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## Cerritos College Named Equity Champion for Equitable Access for Black Students

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**NORWALK, Calif. – June 5, 2023 –** On May 31, the Campaign for College Opportunity named Cerritos College a 2023 Champion for Excelling in Equitable Course Placement in Black English Enrollment at its second annual [Excellence in Placement award](#) ceremony. President/Superintendent Dr. Fierro accepted the award with Associate English Professor and Umoja Success Program Interim Director Damon Cagnolatti.



The District is lauded for its quick implementation of landmark Assembly Bill 705, which eliminated developmental English and math courses from community college placement exams. The campus enrolled 100 percent of its Black students directly into transfer-level English coursework during the 2021-22 academic year without detouring them into developmental courses that often stifle student success. College counselors use Multiple Measures to help students find the right courses using an online Self-Report Tool, their high school transcripts, and the College's Guided Placement Tool.

Cerritos College serves approximately 1,400 students who identify as Black and African American each semester. Over [a decade of research](#) has shown that students' likelihood of earning a degree decreases when they start college in remedial courses. Ninety-three (93) percent of students do not finish remedial math and are unable to advance to college-level work.

Equitable placement practices have proven to be highly consequential for increasing access to transfer-level coursework, maximizing student success, and closing racial/ethnic equity gaps. At Cerritos College, compared to 2017, nearly four times as many students are completing transfer-level math and English in their first year in 2022. According to the College's [Office of Institutional Research, Planning, and Grants](#), students who complete transfer-level math and English earlier in their educational career are more likely to graduate faster.

High-quality instructional programs and services through equity-minded pathways are part of Cerritos College's mission and commitment to addressing student success. The College has a long history of developing programs to support disproportionately impacted students, including Black, Asian Pacific Islander, and Latinx students. The College's [UMOJA Success Program](#) is a learning community

dedicated to the academic success, personal growth, and development of self and community of African American students. The [Black/Africana Studies](#) program is an interdisciplinary program that provides the opportunity to critically study Black people's lived experiences, life history, and culture.

"We are honored to receive the Champion for Excelling in Equitable Course Placement recognition. Improving student equity and outcomes is a primary part of the Board's goals to increase student achievement for Black, first-generation, and underrepresented students," said Dr. Jose Fierro, president/superintendent of Cerritos College. "This recognition is a testament to the hard work of our faculty, staff, and administration in eliminating remedial education courses and ensuring students enroll and succeed in college-level courses. Equity-based support programs like our Umoja Success Program and Black/Africana Studies Department give our students culturally-relevant coursework and a sense of community where they are celebrated and nurtured by the entire campus. We will continue to invest resources to develop and enhance these programs and initiatives to close more equity gaps in education."

**About Cerritos College:** *Cerritos College serves as a comprehensive community college for southeastern Los Angeles County. Communities within the college's district include Artesia, Bellflower, Cerritos, Downey, Hawaiian Gardens, La Mirada, Norwalk, and portions of Bell Gardens, Lakewood, Long Beach, Santa Fe Springs, and South Gate. Cerritos College offers degrees and certificates in more than 180 areas of study in nine divisions. Annually, more than 1,200 students successfully complete their course of studies. Enrollment currently averages 21,000 students. Visit Cerritos College online at <http://www.cerritos.edu/>.*

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