 13% for the 2008 cohort.

Comparison with National Peers

In comparison to national peer institutions (national peers and accompanying data are from www.collegeresults.org), URM graduation rates at Fullerton are about average, although graduation rates among Non-URM students are among the highest. As such, Fullerton's 13% achievement gap is one of the highest in the peer group.

What Drives the Achievement Gap and What Can be Done about It?

Latinos make up the vast majority of URM students at Fullerton, and thus drive the achievement gap between URM and Non-URM students. Academic support and advisement targeted to this population may be necessary if Fullerton is to substantially improve Latino graduation rates. Graduation rates among African Americans are even lower than those for Latinos, however. Because these students comprise such small percentages of incoming freshmen cohorts, it is possible that African Americans face considerable pressures, resulting in higher likelihood of attrition. Yet because there are only 100 or so African Americans in each cohort, providing intrusive academic support and advisement to this population may be feasible and yield substantial benefits.

Lower graduation rates among males may also be a driver of Fullerton's achievement gap. Although six-year graduation rates among both males and females have improved since 2000, the gender achievement gap has hovered between 10-13% (half of all males in the 2008 cohort graduated within 6 years, compared to 60% of females). Given that males, Latinos, and African Americans all graduate at rates substantially lower than their comparison groups, Fullerton may be well advised to focus its retention and academic support efforts on men of color.

 Academic preparation is another major driver of Fullerton's achievement gap. Although measures of educational preparedness (i. e., SAT scores and high school GPA) among incoming students at Fullerton have risen slightly over the past decade—which may have contributed to higher completion rates—average SAT scores among URMs remain around 85 points lower than those for Non-URMs (average GPAs for the two groups are similar). Furthermore, while the percentage of students deemed proficient at entry has increased across the board since 2000, most of that

increase has occurred in the last few years and thus it is not yet possible to assess the effects on six-year graduation rates. What is clear now, though, is that URM students arrive at Fullerton with lower levels of academic preparedness than their White and Asian peers. As such, they may spend more time in developmental sequences, earn lower grades in courses, and require more intensive academic support. As a next step toward closing the achievement gap, Fullerton may want to consider how these experiences qualify opportunity for less-well-prepared students and subsequently target interventions in these areas.

Finally, while many Fullerton students are from low-income backgrounds, 54-58% of URM students are Pell-eligible, compared to 41-46% of each overall cohort. Given the literature describing the additional obstacles low-income students face in completing postsecondary degrees, the high proportion of Pell-eligible URM students at Fullerton does much to explain the achievement gap. The incorporation of additional financial subsidies or support targeted to low-income URM students may help to raise graduation rates overall *and* close the achievement gap, although attention to the social, cultural, and familial capital associated with lower-income groups may also be necessary.

Priority Considerations for Closing Achievement Gaps at Fullerton

- Identify the departments and/or programs in which completion rates among Latinos and African Americans have risen, as well as those where URM students may not be showing as much improvement. What might account for these differences? What lessons or best practices can be shared to improve completion across the university? Which support services are most effective for African American students, and which work best with Latinos?

- Further investigate achievement gaps between female and male students. Are there large variations in the gender achievement gap among departments and/or programs of study? What programs or services could be put in place to better support men, especially men of color, at Fullerton?

- Examine persistence within developmental sequences and lower-division gateway courses, especially for URM students. How might the experiences of academically less-prepared students affect their likelihood of graduating, and how might these experiences differ between URM and Non-URM students?

- Consider the connection between Pell-eligibility and the achievement gap. What financial subsidies or supports are or can be targeted to low-income URM students? In what ways might attention to other factors (e.g., cultural capital or stereotype threat) help to close the achievement gap between low-income students and their middle- and higher-income peers?

Humboldt State University

Demographic Shifts

Humboldt State University has grown substantially over the past decade, with entering freshmen cohorts roughly 75% larger in 2013 than in 2000. Latinos account for much of this growth; this group made up 39% of the 2013 freshmen cohort (up from 9% in 2000). The African American population at Humboldt state has increased as well, but due to the small numbers of African Americans in each freshmen cohort (55 in 2013), these students make up only 4-5% of freshmen cohorts.

The Achievement Gap at a Glance

At Humboldt State, six-year graduation rates among Underrepresented Minorities (URMs) have been variable, beginning at 38% for the 2000 cohort, dipping to 22% for the 2004 cohort, and rising back to 38% for the 2008 cohort. Graduation rates among Whites and Asians (Non-URMs) have similarly shown some variability, but have recently returned to 2000 levels (roughly 45%). This variability means that achievement gaps at Humboldt State have oscillated between 5-18% since 2000, landing at 8% for the 2008 cohort.

Comparison with National Peers

In comparison to national peer institutions (national peers and accompanying data are from www.collegeresults.org), URM graduation rates at Humboldt State are about average, although graduation rates among Non-URM students are among the lowest. As such, the university's 8% achievement gap is on par with others in the peer group.

What Drives the Achievement Gap and What Can be Done about It?

Latinos make up the vast majority of URM students at Humboldt State, and thus drive the achievement gap between URM and Non-URM students. Academic support and advisement targeted to this population may be necessary if Fullerton is to substantially improve Latino graduation rates. Graduation rates among African Americans are also low, however. Because these students comprise such small percentages of incoming freshmen cohorts, it is possible that African Americans face considerable pressures, resulting in higher likelihood of attrition. Yet because there are only 50-70 African Americans in each cohort, providing intrusive academic support and advisement to this population may be feasible and yield substantial benefits.

Lower graduation rates among males may also be a driver of Humboldt's achievement gap. Although six-year graduation rates among both males and females have remained somewhat consistent since 2000, the gender achievement gap has typically hovered between 10-13% (37% of males in the 2008 cohort graduated within 6 years, compared to 49% of females). Given that males, Latinos, and African Americans all graduate at rates substantially lower than their comparison groups, Humboldt State may be well advised to focus its retention and academic support efforts on men of color.

 Academic preparation is another major driver of Humboldt State's achievement gap. Although measures of educational preparedness (i. e., SAT scores and high school GPA) among incoming students at Humboldt State have remained relatively steady, average SAT scores among URMs are

between 110-150 points lower than those for Non-URMs (average GPAs are slightly lower). Furthermore, while the percentage of students deemed proficient at entry has increased across the board since 2000, only 35-36% of URMs were prepared for college-level work when they arrived on campus, compared to 54-57% of the entire cohort. Clearly, URM students arrive at Humboldt State with lower levels of academic preparedness than their White and Asian peers. As such, they may spend more time in developmental sequences, earn lower grades in courses, and require more intensive academic support. As a next step toward closing the achievement gap, Humboldt State may want to consider how these experiences qualify opportunity for less-well-prepared students and subsequently target interventions in these areas.

Finally, while many Humboldt State students are from low-income backgrounds, 71-74% of URM students are Pell-eligible, compared to 47-53% of the overall cohort. Given the literature describing the additional obstacles low-income students face in completing postsecondary degrees, the high proportion of Pell-eligible URM students at Humboldt State does much to explain the achievement gap.   The incorporation of additional financial subsidies or support targeted to low-income URM students may help to raise graduation rates overall *and* close the achievement gap, although attention to the social, cultural, and familial capital associated with lower-income groups may also be necessary.

Priority Considerations for Closing Achievement Gaps at Humboldt State

- Investigate why completion rates among all students have not improved since 2000. What support services have been put into place since then, and what are their effects on various groups of students (Latinos, African Americans, low-income students, etc.)?

- Further investigate achievement gaps between female and male students. Are there large variations in the gender achievement gap among departments and/or programs of study? What programs or services could be put in place to better support men, especially men of color, at Humboldt?

- Examine persistence within developmental sequences and lower-division gateway courses, especially for URM students. How might the experiences of academically less-prepared students affect their likelihood of graduating, and how might these experiences differ between URM and Non-URM students?

- Consider the connection between Pell-eligibility and the achievement gap. What financial subsidies or supports are or can be targeted to low-income URM students? In what ways might attention to other factors (e.g., cultural capital or stereotype threat) help to close the achievement gap between low-income students and their middle- and higher-income peers?

California State University – Long Beach

Demographic Shifts

California State University - Long Beach (CSULB) has grown over the past decade, with entering freshmen cohorts nearly 30% larger in 2013 than in 2000. Latinos account for much of this growth; this group made up 43% of the 2013 freshmen cohort (up from 24% in 2000). The African American population, on the other hand, has decreased, both in numbers and as a share of incoming freshmen cohorts (African Americans comprised 8% of the 2000 cohort but only 4% of the 2013 cohort).

The Achievement Gap at a Glance

At CSULB, six-year graduation rates among both Underrepresented Minorities (URMs) and Whites and Asians (Non-URMs) have improved dramatically since 2000, from 41-58% for URMs and from 51-70% among Non-URMs. However, because graduation rates among Non-URMs have improved at a faster pace, the achievement gap has widened to 12% for the 2008 cohort.

Comparison with National Peers

In comparison to national peer institutions (national peers and accompanying data are from www.collegeresults.org), six-year graduation rates among both URMs and Non-URMs at CSULB are among the highest (CSULB has *the* highest graduation rate for Non-URMs). Nonetheless, CSULB's 12% achievement gap is among the largest in the peer group.

What Drives the Achievement Gap and What Can be Done about It?

Latinos make up the majority of URM students at CSULB. As such, relatively lower graduation rates among Latinos (59% for the 2008 cohort) drive the achievement gap between URM and Non-URM students. Similarly, African Americans graduate at lower rates than Non-URMs (55% for the 2008 cohort), which also contributes to the achievement gap. Although six-year graduation rates at CSULB are relatively high across the board, additional academic support and advisement targeted to these populations may be necessary if CSULB is to improve URM graduation rates to the point at which they are on par with those for Whites and Asians.

Lower graduation rates among males may also be a driver of CSULB's achievement gap. Although six-year graduation rates among both males and females have improved since 2000, the gender achievement gap has remained between 5-10% (59% of males in the 2008 cohort graduated within 6 years, compared to 69% of females). Given that males, Latinos, and African Americans all graduate at rates substantially lower than their comparison groups, CSULB may be well advised to focus its retention and academic support efforts on men of color.

