California State University, Sacramento
Division of Student Affairs
6000 J Street • Lassen Hall 3008 • Mail Stop 6062 • Sacramento, CA 95819
T (916) 278-6060

Sacramento State - Division of Student Affairs
Martin Luther King Jr. Center
Annual Report

Annual Report: 2025-2026

Subdivision Information

- **Subdivision Name:** Student Success & Academic Excellence
- **AVP/Executive Director Name:** Dr. Chao Vang
- **Departments Included in the Report:** Martin Luther King Jr. Center (MLK Center)

Department Name: Martin Luther King Jr. Center (MLK Center)

Mission alignment:

Sacramento State, home of California's premier Black Serving Institution (BSI), the nation's first Black Honors College, and the proud host to the most Black students across the entire California State University and University of California system, is also home to the Martin Luther King Jr. Center, who serves ALL Sacramento State students with an emphasis on Black and African American populations. Given the large number of Black students and the chancellor's office 2023 Black student success report, the MLK Center serves as a vital component in Black Student Success.

Key Achievements

1. Awarded over $16,000 in scholarships across 4 MLK unique scholarships and established over $15,000 in scholarship money to be awarded over the 26-27 academic year
2. Remodeled and enhanced the center to better fit the needs of students and meet demand through new furniture, murals, artwork, staff, and services
3. Saw over 600 unique students enter the space during the academic year, nearly a quarter of the Black student population at Sacramento State
4. Addressed the CSU Chancellor's Office Black Student Success Report targeting career readiness by collaborating with the National Association of Colleges and Employers (NACE) to prepare students for a successful transition into the workplace while supporting them in achieving their educational goals and aspirations by working alongside a network of mentors, employers, and industry leaders
5. Collaborated with Black clubs and organizations on campus, such as the Black Student Union and National Pan-Hellenic Council (NPHC), bringing all 9 historically Black

Greek letter organizations to Sacramento State, further stamping it as the "HBCU of the West".

New or Improved Services/Programs

- Integrated academic advising, peer wellness advocates (PWA), PARC tutoring, library research, EOP holistic advising, and faculty scholars.
- Developed a series of career readiness titled "Paper 2 Paycheck", with resume and cover letter building, professional headshots, and networking with employers

Equity, Inclusion & Belonging Efforts

The MLK Center is open to all incoming students with a focus on serving and supporting Black/African American student populations. As a result, our programming efforts generated interest among students from diverse racial, ethnic, academic, and socioeconomic backgrounds. Furthermore, MLK Center collaborated with the following on-campus departments and organizations to promote unity and openness to those from all backgrounds:

Veterans Success Center, PRIDE Center, Women's Resource Center, Black Honors College, Disability Justice Club, SWANA Center, APIDA Center, Cooper Woodson College Enhancement Program, Male Empowerment Collaborative, Equal Opportunity Program (EOP)

Partnerships & Collaborations

In addition to on-campus partnerships, MLK Center remained active in the community.

Key partnerships include:

- Capital Black Chamber of Commerce
- Chase Bank
- City Year
- BMO Bank
- Project Optimism
- A2Mend
- Young Leadership Collaborative (YLC)
- Black Youth Leadership Project

Assessment & Data Highlights

- Over 600 unique students visited the MLK center over the academic year

California State University, Sacramento
Division of Student Affairs
6000 J Street • Lassen Hall 3008 • Mail Stop 6062 • Sacramento, CA 95819
T (916) 278-6060

- Students most often reported reason for visiting was for a safe space/belonging, and cultural gatherings
- Students surveyed satisfaction with the center's environment and felt like they had a place on campus they could call home
- Nearly half of MLK students wish for mental health services to be further integrated into the center
- MLK students expressed desire for mentorship during the end of year survey

Strategic Priorities & Future Goals

- **Short-Term Priorities (Next 1-2 years):**
  - Revamp digital and marketing footprint (Instagram, TikTok, Facebook, YouTube, Canvas, website, presentations, one-pager, brochures, merchandise)
  - Develop and implement Black Scholar Mentor Program
  - Reframe the center to focus on integrated services (All events should have advising, tutoring, peer wellness advocates, career readiness, librarian and information literacy, faculty scholars, and EOP holistic advising in mind)
  - Revamp MLK staffing with graduate intern, student assistants, and counseling/social work interns
  - Establish two signature events, one in the Fall, one in the Spring (MLK day, Black Excellence Awards)
  - Put mental health at the forefront, breaking down barriers and stigma

- **Long-Term Vision (3-5 years):**
  - Become the touchpoint for Black students on campus, by having over 50% of the Black student population visit the center in one academic year
  - Increase the retention and graduation rates among MLK scholars, further supporting the university goals and initiatives
  - Ensure the MLK Center is regarded as the center for Black students in the entire state of California, through strategic outreach, partnership, and student data success
  - Create employer pipelines through the Black Scholar Mentor program, ensuring that students see the value of the CSU degree
  - Promote graduate school and research among MLK scholars, creating a center of excellence and high achieving students

Resource Needs & Support Requests

- Additional Assistant Program Coordinator
- Continued student assistant funding
- Budget for remodeling and student emergencies

