

UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS
URBANA-CHAMPAIGN SENATE
Equal Opportunity and Inclusion
(Final; Action)

EQ.17.03 Resolution Promoting Black and African American Student Enrollment Goals

BACKGROUND

A coalition of student groups called the Black United Front has recently proposed to the University a plan, known as Project 1000, to increase the enrollment of Black and African American freshmen to 1000 over a four-year period. Proposed to begin at the time of the 50th anniversary of Project 500, an initiative aiming to bring 500 first-year Black and African American students to the University,¹ the Project 1000 initiative also aims to improve upon weaknesses that the student sponsors of the current plan believe led to Project 500's failure to remain a sustained University priority. These would be addressed by increased investment in the financial aid needed to make a University of Illinois education accessible to many Black and African American Illinois high school graduates, and robust ongoing engagement student engagement with the implementation of the program.

The plan comes at a time of recent increases in Black and African American enrollment numbers, and increasing investments in recruitment efforts for Black and African American students, which are laudable achievements beginning to reverse earlier trends.² These achievements are enhanced by the University's strong 6-year graduation rate of underrepresented minority students generally, as compared to its peers. Still, concerns about historical variability in the University's commitment to and success in recruiting Black and African American students over the last 50 years remain, insofar as the initial boost in African American enrollment provided in 1968 could not be consistently maintained. Recognizing these concerns and the opportunity to build on recent achievements in recruitment, and incorporating thoughtful initiatives recently provided through both the Project 1000 proposal and input from the University administration, the Senate provides the following statement on goals of increased Black and African American enrollment:

RESOLUTION

Whereas, the rising numbers of Black and African American students achieved by the Special Enrollment Opportunities Program (known as Project 500) of 50 years ago were not consistently sustained throughout the succeeding decades, and

Whereas, through recruitment, investment in higher yields of enrolled students, and ongoing attention to financial aid needs, the University has achieved encouraging recent successes that have begun to reverse this trend and provide a foundation to continue to build upon, and

¹ See Joy Ann Williamson, *Black Power on Campus: The University of Illinois, 1965-1975* (Champaign: University of Illinois Press, 2003); "Project 500" exhibit by History 386 students, Student Life and Culture Archives web page: <https://archives.library.illinois.edu/slc/oral-history-portal/project-500/>

² According to the Division of Management Information, in Fall 2016 there were 646 entering freshmen who identified as African American (548 as solely African American and 98 as multiracial). On top of this, increasing resources available through the Chancellor's Access Grant have been committed to the effort to improve the yield of enrolled students from among rising numbers of accepted underrepresented students. See also the Spring 2017 "External Review Report and Recommendations on Diversity and Inclusion."

Whereas, a student proposal to address these issues has recently been advanced, with goals of bringing in progressively higher numbers of Black and African American students, particularly Illinois high school graduates, over a four year period, increasing development of and investment in the financial aid needed to recruit and retain larger cohorts of incoming Black and African American undergraduates, improving institutional structures and climate to retain these students, and involving students in ongoing implementation of the program, and

Whereas, successful recruitment and retention of Black and African American students at rising rates requires financial aid investments as well as proactive programs such as cultural houses to improve campus climate and resources for the students such programs recruit, as referenced in the Spring 2017 “External Review Report and Recommendations on Diversity and Inclusion” commissioned by the Chancellor, therefore

Be it resolved, that the Senate of the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign endorses the goal of pursuing sustained increases in Black and African American enrollment at the University of Illinois, and

Be it also resolved, that the Senate supports campus commitments to developing and providing financial aid support needed to recruit and retain increasing numbers of Black and African American students, and

Be it also resolved, that because the Senate recognizes the importance of institutional structures -- including the support of African American Studies, cultural houses, and bridge programs—in producing a climate conducive to retaining the increased numbers of Black and African American undergraduates, it supports these as institutional priorities, and

Be it also resolved, that the Senate endorses the principle of student involvement in implementing programs promoting Black and African American student recruitment and retention, and

Be it also resolved, that the Senate emphasizes the importance of shared governance and encourages cooperation and dialogue on the topic involving student groups, the university administration, the Urbana-Champaign Senate, as well as community stakeholders, and

Be it finally resolved, that while specifically endorsing the goal of increasing Black and African American student enrollment, the Senate also recognizes the importance of simultaneously sustaining and/or increasing the numbers and support of other underrepresented students-- including Native American, Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander, Latina/o, and first generation college students.

EQUAL OPPORTUNITY AND INCLUSION

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