Academic preparation is another major driver of CSULB's achievement gap. Although measures of educational preparedness (i. e., SAT scores and high school GPA) among incoming students at CSULB have increased over the past decade—which may have contributed to higher completion rates—average SAT scores among URMs remain around 100 points lower than those for Non-URMs (average GPAs are slightly lower). Furthermore, while the percentage of students deemed proficient at entry has increased across the board since 2000, a greater percentage of URMs require remedial work than Non-URMs. Clearly, URM students arrive at CSULB with lower levels of

academic preparedness than their White and Asian peers. As such, they may spend more time in developmental sequences, earn lower grades in courses, and require more intensive academic support. As a next step toward closing the achievement gap, CSULB may want to consider how these experiences qualify opportunity for less-well-prepared students and subsequently target interventions in these areas.

Finally, while many CSULB students are from low-income backgrounds, 64% of URM students are Pell-eligible, compared to 50% of each overall cohort. Given the literature describing the additional obstacles low-income students face in completing postsecondary degrees, the high proportion of Pell-eligible URM students at CSULB does much to explain the achievement gap. The incorporation of additional financial subsidies or support targeted to low-income URM students may help to raise graduation rates overall *and* close the achievement gap, although attention to the social, cultural, and familial capital associated with lower-income groups may also be necessary.

Priority Considerations for Closing Achievement Gaps at CSULB

- Identify the departments and/or programs in which completion rates among Latinos and African Americans have risen, as well as those where URM students may not be showing as much improvement. What might account for these differences? What lessons or best practices can be shared to improve completion across the university? Which support services are most effective for African American students, and which work best with Latinos?

- Investigate the possible connection between increased levels of academic preparation among URMs and higher graduation rates among Latinos and African Americans. If there is a connection, what implications might there be for how Fresno State faculty and administrators view the achievement gap and/or the services currently in place to support URM students? Is there a connection between fewer African Americans in each cohort and higher graduation rates?

- Further investigate achievement gaps between female and male students. Are there large variations in the gender achievement gap among departments and/or programs of study? What programs or services could be put in place or expanded to better support men, especially men of color, at CSULB?

- Examine persistence within developmental sequences and lower-division gateway courses, especially for URM students. How might the experiences of academically unprepared students affect their likelihood of graduating, and how might these experiences differ between URM and Non-URM students?

- Consider the connection between Pell-eligibility and the achievement gap. What financial subsidies or supports are or can be targeted to low-income URM students? In what ways might attention to other factors (e.g., cultural capital or stereotype threat) help to close the achievement gap between low-income students and their middle- and higher-income peers?

California State University – Los Angeles

Demographic Shifts

California State University – Los Angeles (Cal State LA) has grown substantially over the past 15 years; its 2013 freshmen cohort was more than double the size of the same cohort in 2000. Latinos account for much of this growth; this group made up 75% of the 2013 freshmen cohort (up from 60% in 2000). In contrast, the African American population at Cal State LA has declined in terms of its share of incoming students—from 7% in 2000 to 3% in 2013 (actual numbers varied from 87 to 156).

The Achievement Gap at a Glance

Six-year graduation rates at Cal State LA have increased among both Underrepresented Minorities (URMs) and Whites and Asians (Non-URMs) since 2000. Nonetheless, only 38% of URMs in the 2008 cohort graduated within six years (up from 31% in 2000), compared to 49% of Non-URMs (up from 44% in 2000). Thus, despite improved graduation rates across the board, Cal State LA's achievement gap has remained relatively steady (it was 11% for the 2008 cohort).

Comparison with Peer Institutions

In comparison with national peers (national peers and accompanying data are from www.collegeresults.org), Cal State LA's URM graduation rates are among the lowest; its Non-URM graduation rates are about average for the peer group. As such, Cal State LA's 11% achievement gap is one of the highest.

What Drives the Achievement Gap and What Can be Done About It?

Because Latinos make up the vast majority of URM students—indeed all students—at Cal State LA, lower graduation rates among these students are a major driver of the university's 11% achievement gap. However, six-year graduation rates among African Americans (30% for the 2008 cohort) are also concerning, as they typically lag even further behind Non-URM graduation rates. While academic support and advisement directed toward the Latino population at Cal State LA will be necessary to close the achievement gap, targeted interventions for African Americans, because there are less than 100 in each cohort, may be relatively feasible and thus have a beneficial effect.

Lower graduation rates among males may be another driver of Cal State LA's achievement gap, although the gender gap is not as apparent as it once was. Indeed, 38% of males in the 2008 cohort completed a degree within six years (up from 27% for the 2000 cohort), while female graduation rates improved from 40-43%. However, because males, African Americans, and Latinos all graduate at rates lower than their comparison groups, Cal State LA may be well advised to explore the college experiences that contribute to lower persistence and attainment among male students—regardless of race—as well as the intersection of race and gender as it relates to degree completion.

Academic preparation is another major driver of Cal State LA's achievement gap. Although measures of educational preparedness (i. e., SAT scores and high school GPA) among incoming students at Cal State LA have risen over the past decade—perhaps contributing to rising graduation rates—average SAT scores among URMs remain between 85-120 points lower than for Non-URMs (average GPAs among URMs are slightly lower). Furthermore, while the percentage of students

deemed proficient at entry has increased across the board since 2000, in 2013 only 18% of all incoming URMs were prepared for college-level work. Clearly, African Americans and Latinos at Cal State LA display lower levels of academic preparedness than their White and Asian peers. As such, they may spend more time in developmental sequences, earn lower grades in courses, and require more intensive academic support. As a next step toward closing the achievement gap, Cal State LA may want to consider how these experiences qualify opportunity for less-well-prepared students and subsequently target interventions to these areas.

Finally, URM students at Cal State LA are more likely to be from low-income backgrounds. Indeed, nearly 4 out of every 5 URMs are Pell-eligible. Given the literature that describes the additional obstacles low-income students face in completing postsecondary degrees, the high incidence of Pell-eligibility among URM students does much to explain lower graduation rates among Latinos and African Americans. The incorporation of additional financial subsidies or support targeted to these students may help to mediate the achievement gap, although attention to the social, cultural, and familial capital associated with lower-income groups may also be necessary.

Priority Considerations for Closing Achievement Gaps at Cal State LA

- Identify the departments and/or programs in which completion rates among African Americans and Latinos have risen, as well as those where URM students may not be showing as much improvement. What might account for these differences? What lessons or best practices can be shared to improve completion across the university? Which support services are most effective for African American students, and which work best with Latinos?

- Investigate achievement gaps between female and male students. Are there large variations in the gender achievement gap among departments and/or programs of study? What programs or services could be put in place to better support men, and particularly men of color, at Cal State LA?

- Examine persistence within developmental sequences, especially for URM students. How might the experiences of academically unprepared students affect their likelihood of graduating, and how might these experiences differ between URM and Non-URM students?

- Consider the connection between Pell-eligibility and the achievement gap. What financial subsidies or supports are or can be targeted to low-income URM students? In what ways might attention to other factors (e.g., cultural capital or stereotype threat) help to close the achievement gap between low-income students and their middle- and higher-income peers?

California Maritime Academy

Demographic Shifts

Despite being a small institution focused on the transportation and related industries of the Pacific Rim, California Maritime Academy (Cal Maritime) has grown substantially over the past decade; the 2013 entering freshmen cohort was roughly twice the size of the 2000 cohort. Underrepresented Minorities (URMs) account for some of this growth; this group made up 19% of the 2013 freshmen cohort, up from 13% in 2000 (actual numbers increased from 14 to 38).

The Achievement Gap at a Glance

Due to the small number of Latinos, African Americans, and other underrepresented minorities in each cohort, six-year graduation rates among URMs have been highly variable, ranging from 36-65% for the 2000-2008 cohorts. Among Non-URMs, graduation rates increased from 51%-70% for the 2000-2003 cohorts before steadily dropping to 56% for the 2008 cohort. This variability means that achievement gaps at Cal Maritime have oscillated between -3% and 31%; it was 17% for the 2008 cohort.

Comparison with National Peers

In comparison to national peer institutions (national peers and accompanying data are from www.collegeresults.org), URM graduation rates at Cal Maritime are among the lowest, and graduation rates among Non-URM students are about average. As such, the university's 17% achievement gap is among the highest. However, these comparisons should be interpreted with caution, as many of Cal Maritime's peers did not report data for all years and because the data are highly variable due to small numbers.

What Drives the Achievement Gap and What Can be Done about It?

Latinos make up the vast majority of URM students at Cal Maritime (35 of 38 URMs in the 2013 freshmen cohort), and thus drive the achievement gap between URM and Non-URM students. Academic support and advisement targeted to this population may be necessary if Cal Maritime is to consistently demonstrate improved Latino graduation rates. Due to the small number of African Americans in each cohort, graduation rates are highly variable. Yet because there are only a handful of African Americans in each cohort, providing intrusive academic support and advisement to this population may be feasible and may have a beneficial effect on the achievement gap.

Lower graduation rates among females may also be a driver of Cal Maritime's achievement gap. Although six-year graduation rates among both males and females have varied between 2000 and 2008, in recent years the gender achievement gap has increased to 13% (43% of females in the 2008 cohort graduated within 6 years, compared to 56% of males). While not surprising given Cal Maritime's narrow mission, it is important to note that the gender achievement gap at Cal Maritime runs counter to gender gaps at most other institutions (where females are more likely to graduate than males). Therefore, Cal Maritime may be well advised to focus its retention and academic support efforts on women, especially women of color.

Academic preparation may be another driver of Cal Maritime's achievement gap. Measures of educational preparedness (i. e., SAT scores and high school GPA) among incoming students at Cal

Maritime are relatively high and have remained steady (in the case of SATs) or increased slightly (GPAs). However, average SAT scores among URMs are between 50-100 points lower than those for Non-URMs (average GPAs are slightly lower). Furthermore, only 67-68% of URMs were prepared for college-level work when they arrived on campus, compared to 74-84% of the entire cohort. This indicates that URM students arrive at Cal Maritime with lower levels of academic preparedness than their White and Asian peers. As such, they may spend more time in developmental sequences, earn lower grades in courses, or require more intensive academic support. As a next step toward closing the achievement gap, Cal Maritime may want to consider how these experiences qualify opportunity for less-well-prepared students and subsequently target interventions in these areas.