California State University, Sacramento
Division of Student Affairs
6000 J Street • Lassen Hall 3008 • Mail Stop 6062 • Sacramento, CA 95819
T (916) 278-6060

Assessment & Data-Driven Insights

- **Student Engagement & Success Metrics**
  - As MLK Center undergoes a refresh in the Fall of 2026, including rebranding, new digital footprint, and services, it will be important to look at the data and assess student success and needs. Focusing on graduation rates, retention rates, GPA, career outcomes, student satisfaction, belonging, and wellness statistics will help us better understand the pulse of the Black population at Sacramento State
  - Looking at the utilization of the MLK Center, including time of day, day of the week, class standing, and majors can be helpful. Furthermore, looking at the students who do not utilize the center and diving deeper into how to still be a touchpoint to those students despite being not physically in the center

- **Use of Assessment for Improvement**
  - Oftentimes, things become habits just due to the fact that they have been done historically. With assessment, we can see what is moving the needle in regard to Black student success and what is not. For example, the programs being held by the MLK Center can be measured by a post event survey to see what students got from it. In addition, the students who checked in for advising on multiple occasions versus the student who checked in multiple times for MLK Visitor may have largely different outcomes when it comes to GPA and retention. Being able to use assessment as a tool to not just try and paint a positive picture but instead use it to measure ways to improve the center a whole will be pivotal in the center's growth going forward.

- **Data Challenges & Needs**
  - Being able to look at and identify historical data (from 2015-2024) and 2025 – 2026 and beyond will be pivotal. Looking at how the new direction of the center under its new AVP and the focus on intentional programming and integrated services has affected student GPA, retention, and graduation
  - Need a dashboard to track the changes from historical data to now present data

Financial Overview

- **Budget Overview:**
  - The MLK Center's top funding priorities for 2025–2026 were staffing, food expenses, and center remodeling.
  - The center remodel was a shared expense with the SSAE unit and provided new furniture and updated configurations that allowed the space to serve more students, create a more elevated student experience, and maintain cultural relevance.
  - Staffing also increased significantly. The center moved from one full-time staff coordinator to a team that includes two coordinators, a director, and a graduate

student assistant. This investment in staffing allowed for greater student engagement, stronger programming, and increased overall impact.
- One expense that will not carry over next year is the Yardstream subscription, which was purchased to pilot a podcast series.

- **Major Financial Challenges & Sustainability Considerations:**
  - Many students who utilize the MLK Center experience food insecurity and limited access to healthy snacks between classes. A larger portion of the budget dedicated to food support would help address this need while staff continue to connect students to Basic Needs resources on campus.
  - Additionally, planning to provide lunch for regular programming could increase student engagement and attendance at events such as Sister Circle, Baldwin Collective, financial literacy workshops, and other ongoing programs.
  - There were some cost savings this year due to the absence of a director for four months, which accounted for approximately 33% of that position's wages and benefits. This savings may skew the budget outlook for next year if not properly accounted for.
  - Overall, the MLK Center operated on a lean budget this year and relied on the SSAE unit to cover larger expenses, including major event food costs, promotional materials, remodeling, and furniture. To more accurately reflect the true cost of MLK Center programming, it is recommended that a larger allocation be provided directly to the department, along with more intentional upfront program planning to ensure the annual allocation is sufficient.

Recommendations

- **Key Takeaways for Division Leadership:**
  - **Any major themes, needs, or institutional-level recommendations?**

  - Put mental health at the forefront
    - An alarming amount of our students (nearly 50%) expressed their desire for mental health services in the MLK center during the needs report. Asking for help is oftentimes stigmatized in the Black community, and due to that, the MLK Center needs to be the model putting mental health at the forefront and being unapologetic about it. Mental health workshops, integrated peer wellness advocates, and hosting a counseling intern will all be ways to push this forward.
  - Continue to push integrated services
    - Cultural academic resource centers need to be resource heavy, and MLK Center is no difference. For far too long, the MLK center was known as a hang out spot and just that; but if we are bringing in large amounts of students, what are we assisting them with when they arrive? Being able to provide a great product for students utilizing the space is key; and integrated services are the answer. Going forward, support consistently

California State University, Sacramento
Division of Student Affairs
6000 J Street • Lassen Hall 3008 • Mail Stop 6062 • Sacramento, CA 95819
T (916) 278-6060

having space for these services in the MLK center will be greatly appreciated as the direction of programming will be tailored to these services specifically.

- Understand barriers, hold cultural competence
  - Our students are facing challenges bigger than just at the university level. Systemic barriers oftentimes impact our students despite them being a college student, and as a center, we need to be privy of that fact. Interacting with our students with grace and cultural competency will be key to establishing an environment of belonging for our students. What works for some centers may not work for MLK, and the MLK center should be allowed to push boundaries when it comes to innovation

Final Reflections from AVP/Executive Director

- **Overall reflections on the subdivision's progress and future outlook.**

As a center who has been on Sacramento State's campus for over a decade, the needle for Black student success deserves to be moved even greater. With Sacramento State now being a State of California recognized Black Serving Institution, the MLK Center is positioned to enrich the students college experience and support their graduation and preparation for career.