Finally, a higher percentage of URMs (34-53%) are Pell-eligible, compared to 22-26% of the overall cohort. Given the literature describing the additional obstacles low-income students face in completing postsecondary degrees, the high proportion of Pell-eligible URM students at Cal Maritime helps to explain the achievement gap.   The incorporation of additional financial subsidies or support targeted to low-income URM students may help to raise graduation rates overall *and* close the achievement gap, although attention to the social, cultural, and familial capital associated with lower-income groups may also be necessary.

Priority Considerations for Closing Achievement Gaps at Cal Maritime

- Investigate the factors leading to variable completion rates among various groups of students (African Americans, Latinos, Whites, Asians, females, low-income students, etc.). Do graduation rates among these groups vary by department or program? What support services are successful in improving persistence among these populations, and how might these be expanded?

- Further investigate achievement gap between female and male students. Are there large variations in the gender achievement gap among departments and/or programs of study? What programs or services could be put in place to better support women, especially women of color, at Cal Maritime?

- Examine persistence within developmental sequences and lower-division gateway courses, especially for URM students. How might the experiences of academically less-prepared students affect their likelihood of graduating, and how might these experiences differ between URM and Non-URM students?

- Consider the connection between Pell-eligibility and the achievement gap. What financial subsidies or supports are or can be targeted to low-income students? In what ways might attention to other factors (e.g., cultural capital or stereotype threat) help to close the achievement gap between low-income students and their middle- and higher-income peers?

California State University – Monterey Bay

Demographic Shifts

California State University – Monterey Bay (CSUMB) has grown over the past decade, with entering freshmen cohorts nearly double in 2013 than in 2000. Latinos account for much of this growth; this group made up 45% of the 2013 freshmen cohort (up from 27% in 2000). The African American population has also increased: in 2000 twenty-one African Americans made up 5% of the freshmen cohort; in the 2013 cohort there were 94 African Americans (1% of the total).

The Achievement Gap at a Glance

At CSUBM, six-year graduation rates among both Underrepresented Minorities (URMs) and Whites and Asians (Non-URMs) have improved since 2000, from 35-45% for URMs and from 36-46% among Non-URMs. CSUBM's achievement gap has varied over the years, with URMs slightly outperforming Whites and Asians in some years, but was 1% for the 2008 cohort.

Comparison with National Peers

In comparison to national peer institutions (national peers and accompanying data are from www.collegeresults.org), six-year graduation rates among both URMs and Non-URMs at CSUMB are close to the average. CSUMB's 1% achievement gap is similar to the median for peer institutions, some of which demonstrate larger gaps, and some that have negative gaps (i.e., URMs outperform their Non-URM peers).

What Drives the Achievement Gap and What Can be Done about It?

Latinos make up the majority of URM students at CSUMB. As such, Latino graduation rates (43% for the 2008 cohort) drive the overall URM rate (45%). However, African American graduation rates have been highly variable (likely because of the small numbers in each cohort); 2000-2008 cohort graduation rates ranged from 15-56%. These numbers also contribute to the achievement gap. Thus, academic support and advisement targeted to African American and Latino populations may be necessary if CSUMB is to continue to improve URM graduation rates.

Improved academic preparation among incoming URMs at CSUMB, however, may be the key reason why URM graduation rates have improved, and likely contributes to CSUMB's negligible achievement gap. Indeed, measures of educational preparedness (i. e., SAT scores and high school GPA) among incoming URM students have risen over the past decade, as has the percentage of URMs who are prepared for college-level work (from 17% in 2000 to 44% in 2013). In other words, as CSUMB's enrolls better prepared students, more of these students graduate.

However, despite rising levels of academic preparation among URMs, average SAT scores for these students remain around 100-120 points lower than those for Non-URMs, average GPAs are lower, and a greater percentage require remediation (56%, compared to 45% for the cohort as a whole). Given that URM students arrive at CSUMB with lower levels of academic preparedness than their White and Asian peers, the fact that the achievement gap is negligible is encouraging, but raises some questions. It is possible that the support and advisement URMs receive in developmental sequences may contribute to improved persistence and completion. It is also possible that Non-URMs don't receive or don't benefit equally from that same support. As a next step toward

improving graduation rates for all students, CSUMB may want to consider how developmental experiences qualify or boost opportunity for less-well-prepared students—both URM and Non-URM—and subsequently target interventions to these areas.

In addition, while many CSUMB students are from low-income backgrounds, 65-69% of URM students are Pell-eligible, compared to 49-53% of each overall cohort. Given the literature describing the additional obstacles low-income students face in completing postsecondary degrees, one might expect to see a larger achievement gap between URMs and Non-URMs at CSUMB. Thus, the university may be well advised to investigate the ways in which financial subsidies or support targeted to low-income URM students are contributing to improved persistence and completion, as well as how these programs may differ in impact among various groups (Latinos, African Americans, Whites, Asians, etc.).

Finally, it is unclear if or how lower graduation rates among males influence CSUBM's achievement gap. Although six-year graduation rates among both males and females have improved since 2000, the gender achievement gap has hovered around 5% (42% of males in the 2008 cohort graduated within 6 years, compared to 57% of females). Yet because URMs and Non-URMs graduate from CSUMB at roughly the same rates, there does not seem to be a strong association between the gender gap and the race-based achievement gap. Therefore, CSUMB may be well advised to explore the college experiences that contribute to lower persistence and attainment rates among male students—regardless of race—as well as the intersection of race and gender as it relates to degree completion.

Priority Considerations for Closing Achievement Gaps at CSUMB

- Identify the departments and/or programs in which completion rates among various groups of students (e.g., Latinos, African Americans, Non-URMs) have risen, as well as those where the same students may not be showing as much improvement. What might account for these differences? What lessons or best practices can be shared to improve completion across the university? Are some support services more effective among certain groups of students than among others?

- Investigate the possible connection between increased levels of academic preparation among URMs and improved graduation rates. If there is a connection, what implications might there be for how CSUMB faculty and administrators view the achievement gap and/or the services currently in place to support URM students?

- Further investigate achievement gaps between female and male students. Are there large variations in the gender achievement gap among departments and/or programs of study? What programs or services could be put in place to better support men at CSUMB?

- Examine persistence within developmental sequences, especially for URM students. How might the experiences of academically unprepared students affect their likelihood of graduating, and how might these experiences differ between URM and Non-URM students?

- Consider the connection between Pell-eligibility and graduation rates. What financial subsidies or supports are or can be further targeted to low-income students? In what ways might attention to other factors (e.g., cultural capital or stereotype threat) help to improve graduation rates among URM and Non-URM students?

California State University – Northridge

Demographic Shifts

California State University – Northridge (CSUN) has grown substantially over the past 15 years; its 2013 freshmen cohort was more than double the size of the 2000 cohort. Latinos account for much of this growth; this group made up 56% of the 2013 freshmen cohort (up from 31% in 2000). In contrast, while actual numbers have increased, the African American population at CSUN has declined in terms of its share of incoming students—from 12% in 2000 to under 8% in 2013.

The Achievement Gap at a Glance

Six-year graduation rates at CSUN have increased among both Underrepresented Minorities (URMs) and Whites and Asians (Non-URMs) since 2000. Nonetheless, only 41% of URMs in the 2008 cohort graduated within six years (up from 34% in 2000), compared to 54% of Non-URMs (up from 44% in 2000). Thus, despite improved graduation rates across the board, CSUN's achievement gap has remained relatively steady (it was 13% for the 2008 cohort).

Comparison with Peer Institutions

In comparison with national peers (national peers and accompanying data are from www.collegeresults.org), CSUN's URM graduation rates are on par with its peers. Graduation rates among Non-URM students, however, are among the highest in the group. As such, CSUN's 13% achievement gap is the largest among peer institutions.

What Drives the Achievement Gap and What Can be Done About It?

Although Latinos make up a majority of URM students at CSUN, extremely low and declining graduation rates among African Americans are a major driver of the current 13% achievement gap. Currently, only 34% of African Americans graduate from CSUN within six years. As these students have comprised smaller percentages of incoming freshmen cohorts, it is possible that African Americans have faced considerable pressures, resulting in higher likelihood of attrition. However, because there are only a few hundred African Americans in each cohort, academic support and advisement targeted to this population may be feasible and have a disproportionate impact on the overall achievement gap. However, if CSUN is to improve graduation rates among all URMs, the university may also need to target academic support to Latinos.

Lower graduation rates among males may be another driver of CSUN's achievement gap. For example, only 41% of males in the 2008 cohort completed a degree within six years (up from 31% for the 2000 cohort), while female graduation rates improved from 47-51%. Because males, African Americans, and Latinos all graduate at rates lower than their comparison groups, CSUN may be well advised to explore the intersection of race and gender as it relates to degree completion and, if necessary, focus its retention and academic support efforts on men of color.

Academic preparation is another major driver of CSUN achievement gap. Although measures of educational preparedness (i. e., SAT scores and high school GPA) among incoming students at CSUN have risen slightly over the past decade—perhaps contributing to rising graduation rates—average SAT scores among URMs remain between 100-135 points lower than for Non-URMs (average GPAs among URMs are slightly lower). Furthermore, while the percentage of students deemed proficient

at entry has increased across the board since 2000, in 2013 only 28% of all incoming URMs were prepared for college-level work. Clearly, African Americans and Latinos at CSUN display lower levels of academic preparedness than their White and Asian peers. As such, they may spend more time in developmental sequences, earn lower grades in courses, and require more intensive academic support. As a next step toward closing the achievement gap, CSUN may want to consider how these experiences qualify opportunity for less-well-prepared students and subsequently target interventions to these areas.

Finally, URM students at CSUN are more likely to be from low-income backgrounds. Indeed, 72-76% of URMs are Pell-eligible, compared to 59% of the overall cohort. Given the literature that describes the additional obstacles low-income students face in completing postsecondary degrees, the high incidence of Pell-eligibility among URM students does much to explain lower graduation rates among Latinos and African Americans. The incorporation of additional financial subsidies or support targeted to these students may help to mediate the achievement gap, although attention to the social, cultural, and familial capital associated with lower-income groups may also be necessary.

Priority Considerations for Closing Achievement Gaps at CSUN

- Identify the departments and/or programs in which completion rates among African Americans and Latinos have risen, as well as those where URM students may not be showing as much improvement. What might account for these differences? What lessons or best practices can be shared to improve completion across the university? Which support services are most effective for African American students, and which work best with Latinos?

- Investigate achievement gaps between female and male students. Are there large variations in the gender achievement gap among departments and/or programs of study? What programs or services could be put in place to better support men, and particularly men of color, at CSUN?

- Examine persistence within developmental sequences, especially for URM students. How might the experiences of academically unprepared students affect their likelihood of graduating, and how might these experiences differ between URM and Non-URM students?

- Consider the connection between Pell-eligibility and the achievement gap. What financial subsidies or supports are or can be targeted to low-income URM students? In what ways might attention to other factors (e.g., cultural capital or stereotype threat) help to close the achievement gap between low-income students and their middle- and higher-income peers?

Cal Poly Pomona

Demographic Shifts

Although the size of Cal Poly Pomona's (CPP's) freshmen cohort has grown slightly over the past decade, the number of Latinos in each cohort has more than doubled; this group made up 44% of the 2013 freshmen cohort (up from 23% in 2000). The African American population at CPP has also grown, although the proportion of African Americans in each entering cohort has remained steady at less than 4%.

The Achievement Gap at a Glance

Six-year graduation rates at CPP are comparatively high and have increased among both Underrepresented Minorities (URMs) and Whites and Asians (Non-URMs) since 2000. Nonetheless, only 48% of URMs in the 2008 cohort graduated within six years (up from 41% in 2000), compared to 62% of Non-URMs (up from 51% in 2000). Thus, despite improved graduation rates across the board, CPP's achievement gap has grown from 9 to 14%.

Comparison with Peer Institutions

At 62%, CPP's graduation rate for non-URM students is the highest in its national peer group (national peers and accompanying data are from www.collegeresults.org). However, the university's URM graduation rate (48%) falls somewhere in the middle. As at most of its peer institutions, CPP's graduation rates for both URM and Non-URM students have increased in recent years but those for Non-URMs have grown faster, leading to larger achievement gaps. At 14%, CPP's gap is among the largest in the group.

What Drives the Achievement Gap and What Can be Done About It?

Because Latinos make up the vast majority of URM students at CPP, lower graduation rates among these students (50% for the 2008 cohort) are a major driver of the university's 14% Achievement Gap. However, six-year graduation rates among African Americans (40% for the 2008 cohort) are also concerning, as they typically lag even further behind Non-URM graduation rates. While academic support and advisement directed toward the Latino population at CPP will be necessary to close the achievement gap, targeted interventions for African Americans, because there are only 100 or so in each cohort, may be relatively feasible and thus have a disproportionate effect.

Lower graduation rates among males are another likely driver of CPP's achievement gap. Although more than half of males now graduate from CPP within six years (up from 43% for the 2000 cohort), male graduation rates are consistently 10-12 percentage points lower than those for females (62% of whom now graduate within six years). CPP may be well advised to explore the intersection of race and gender as it relates to degree completion and, if necessary, focus its retention and academic support efforts on men of color.

 Academic preparation is another major driver of CPP's achievement gap. Although measures of educational preparedness (i. e., SAT scores and high school GPA) among incoming students at CPP have risen over the past decade, average SAT scores among URMs remain between 90 and 110 points lower than for Non-URMs (average GPAs among URMs are slightly lower). Furthermore, while the percentage of students deemed proficient at entry has increased across the board since

2000, in 2013 only 50-56% of URMs were prepared for college-level work when they arrived on campus, compared to 64-67% of the overall cohort. Clearly, although CPP freshmen are better prepared than many other students who enter the California State University system, URMs at CPP display lower levels of academic preparedness than their White and Asian peers. As such, they may spend more time in developmental sequences, earn lower grades in courses, and require more intensive academic support. As a next step toward closing the achievement gap, CPP may want to consider how these experiences qualify opportunity for less-well-prepared students and subsequently target interventions to these areas.

Finally, URM students at CPP are more likely to be from low-income backgrounds. Indeed, 57-60% of URMs are Pell-eligible, compared to 44-47% of each overall cohort. Given the literature that describes the additional obstacles low-income students face in completing postsecondary degrees, the high incidence of Pell-eligibility among URM students does much to explain lower graduation rates among Latinos and African Americans. The incorporation of additional financial subsidies or support targeted to these students may help to close the achievement gap, although attention to the social, cultural, and familial capital associated with lower-income groups may also be necessary.

Priority Considerations for Closing Achievement Gaps at CPP

- Identify the departments and/or programs in which completion rates among African Americans and Latinos have risen, as well as those where URM students may not be showing as much improvement. What might account for these differences? What lessons or best practices can be shared to improve completion across the university? Which support services are most effective for African American students, and which work best with Latinos?

- Investigate achievement gaps between female and male students, especially those from African American and Latino backgrounds. What programs are or could be put in place to better support men, and in particular, men of color?

- Examine persistence within developmental sequences, especially for URM students. How might the experiences of academically unprepared students affect their likelihood of graduating, and how might these experiences differ between URM and Non-URM students?

- Consider the connection between Pell-eligibility and the achievement gap. What financial subsidies or supports are or can be targeted to low-income URM students? In what ways might attention to other factors (e.g., cultural capital or stereotype threat) help to close the achievement gap between low-income students and their middle- and higher-income peers?

Sacramento State University

Demographic Shifts

Sacramento State University (Sac State) has grown over the past decade, with entering freshmen cohorts roughly 50% larger in 2013 than in 2000. Latinos account for much of this growth; this group made up 36% of the 2013 freshmen cohort (up from 17% in 2000). The African American population at Sac State increased between the 2000 and 2006 cohorts, but then began shrinking; as a percentage of freshmen cohorts, African American dropped from 8% in 2000 to less than 7% in 2013.

The Achievement Gap at a Glance

At Sac State, six-year graduation rates among Underrepresented Minorities (URMs) have been variable, beginning at 37% for the 2000 cohort, dipping to 34% for the 2005 cohort, and rising back to 39% for the 2008 cohort. Graduation rates among Whites and Asians (Non-URMs) remained steady around 44% between 2000-06, but improved slightly to 46% for the 2007 and 2008 cohorts. This variability means that achievement gaps at Sac State have oscillated between 7-12% since 2000, landing at 7% for the 2008 cohort (the achievement gap in 2000 was also 7%).

Comparison with National Peers

In comparison to national peer institutions (national peers and accompanying data are from www.collegeresults.org), graduation rates among both URMs and Non-URMs at Sac State are about average. However, the university's 7% achievement gap is one of the smallest in the peer group.

What Drives the Achievement Gap and What Can be Done about It?

Although Latinos make up a majority of URM students at Sac State, extremely low graduation rates among African Americans are a major driver of the current 7% achievement gap. Fewer than one-third of African Americans in the 2008 cohort graduated from Sac State within six years, and this rate is substantially higher than previous cohorts (which ranged from 26-28%). As these students have comprised smaller percentages of incoming freshmen cohorts, it is possible that African Americans have faced considerable pressures, resulting in higher likelihood of attrition. However, because there are only 220 or so African Americans in each cohort, academic support and advisement targeted to this population may be feasible and have a disproportionate impact on the overall achievement gap.

Lower graduation rates among males may also be a driver of Sac State's achievement gap. Although six-year graduation rates among both males and females have improved slightly since 2000, the gender achievement gap has typically hovered between 8-12% (39% of males in the 2008 cohort graduated within 6 years, compared to 47% of females). Given that males, Latinos, and African Americans all graduate at rates substantially lower than their comparison groups, Sac State may be well advised to focus its retention and academic support efforts on men of color.

Academic preparation is another major driver of Sac State's achievement gap. Although high school GPAs among incoming URMs have increased somewhat since 2000, average SAT scores have remained the same, and are between 60-90 points lower than those for Non-URMs (average GPAs are slightly lower). Furthermore, while the percentage of students deemed proficient at entry has

increased across the board since 2000, only one-third of URMs were prepared for college-level work when they arrived on campus, compared to 41-44% of the entire cohort. Clearly, URM students arrive at Sac State with lower levels of academic preparedness than their White and Asian peers. As such, they may spend more time in developmental sequences, earn lower grades in courses, and require more intensive academic support. As a next step toward closing the achievement gap, Sac State may want to consider how these experiences qualify opportunity for less-well-prepared students and subsequently target interventions in these areas.

Finally, while many Sac State students are from low-income backgrounds, 62-67% of URM students are Pell-eligible, compared to 54-59% of the overall cohort. Given the literature describing the additional obstacles low-income students face in completing postsecondary degrees, the high proportion of Pell-eligible URM students at Sac State does much to explain the achievement gap. The incorporation of additional financial subsidies or support targeted to low-income URM students may help to raise graduation rates overall *and* close the achievement gap, although attention to the social, cultural, and familial capital associated with lower-income groups may also be necessary.

Priority Considerations for Closing Achievement Gaps at Sac State

- Investigate why completion rates among all students have only minimally improved since 2000. What support services have been put into place since then, and what are their effects on various groups of students (Latinos, African Americans, low-income students, etc.)?

- Further investigate achievement gaps between female and male students. Are there large variations in the gender achievement gap among departments and/or programs of study? What programs or services could be put in place to better support men, especially men of color, at Sac State?

- Examine persistence within developmental sequences and lower-division gateway courses, especially for URM students. How might the experiences of academically less-prepared students affect their likelihood of graduating, and how might these experiences differ between URM and Non-URM students?

- Consider the connection between Pell-eligibility and the achievement gap. What financial subsidies or supports are or can be targeted to low-income URM students? In what ways might attention to other factors (e.g., cultural capital or stereotype threat) help to close the achievement gap between low-income students and their middle- and higher-income peers?

California State University – San Bernardino

Demographic Shifts

California State University – San Bernardino (CSUSB) has grown considerably over the past decade, with entering freshmen cohorts twice as large in 2013 than in 2000. Latinos account for much of this growth, making CSUSB a heavily minority-majority institution. Latinos made up 71% of the 2013 freshmen cohort (up from 35% in 2000). The African American population at CSUSB has decreased, however, both in numbers (from 153 in the freshmen class of 2000 to 126 in 2013) and as a percentage of the freshmen population (from 13% to 5%).

The Achievement Gap at a Glance

At Sac State, six-year graduation rates among Underrepresented Minorities (URMs) have been variable, beginning at 43% for the 2000 cohort, dipping to 38% for the 2007 cohort, then rising to 46% for the 2008 cohort. Graduation rates among Whites and Asians (Non-URMs) remained relatively steady around 46-47% between 2000-07, but increased to 51% for the 2008 cohort. This variability means that achievement gaps at CSUSB increased from 3% in 2000 to 9% in 2007, but then dropped to 5% for the 2008 cohort.

Comparison with National Peers

In comparison to national peer institutions (national peers and accompanying data are from www.collegeresults.org), graduation rates among both URMs and Non-URMs at CSUSB are among the highest, and the university's 5% achievement gap is one of the lowest in the peer group.

What Drives the Achievement Gap and What Can be Done about It?

Although Latinos make up a majority of URM students at CSUSB, extremely low graduation rates among African Americans are a major driver of the current 5% achievement gap. Only 38% of African Americans in the 2008 cohort graduated from CSUSB within six years, and this rate is higher than previous cohorts (which ranged from 27-37%). As these students have comprised smaller and smaller percentages of incoming freshmen cohorts, it is possible that African Americans have faced considerable pressures, resulting in higher likelihood of attrition. However, because there are only 100-150 African Americans in each cohort, academic support and advisement targeted to this population may be feasible and have a disproportionate impact on the overall achievement gap.

Lower graduation rates among males may also be a driver of CSUSB's achievement gap. Although six-year graduation rates among both males and females have improved slightly since 2000, narrowing the gender achievement gap, only 45% of males in the 2008 cohort graduated within 6 years, compared to 50% of females. Given that males, Latinos, and African Americans all graduate at rates substantially lower than their comparison groups, CSUSB may be well advised to focus its retention and academic support efforts on men of color.

Academic preparation is another major driver of CSUSB's achievement gap. Although measures of educational preparedness (i. e., SAT scores and high school GPA) among incoming URM students have risen slightly over the past decade, average SAT scores remain between 75-95 points lower than for Non-URMs (average GPAs among URMs are slightly lower). Furthermore, while the

percentage of students deemed proficient at entry has increased across the board since 2000, in 2013 only 27% of all incoming URMs were prepared for college-level work. Clearly, URMs at CSUSB display lower levels of academic preparedness than their White and Asian peers. As such, they may spend more time in developmental sequences, earn lower grades in courses, and require more intensive academic support. As a next step toward closing the achievement gap, CSUSB may want to consider how these experiences qualify opportunity for less-well-prepared students and subsequently target interventions to these areas.

Finally, while the majority of CSUSB students are from low-income backgrounds, more than three-quarters of URM students are Pell-eligible. Given the literature describing the additional obstacles low-income students face in completing postsecondary degrees, the high proportion of Pell-eligible URM students at CSUSB does much to explain the achievement gap.   The incorporation of additional financial subsidies or support targeted to low-income URM students may help to raise graduation rates overall *and* close the achievement gap, although attention to the social, cultural, and familial capital associated with lower-income groups may also be necessary.

Priority Considerations for Closing Achievement Gaps at CSUSB

- Investigate why completion rates among all students dipped or remained steady through 2007 before improving for the 2008 cohort. What support services were put into place during this time, and what are their effects on various groups of students (Latinos, African Americans, low-income students, etc.)?

- Further investigate achievement gaps between female and male students. Are there large variations in the gender achievement gap among departments and/or programs of study? What programs or services could be put in place to better support men, especially men of color, at CSUSB?

- Examine persistence within developmental sequences and lower-division gateway courses, especially for URM students. How might the experiences of academically less-prepared students affect their likelihood of graduating, and how might these experiences differ between URM and Non-URM students, or between Latinos and African Americans?

- Consider the connection between Pell-eligibility and the achievement gap. What financial subsidies or supports are or can be targeted to low-income URM students? In what ways might attention to other factors (e.g., cultural capital or stereotype threat) help to close the achievement gap between low-income students and their middle- and higher-income peers?

San Diego State University

Demographic Shifts

Although the size of San Diego State University (SDSU's) freshmen cohort has grown over the past decade, the number of Latinos in each cohort has nearly tripled; this group made up 29% of the 2013 freshmen cohort (up from 17% in 2000). The number of African Americans at SDSU has remained relatively stable, however, although the percentage of African Americans in each entering cohort has dropped from 5% to 3%.

The Achievement Gap at a Glance

Six-year graduation rates at SDSU are comparatively high and have increased among both Underrepresented Minorities (URMs) and Whites and Asians (Non-URMs) since 2000. However, only 59% of URMs in the 2008 cohort graduated within six years (up from 53% in 2000), compared to 69% of Non-URMs (up from 60% in 2000). Thus, despite relatively high and improved graduation rates across the board, SDSU's achievement gap between URMs and Non-URMs has grown from 7% (where it was for most of the 2000-2007 cohorts) to 10% for the 2008 cohort.

Comparison with Peer Institutions

In comparison to national peers (national peers and accompanying data are from www.collegeresults.org), SDSU's six-year graduation rates among both URMs and Non-URMs are among the highest. However, the university's 10% achievement gap falls somewhere in the middle of the peer group (where gaps range from -4 to 26%).

What Drives the Achievement Gap and What Can be Done About It?

Because Latinos make up the vast majority of URM students at SDSU, comparatively lower graduation rates among these students (59% for the 2008 cohort) are a major driver of the university's 10% achievement gap. However, six-year graduation rates among African Americans (57% for the 2008 cohort) are also lower than those for Whites and Asians. While academic support and advisement directed toward the Latino population at SDSU will be necessary to close the achievement gap, targeted interventions for African Americans, because there are only 100-140 in each cohort, may be relatively feasible and thus yield substantial benefits.

Lower graduation rates among males are another likely driver of SDSU's achievement gap. Although graduation rates for both males and females have improved since 2000, only 62% of males in the 2008 cohort graduated within six years, compared to 69% of females. Indeed, the gender achievement gap has increased slightly to 7% for the 2008 cohort. Given that males, African Americans, and Latinos graduate at rates lower than their comparison groups, SDSU may be well advised to explore the intersection of race and gender as it relates to degree completion and, if necessary, focus its retention and academic support efforts on men of color.

Improved academic preparation among incoming students may be a major driver of SDSU's higher graduation rates, and may also help explain the university's achievement gap. For example, measures of educational preparedness (i. e., SAT scores, high school GPA) among incoming students at SDSU have risen over the past decade. So has the percentage of students deemed proficient at entry (from 39-89% for URMs and from 56-90% the overall cohorts). Higher levels of academic

preparedness among incoming students may thus contribute to higher graduation rates among all groups.

However, despite rising levels of academic preparation among URMs, average SAT scores for these students remain around 70-95 points lower than those for Non-URMs, and average GPAs are slightly lower. Clearly, although SDSU freshmen are better prepared than many other students who enter the California State University system, URMs at SDSU display lower levels of academic preparedness than their White and Asian peers. As such, they may spend more time in developmental sequences or lower-division gateway courses, earn lower grades in courses, and require more intensive academic support. As a next step toward closing the achievement gap, SDSU may want to consider how these experiences qualify opportunity for less-well-prepared students and subsequently target interventions in these areas.

Finally, URM students at SDSU are more likely to be from low-income backgrounds. Indeed, 50-55% of URMs are Pell-eligible, compared to 31-35% of each overall cohort. Given the literature that describes the additional obstacles low-income students face in completing postsecondary degrees, the high incidence of Pell-eligibility among URM students does much to explain lower graduation rates among Latinos and African Americans. The incorporation of additional financial subsidies or support targeted to these students may help to close the achievement gap, although attention to the social, cultural, and familial capital associated with lower-income groups may also be necessary.

Priority Considerations for Closing Achievement Gaps at SDSU

- Identify the departments and/or programs in which completion rates among African Americans and Latinos have risen, as well as those where URM students may not be showing as much improvement. What might account for these differences? What lessons or best practices can be shared to improve completion across the university? Which support services are most effective for African American students, and which work best with Latinos?

- Investigate achievement gaps between female and male students, especially those from African American and Latino backgrounds. What programs are or could be put in place to better support men, and in particular, men of color?

- Examine persistence within developmental sequences and lower-division gateway courses, especially for URM students. How might the experiences of academically less-well-prepared students affect their likelihood of graduating, and how might these experiences differ between URM and Non-URM students?

- Consider the connection between Pell-eligibility and the achievement gap. What financial subsidies or supports are or can be targeted to low-income URM students? In what ways might attention to other factors (e.g., cultural capital or stereotype threat) help to close the achievement gap between low-income students and their middle- and higher-income peers?

San Francisco State University

Demographic Shifts

San Francisco State University (SFSU) has grown substantially over the past 15 years; its 2013 freshmen cohort was nearly double the size of the 2000 cohort. Latinos account for much of this growth; this group made up 35% of the 2013 freshmen cohort (up from 15% in 2000). In contrast, the African American population at SFSU has declined slightly in terms of its share of incoming students—from 7% in 2000 to 5% in 2013 (actual numbers varied from 129-218).

The Achievement Gap at a Glance

Six-year graduation rates at SFSU have increased among both Underrepresented Minorities (URMs) and Whites and Asians (Non-URMs) since 2000. Nonetheless, only 44% of URMs in the 2008 cohort graduated within six years (up from 36% in 2000), compared to 52% of Non-URMs (up from 44% in 2000). Thus, despite improved graduation rates across the board, SFSU's achievement gap between URMs and Non-URMs was 8% for the 2008 cohort.

Comparison with Peer Institutions

SFSU's graduation rates among both URM and Non-URM students are similar to the averages among national peers (national peers and accompanying data are from www.collegeresults.org). As such, SFSU's 8% achievement gap falls somewhere in the middle of the peer group.

What Drives the Achievement Gap and What Can be Done About It?

Because Latinos make up the vast majority of URM students at SFSU, lower graduation rates among these students (46% for the 2008 cohort) are a major driver of the university's achievement gap. However, six-year graduation rates among African Americans are also concerning, as they typically lag even further behind Non-URM graduation rates (41% of African Americans in the 2008 cohort graduated within 6 years). While academic support and advisement directed toward the Latino population at SFSU will be necessary to close the achievement gap, targeted interventions for African Americans, because there are only 150-200 in each cohort, may be relatively feasible and thus have a disproportionate effect on the achievement gap.

Unlike many of its peer institutions, male students at SFSU graduate at rates similar to their female counterparts (sometimes slightly higher, sometimes slightly lower), and graduation rates among both groups have improved in recent years. Thus, gender may not be a major contributor to SDSU's achievement gap. However, it may still be useful to examine intersection of gender and race as it relates to degree completion.

Academic preparation may be another major driver of SFSU's achievement gap. Although measures of educational preparedness (i. e., SAT scores and high school GPA) among incoming students at SFSU have risen over the past decade—perhaps contributing to rising graduation rates—average SAT scores among URMs remain between 65-80 points lower than for Non-URMs (average GPAs among URMs are slightly lower). Furthermore, while the percentage of students deemed proficient at entry has increased across the board since 2000, in 2013 only 42% of all incoming URMs were prepared for college-level work, compared to 51% of the overall cohort. Clearly, URMs at SFSU display lower levels of academic preparedness than their White and Asian peers. As such, they may

spend more time in developmental sequences, earn lower grades in courses, and require more intensive academic support. As a next step toward closing the achievement gap, SFSU may want to consider how these experiences qualify opportunity for less-well-prepared students and subsequently target interventions to these areas.

Finally, URM students at SFSU are more likely to be from low-income backgrounds. Indeed, 60-62% of URMs are Pell-eligible, compared to 47% of each overall cohort. Given the literature that describes the additional obstacles low-income students face in completing postsecondary degrees, the relatively high incidence of Pell-eligibility among URM students does much to explain lower graduation rates among Latinos and African Americans. The incorporation of additional financial subsidies or support targeted to these students may help to mediate the achievement gap, although attention to the social, cultural, and familial capital associated with lower-income groups may also be necessary.

Priority Considerations for Closing Achievement Gaps at SFSU

- Identify the departments and/or programs in which completion rates among African Americans and Latinos have risen, as well as those where URM students may not be showing as much improvement. What might account for these differences? What lessons or best practices can be shared to improve completion across the university? Which support services are most effective for African American students, and which work best with Latinos?

- Examine persistence within developmental sequences, especially for URM students. How might the experiences of academically unprepared students affect their likelihood of graduating, and how might these experiences differ between URM and Non-URM students?

- Consider the connection between Pell-eligibility and the achievement gap. What financial subsidies or supports are or can be targeted to low-income URM students? In what ways might attention to other factors (e.g., cultural capital or stereotype threat) help to close the achievement gap between low-income students and their middle- and higher-income peers?

San Jose State University

Demographic Shifts

San Jose State University (SJSU) has grown substantially over the past 15 years; its 2013 freshmen cohort was 50% larger than the same cohort in 2000. Latinos account for much of this growth; this group made up 29% of the 2013 freshmen cohort (up from 15% in 2000). In contrast, the African American population at SJSU has declined slightly in terms of its share of incoming students—from 6% in 2000 to 4% in 2013 (actual numbers varied from 94 to 258).

The Achievement Gap at a Glance

Six-year graduation rates at SJSU have increased among both Underrepresented Minorities (URMs) and Whites and Asians (Non-URMs) since 2000. Nonetheless, only 43% of URMs in the 2008 cohort graduated within six years (up from 34% in 2000), compared to 55% of Non-URMs (up from 43% in 2000). Thus, despite improved graduation rates across the board, SJSU's achievement gap between URMs and Non-URMs has grown from 9 to 12%.

Comparison with Peer Institutions

SJSU's graduation rates among both URM and Non-URM students are similar to the averages among national peers (national peers and accompanying data are from www.collegeresults.org). As at most of its peer institutions, SJSU's graduation rates for both URM and Non-URM students have increased, but those for Non-URMs have grown faster, leading to larger achievement gaps. SJSU's 12% achievement gap falls somewhere in the middle of the peer group (where gaps range from -1 to 17%).

What Drives the Achievement Gap and What Can be Done About It?

Because Latinos make up the vast majority of URM students at SJSU, lower graduation rates among these students (45% for the 2008 cohort) are a major driver of the university's 12% achievement gap. However, six-year graduation rates among African Americans (39% for the 2008 cohort) are also concerning, as they typically lag even further behind Non-URM graduation rates. While academic support and advisement directed toward the Latino population at SJSU will be necessary to close the achievement gap, targeted interventions for African Americans, because there are only 150 or so in each cohort, may be relatively feasible and thus have a disproportionate effect.

Lower graduation rates among males are another likely driver of SJSU's achievement gap. Although male graduation rates have increased in recent years, only 47% of the 2008 cohort completed a degree within six years (up from 35% for the 2000 cohort). In contrast, 56% of females in the 2008 cohort graduated within the same time frame (up from 49%). As URMs make up only one-third of each freshmen cohort, the difference in male and female completion rates cannot be fully explained by lower graduation rates among URMs. Thus, SJSU may be well advised to explore the college experiences that contribute to lower persistence and attainment rates among male students— regardless of race—as well as the intersection of race and gender as it relates to degree completion.

Academic preparation is another major driver of SJSU's achievement gap. Although measures of educational preparedness (i. e., SAT scores and high school GPA) among incoming students at SJSU have risen over the past decade—perhaps contributing to rising graduation rates—average SAT

scores among URMs remain between 90 and 100 points lower than for Non-URMs (average GPAs among URMs are slightly lower). Furthermore, while the percentage of students deemed proficient at entry has increased dramatically across the board since 2000, in 2013 only half of all incoming URMs were prepared for college-level work, compared to 64% of the overall cohort. Clearly, URMs at SJSU display lower levels of academic preparedness than their White and Asian peers. As such, they may spend more time in developmental sequences, earn lower grades in courses, and require more intensive academic support. As a next step toward closing the achievement gap, SJSU may want to consider how these experiences qualify opportunity for less-well-prepared students and subsequently target interventions to these areas.

Finally, URM students at SJSU are more likely to be from low-income backgrounds. Indeed, 57% of URMs are Pell-eligible, compared to 40-43% of each overall cohort. Given the literature that describes the additional obstacles low-income students face in completing postsecondary degrees, the relatively high incidence of Pell-eligibility among URM students does much to explain lower graduation rates among Latinos and African Americans. The incorporation of additional financial subsidies or support targeted to these students may help to mediate the achievement gap, although attention to the social, cultural, and familial capital associated with lower-income groups may also be necessary.

Priority Considerations for Closing Achievement Gaps at SJSU

- Identify the departments and/or programs in which completion rates among African Americans and Latinos have risen, as well as those where URM students may not be showing as much improvement. What might account for these differences? What lessons or best practices can be shared to improve completion across the university? Which support services are most effective for African American students, and which work best with Latinos?

- Investigate achievement gaps between female and male students. Are there large variations in the gender achievement gap among departments and/or programs of study? What programs or services could be put in place to better support male students at SJSU?

- Examine persistence within developmental sequences, especially for URM students. How might the experiences of academically unprepared students affect their likelihood of graduating, and how might these experiences differ between URM and Non-URM students?

- Consider the connection between Pell-eligibility and the achievement gap. What financial subsidies or supports are or can be targeted to low-income URM students? In what ways might attention to other factors (e.g., cultural capital or stereotype threat) help to close the achievement gap between low-income students and their middle- and higher-income peers?

Cal Poly San Louis Obispo

Demographic Shifts

Cal Poly San Louis Obispo (Cal Poly) has grown over the past 15 years; its 2013 freshmen cohort was 50% larger than the same cohort in 2000. Latinos account for some of this growth; this group made up 14% of the 2013 freshmen cohort (up from 10% in 2000). The African American population at Cal Poly has also increased in terms of numbers (from 22-37), but remains less than 1% of each freshmen cohort.

The Achievement Gap at a Glance

Six-year graduation rates at Cal Poly are comparatively high and have increased among both Underrepresented Minorities (URMs) and Whites and Asians (Non-URMs) since 2000. However, only 64% of URMs in the 2008 cohort graduated within six years (up from 58% in 2000), compared to 77% of Non-URMs (up from 68% in 2000). Thus, despite relatively high and improved graduation rates across the board, Cal Poly's achievement gap between URMs and Non-URMs has grown from 10-13%.

Comparison with Peer Institutions

In comparison to national peers (national peers and accompanying data are from www.collegeresults.org), six-year graduation rates among both URMs and Non-URMs at Cal Poly are about average. However, the university's 13% achievement gap is among the highest in the group.

What Drives the Achievement Gap and What Can be Done About It?

Because Latinos make up the vast majority of URM students at Cal Poly, comparatively lower graduation rates among these students (66% for the 2008 cohort) are a major driver of the university's 13% achievement gap. However, six-year graduation rates among African Americans are also concerning, as they lag even further behind those for Whites and Asians (half of the African Americans in the 2008 cohort graduated within six years, although there is some variability among cohorts due to small numbers). While academic support and advisement directed toward the Latino population at Cal Poly will be necessary to close the achievement gap, targeted interventions for African Americans, because there are only 20-40 in each cohort, may be important and relatively feasible.

Lower graduation rates among males are another likely driver of Cal Poly's achievement gap. Although graduation rates for both males and females have improved since 2000, only 69% of males in the 2008 cohort graduated within six years, compared to 82% of females. Indeed, the gender achievement gap has varied between 8-15%; it was 13% for the 2008 cohort. Given that males, African Americans, and Latinos graduate at rates lower than their comparison groups, Cal Poly may be well advised to explore the intersection of race and gender as it relates to degree completion and, if necessary, focus its retention and academic support efforts on men of color.

Improved academic preparation among incoming students may be a major driver of Cal Poly's improved graduation rates, and may also help explain the university's achievement gap. For example, measures of educational preparedness (i. e., SAT scores, high school GPA) among

incoming students (especially URMs) have risen substantially over the past decade. So has the percentage of students deemed proficient at entry (from 64-95% for URMs and from 80-97% for the overall cohorts). Higher levels of academic preparedness among incoming students may thus contribute to higher graduation rates among all groups.

However, despite rising levels of academic preparation among URMs, average SAT scores for these students remain around 70-75 points lower than those for Non-URMs, and average GPAs are slightly lower. Clearly, although Cal Poly freshmen are better prepared than many other students who enter the California State University system, URMs at Cal Poly display lower levels of academic preparedness than their White and Asian peers. As such, they may spend more time in lower-division gateway courses, earn lower grades in courses, and require more intensive academic support. As a next step toward closing the achievement gap, Cal Poly may want to consider how these experiences qualify opportunity for less-well-prepared students and subsequently target interventions in these areas.

Finally, URM students at Cal Poly are more likely than Non-URMs to be from low-income backgrounds. Indeed, 28-35% of URMs are Pell-eligible, compared to 16-17% of each overall cohort. Given the literature that describes the additional obstacles low-income students face in completing postsecondary degrees, the higher incidence of Pell-eligibility among URM students does much to explain lower graduation rates among Latinos and African Americans. The incorporation of additional financial subsidies or support targeted to these students may help to close the achievement gap, although attention to the social, cultural, and familial capital associated with lower-income groups may also be necessary.

Priority Considerations for Closing Achievement Gaps at Cal Poly

- Identify the departments and/or programs in which completion rates among African Americans and/or Latinos have risen, as well as those where URM students may not be showing as much improvement. What might account for these differences? What lessons or best practices can be shared to improve completion across the university? Which support services are most effective for African American students, and which work best with Latinos?

- Investigate achievement gaps between female and male students, especially those from African American and Latino backgrounds. What programs are or could be put in place to better support men, and in particular, men of color?

- Examine persistence within developmental sequences and lower-division gateway courses, especially for URM students. How might the experiences of academically less-well-prepared students affect their likelihood of graduating, and how might these experiences differ between URM and Non-URM students?

- Consider the connection between Pell-eligibility and the achievement gap. What financial subsidies or supports are or can be targeted to low-income URM students? In what ways might attention to other factors (e.g., cultural capital or stereotype threat) help to close the achievement gap between low-income students and their middle- and higher-income peers?

California State University – San Marcos

Demographic Shifts

California State University – San Marcos (Cal State San Marcos) has grown substantially over the past decade, with the 2013 entering freshmen cohort more than 5 times the size of the 2000 cohort. Latinos account for much of this growth; this group made up 48% of the 2013 freshmen cohort (up from 22% in 2000). Although small in numbers (92 in 2013), the African American population has grown as a proportion of each freshmen cohort (from 3% to 4% between 2002 and 2013).

The Achievement Gap at a Glance

At Cal State San Marcos, six-year graduation rates among both Underrepresented Minorities (URMs) and Whites and Asians (Non-URMs) have improved since 2000, from 36-46% for URMs and from 39-50% among Non-URMs. However, Cal State San Marcos' achievement gap has varied over the years, with URMs slightly outperforming Whites and Asians in some years, and with achievement gaps of up to 10-12% in others. Among students in the 2008 cohort, the achievement gap was 4%.

Comparison with National Peers

In comparison to national peer institutions (national peers and accompanying data are from www.collegeresults.org), six-year graduation rates among URMs and at Cal State San Marcos are among the highest, whereaas rates among Non-URMs are near the average for the group. Thus, Cal State San Marcos' 4% achievement gap is among the lowest.

What Drives the Achievement Gap and What Can be Done about It?

Latinos make up the majority of URM students at Cal State San Marcos. As such, Latino graduation rates (47% for the 2008 cohort) drive the overall URM rate (46%). However, African American graduation rates have been highly variable (likely because of the small numbers in each cohort); 2000-2008 cohort graduation rates ranged from 37-50%. These numbers also contribute to the small achievement gap. Thus, academic support and advisement targeted to African American and Latino populations may be necessary if Cal State San Marcos is to continue to improve URM graduation rates.

Lower graduation rates among males are another likely driver of Cal State San Marcos' achievement gap. Although graduation rates for both males and females have improved since 2000, only 42% of males in the 2008 cohort graduated within six years, compared to 52% of females. Indeed, the gender achievement gap has varied between 5-15%; it was 10% for the 2008 cohort. Given that males, African Americans, and Latinos graduate at rates lower than their comparison groups, Cal State San Marcos may be well advised to explore the intersection of race and gender as it relates to degree completion and, if necessary, focus its retention and academic support efforts on men of color.

Interestingly, Cal State San Marcos has demonstrated improved graduation rates despite small declines in average SAT scores and high school GPAs among incoming students. Part of the explanation may reside in the fact that—despite lower academic credentials—a much greater proportion of incoming URM students at Cal State San Marcos are prepared for college-level work

(37% in 2013, compared to 15% in 2000). Proficiency rates for overall cohorts remained about the same at 44%.

However, despite rising levels of college readiness among URMs, average SAT scores for these students remain around 70-80 points lower than those for Non-URMs, average GPAs are slightly lower, and a greater percentage require remediation. Clearly, URMs at Cal State San Marcos display lower levels of academic preparedness than their White and Asian peers. As such, they may spend more time in developmental sequences and lower-division gateway courses, earn lower grades in courses, and require more intensive academic support. As a next step toward closing the achievement gap, Cal State San Marcos may want to consider how these experiences qualify opportunity for less-well-prepared students and subsequently target interventions in these areas.

In addition, while many Cal State San Marcos students are from low-income backgrounds, 63-65% of URM students are Pell-eligible, compared to 42-47% of each overall cohort. Given the literature describing the additional obstacles low-income students face in completing postsecondary degrees, the higher incidence of Pell-eligibility among URM students does much to explain lower graduation rates among Latinos and African Americans. The incorporation of additional financial subsidies or support targeted to these students may help to close the achievement gap, although attention to the social, cultural, and familial capital associated with lower-income groups may also be necessary.

Priority Considerations for Closing Achievement Gaps at Cal State San Marcos

- Identify the departments and/or programs in which completion rates among various groups of students (e.g., Latinos, African Americans, Non-URMs) have risen, as well as those where the same students may not be showing as much improvement. What might account for these differences? What lessons or best practices can be shared to improve completion across the university? Are some support services more effective among certain groups of students than among others?

- Investigate achievement gaps between female and male students. Are there large variations in the gender achievement gap among departments and/or programs of study? What programs or services could be put in place to better support men, especially men of color, at Cal State San Macros?

- Examine persistence within developmental sequences and lower-division gateway courses, especially for URM students. How might the experiences of academically less-well-prepared students affect their likelihood of graduating, and how might these experiences differ between URM and Non-URM students?

- Consider the connection between Pell-eligibility and graduation rates. What financial subsidies or supports are or can be further targeted to low-income students? In what ways might attention to other factors (e.g., cultural capital or stereotype threat) help to improve graduation rates among URM and Non-URM students?

Sonoma State University

Demographic Shifts

Sonoma State University (SSU) has grown over the past decade, with entering freshmen cohorts nearly 70% larger in 2013 than in 2000. Latinos account for much of this growth; this group made up 32% of the 2013 freshmen cohort (up from 12% in 2000). The African American population at SSU has also increased, both in numbers (from 24-50) and in its share of incoming students (from 2% for the 2000 cohort to 3% for the 2013 cohort)

The Achievement Gap at a Glance

Graduation rates at SSU display a troubling trend. Indeed, six-year graduation rates among Underrepresented Minorities (URMs) have *fallen* in recent years (from 49-45% for the 2000 - 2008 cohorts), while rates among Whites and Asians (Non-URMs) have improved (from 51-58%). As a result, SSU's achievement gap between URMs and Non-URMs has gone from less than 2% to 13% for the 2008 cohort.

Comparison with National Peers

In comparison to national peer institutions (national peers and accompanying data are from www.collegeresults.org), both URM and Non-URM graduation rates at SSU are similar to averages for the group. As such, SSU's 13% achievement gap is on par with peer institutions.

What Drives the Achievement Gap and What Can be Done about It?

Latinos make up the majority of URM students at SSU. As such, Latino graduation rates (47% for the 2008 cohort) drive the overall URM rate (45%). However, African American graduation rates are lag even further behind those for Non-URMs (35% for the 2008 cohort). Although these rates have been somewhat variable over the years due to the small numbers in each cohort, they too contribute to SSU's achievement gap. Thus, academic support and advisement targeted to both African American and Latino populations may be necessary if SSU is to reverse the trend of declining URM graduation rates and close the achievement gap.

Lower graduation rates among males are another likely driver of SSU's achievement gap. Although graduation rates for both males and females have improved since 2000, only 51% of males in the 2008 cohort graduated within six years, compared to 58% of females. Indeed, while the gender achievement gap has varied over the years, it has generally widened, reaching 8% for the 2008 cohort. Given that males, African Americans, and Latinos graduate at rates lower than their comparison groups, SSU may be well advised to explore the intersection of race and gender as it relates to degree completion and, if necessary, focus its retention and academic support efforts on men of color.

 Academic preparation is another major driver of SSU's achievement gap. Indeed, average SAT scores among URMs have consistently been between 75-100 points lower than those for Non-URMs and average GPAs are slightly lower. Furthermore, while the percentage of students deemed proficient at entry has increased across the board since 2000, in 2013 only 40-41% of URMs were prepared for college-level work when they arrived on campus, compared to 54-57% of the overall cohort. Clearly, URM students arrive at SSU with lower levels of academic preparedness than their

White and Asian peers. As such, they may spend more time in developmental sequences, earn lower grades in courses, and require more intensive academic support. As a next step toward closing the achievement gap, SSU may want to consider how these experiences qualify opportunity for less-well-prepared students and subsequently target interventions in these areas.

Finally, while many SSU students are from low-income backgrounds, 46-52% of URM students are Pell-eligible, compared to 27-32% of each overall cohort. Given the literature describing the additional obstacles low-income students face in completing postsecondary degrees, the higher proportion of Pell-eligible URM students at SSU does much to the achievement gap between URM and Non-URM students. The incorporation of additional financial subsidies or support targeted to low-income URM students may help to close the achievement gap, although attention to the social, cultural, and familial capital associated with lower-income groups may also be necessary.

Priority Considerations for Closing Achievement Gaps at SSU

- Examine why completion rates among African Americans and Latinos have fallen in recent years. What programs are or could be put in place to better support these students through graduation?

- Investigate achievement gaps between female and male students. Are there large variations in the gender achievement gap among departments and/or programs of study? What programs or services could be put in place to better support men, especially men of color, at SSU?

- Examine persistence within developmental sequences, especially for URM students. How might the experiences of academically unprepared students affect their likelihood of graduating, and how might these experiences differ between URM and Non-URM students?

- Consider the connection between Pell-eligibility and the achievement gap. What financial subsidies or supports are or can be targeted to low-income URM students? In what ways might attention to other factors (e.g., cultural capital or stereotype threat) help to close the achievement gap between low-income students and their middle- and higher-income peers?

Stanislaus State University

Demographic Shifts

Stanislaus State University has grown substantially over the past decade, with the 2013 entering freshmen cohort twice the size of the 2000 cohort. Latinos account for much of this growth; this group made up 56% of the 2013 freshmen cohort (up from 32% in 2000). The number of African Americans in each cohort has ranged from 15-50, but in recent years has diminished as a proportion of the freshmen cohort (from 3% to 2% between 2002 and 2013).

The Achievement Gap at a Glance

At Stanislaus State, six-year graduation rates among Underrepresented Minorities (URMs) have improved over the past few years, from 44-52% for the 2001-2008 cohorts. Among Whites and Asians (Non-URMs), however, rates dropped from 55% down to 51% for the 2003 and 2004 cohorts, before rebounding back to 55% for the 2008 cohort. As such, Stanislaus State's achievement gap has varied over the years, although in general it has narrowed, reaching 3% for the 2007 and 2008 cohorts.

Comparison with National Peers

In comparison to national peer institutions (national peers and accompanying data are from www.collegeresults.org), Stanislaus State has the highest six-year graduation rates among both URMs and Non-URMs. Furthermore, Stanislaus State's achievement gap is among the lowest in the peer group.

What Drives the Achievement Gap and What Can be Done about It?

Latinos make up the majority of URM students at Stanislaus State. As such, Latino graduation rates (53% for the 2008 cohort) drive the overall URM rate (52%). However, African American graduation rates have been highly variable (likely because of the small numbers in each cohort); 2000-2008 cohort graduation rates ranged from 19-52%. These numbers also contribute to the small achievement gap. Thus, academic support and advisement targeted to African American and Latino populations may be necessary if Stanislaus State is to continue to improve graduation rates and close the achievement gap.

Lower graduation rates among males are another likely driver of Stanislaus State's small achievement gap. Indeed, male graduation rates have declined since the 2004 cohort (from 49-45%) while rates among females have improved (55% of women in the 2008 cohort graduated within six years). As such, the gender achievement gap has varied between 0-16%, but in general has widened (it was 13% for the 2008 cohort). Given that males, African Americans, and Latinos graduate at rates lower than their comparison groups, Stanislaus State may be well advised to explore the intersection of race and gender as it relates to degree completion and, if necessary, focus its retention and academic support efforts on men of color.

Academic preparation may be another driver of Stanislaus State's small achievement gap. Indeed, average SAT scores among URMs have consistently been between 80-100 points lower than those for Non-URMs, and average GPAs are slightly lower. Furthermore, while the percentage of students deemed proficient at entry has increased across the board since 2000, in 2013 only 34-38% of

URMs were prepared for college-level work when they arrived on campus, compared to 44-46% of the overall cohort. Clearly, URM students arrive at Stanislaus State with lower levels of academic preparedness than their White and Asian peers. As such, they may spend more time in developmental sequences, earn lower grades in courses, and require more intensive academic support. As a next step toward closing the achievement gap, the university may want to consider how these experiences qualify opportunity for less-well-prepared students and subsequently target interventions in these areas.

In addition, while many Stanislaus State students are from low-income backgrounds, 68-73% of URM students are Pell-eligible, compared to 60-61% of each overall cohort. Given the literature describing the additional obstacles low-income students face in completing postsecondary degrees, the higher incidence of Pell-eligibility among URM students helps to explain lower graduation rates among Latinos and African Americans. The incorporation of additional financial subsidies or support targeted to these students may help to close the achievement gap, although attention to the social, cultural, and familial capital associated with lower-income groups may also be necessary.

Priority Considerations for Closing Achievement Gaps at Stanislaus State

- Identify the departments and/or programs in which completion rates among various groups of students (e.g., Latinos, African Americans, Non-URMs) have risen, as well as those where the same students may not be showing as much improvement. What might account for these differences? What lessons or best practices can be shared to improve completion across the university? Are some support services more effective among certain groups of students than among others?

- Investigate achievement gaps between female and male students. Are there large variations in the gender achievement gap among departments and/or programs of study? What programs or services could be put in place to better support men, especially men of color, at Stanislaus State?

- Examine persistence within developmental sequences and lower-division gateway courses, especially for URM students. How might the experiences of academically less-well-prepared students affect their likelihood of graduating, and how might these experiences differ between URM and Non-URM students?

- Consider the connection between Pell-eligibility and graduation rates. What financial subsidies or supports are or can be further targeted to low-income students? In what ways might attention to other factors (e.g., cultural capital or stereotype threat) help to improve graduation rates among URM and Non-URM students?

Conclusions: Achievement and Opportunity at the System Level

Despite decades of research on achievement gaps in higher education, as well as the implementation of numerous university programs and support systems designed to improve student persistence and completion, most public universities in the U.S. have not experienced substantial or sustained progress toward parity in student outcomes. Gaps in student achievement remain between students from certain races and ethnicities, income levels, levels of academic preparation, English language competency or fluency, and gender. Differences are also apparent across program areas within individual institutions. Policymakers have put pressure on universities to close gaps in student achievement, yet conditions outside of the universities are far more responsible for these gaps than the universities themselves. The quality and rigor of high school curricula, students' neighborhoods and social groups, and family incomes and expectations, for example, all influence students' academic persistence and achievement. So, too, do students' obligations outside of college; for example, students who must work in excess of 30 hours a week to pay for college are substantially less likely to persist and attain a degree.[xviii] Yet universities do have the capacity to modify policies, programs, and priorities in ways that better support and educate students; that improve the climate in which students learn; and that influence how students are placed into various courses and programs. In these ways, universities can work to improve graduation rates among all students—especially those who face the biggest barriers to degree completion—and at the same time, begin to close achievement gaps.

California State University, as a system of 23 distinct universities, defies definitive or overarching statements about graduation rates and achievement gaps. However, analyses of these trends suggest some commonalities among institutions. Perhaps the most pronounced commonality lies in demographics: each university is growing; much of this growth is driven by larger populations of Underrepresented Minorities (URMs), particularly Latinos; and many of these new students are low-income and/or demonstrate lower levels of academic preparedness than their White and Asian (Non-URM) peers. These demographic shifts bring intense challenges for institutions. That the vast majority of universities in the CSU system nonetheless demonstrate improved graduation rates is notable.

However, the causes of these improvements can be elusive and require careful and detailed explanations. For example, 13 universities in the CSU system demonstrated improved completion rates among all or most racial groups, yet had consistent or growing achievement gaps between URM and Non-URM students. What might explain this pattern? Perhaps these universities have instituted new or expanded existing academic support services or programs, and these efforts similarly affected all groups. Or perhaps they have paid greater attention to persistence and attainment in light of the 2015 Graduation Initiative, in turn improving completion across the board. But for roughly half of these 13 universities, substantial increases in the levels of academic preparation among incoming students, particularly URMs, may have also played a role. Specifically, as program impaction allowed universities to be more selective in admissions, graduation rates improved. Yet because average SAT scores for URMs continue to lag behind those for Non-URMs, and because URMs are more likely to be from low-income backgrounds or require remedial education, the achievement gap persists.

Another set of universities in the CSU system demonstrates a different pattern. At these 6 institutions, URM graduation rates have either fallen, remained stagnant, or improved at a rate substantially lower than that for Non-URMs, leading in many cases to larger achievement gaps. Are these 6 universities failing to provide necessary levels of academic support for their URM students? Perhaps, but it may also be the case that demographic shifts toward more low-income and less-

well-prepared students may also be factors. Persistent gender achievement gaps at many of these universities may also contribute to the pattern; indeed, many of the California State Universities would be well-served to investigate the intersection of race and gender as it relates to degree completion and, if necessary, focus their academic support and retention efforts on men of color.

Of the 3 universities in the CSU system that demonstrate substantially smaller achievement gaps, only two appear to have made any real progress toward ensuring that URMs graduate at rates similar to their Non-URM peers (at the third, falling graduation rates among Whites and Asians have driven the smaller achievement gap). Can these institutions serve as models of promising practices for other universities in the system? Possibly, but in comparison to most of the other universities, these institutions are relatively small, geographically isolated, or have specialized missions. What has helped them to narrow the achievement gap may or may not be relevant elsewhere. Indeed, as this white paper illustrates, context—not only the demographics of an institution, but also its selectivity, mission, purposes, history, and human and cultural geography— matters a great deal.

In the coming years, it is likely that most universities in the CSU system will demonstrate (or continue to demonstrate) higher graduation rates and, perhaps, smaller achievement gaps. In fact, because of the six-year delay between when a cohort starts college and when completion is measured, the effects of numerous programs and support systems put in place as part of the 2015 Graduation Initiative may become more apparent in completion rates for the 2009 and later cohorts.

Nevertheless, university leaders should not assume that higher graduation rates and/or smaller achievement gaps necessarily indicate equitable opportunities for all students. As this white paper contends, evaluating student achievement and opportunity is highly complex and ill-suited to simplistic explanations or direct comparisons among institutions. Improved graduation rates must be assessed in light of the educational preparedness and socioeconomic levels of incoming students; differences in achievement among various identity groups must be investigated across departments, programs, and corners of the university; and retention and academic support programs must be assessed continually for efficacy.

In other words, the work of improving *opportunity*, which takes into account students' experiences, development, and outcomes, must be continual, even once there is parity in *achievement* among various groups. By focusing on opportunity, university leaders may find it easier to identify the work that still needs to be done to improve student success, to redirect resources to better support those efforts, and ultimately, to improve the experiences of all students, especially those who face the greatest challenges in degree completion.

Endnotes

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