

August 25, 2026

Statement from the President/Superintendent of El Camino College

At El Camino College, our commitment to Black and African American student success is not defined by a single program, initiative, or moment in time. It is an institutional responsibility—one that calls upon us to examine how our policies, practices, resources, and learning environments contribute to the experiences and outcomes of the students we serve.

That responsibility is central to who we are as a college. Our mission is to make a positive difference in people's lives through high-quality and comprehensive educational programs and services, and our vision is to be the college of equity and innovation, empowering students to attain their educational goals and realize their potential. Advancing Black student success is essential to fulfilling both.

Our 2025–2028 Student Equity Plan provides a clear framework for translating this commitment into action. African American/Black students are among the populations identified as experiencing disproportionate impact, and the plan establishes goals for eliminating equity gaps across key milestones in the student journey—from successful enrollment and completion of transfer-level Math and English to persistence, degree and certificate attainment, and transfer. Our goal is ambitious and intentional: to eliminate disproportionate impact and fully close identified equity gaps.

Achieving that goal requires us to think beyond access. Access opens the door; equity requires us to examine what happens after students enter it. We must understand where barriers remain, respond to disparities revealed through student experiences and outcomes, and create learning environments in which students experience belonging, affirmation, opportunity, and the support necessary to thrive. This commitment can be seen throughout El Camino College.

The Black Student Success Center serves as one important hub for connection, community, and student development, offering a culturally affirming environment where students can access dedicated counseling, academic resources, leadership opportunities, basic-needs connections, and other supports that contribute to their academic, personal, and professional success.

Our broader equity work extends across the institution. Through implementation of the 2025–2028 Student Equity Plan, we are strengthening cohort-based supports, targeted outreach and dual enrollment, wraparound services, culturally affirming programming, and the use of real-time disaggregated data to inform early intervention and decision-making.

We are also deepening our use of equity-focused data and institutional planning to understand where disparities exist, assess whether our strategies are producing meaningful results, guide resource allocation,

and strengthen accountability. Faculty engagement in culturally responsive and equity-minded teaching further advances this work by encouraging examination of disaggregated course-completion data and the instructional and structural conditions that influence student achievement.

Beyond the classroom, El Camino College continues to strengthen educational pathways, partnerships, mentorship, leadership development, and community-building opportunities for Black students. This includes pathways to the California State University and University of California systems as well as Historically Black Colleges and Universities, expanding the possibilities available to students as they pursue transfer and their long-term educational goals.

These efforts matter but alone are not the sole measure of our success. Our students are. It is imperative that we interrogate our data and use those findings to drive our initiatives. We must continually ask whether our students are experiencing greater belonging, persistence, achievement, completion, transfer, and preparation for their careers and professional developments. We must listen to students, examine the evidence before us, acknowledge where inequities persist, and be willing to adapt our practices when outcomes tell us that more is required.

For El Camino College, designation as a Black-Serving Institution would therefore represent both recognition and responsibility. It would recognize the students and communities we are privileged to serve while affirming our responsibility to ensure that our institutional practices consistently support their success. We are proud of the progress we have made, and we recognize that meaningful equity work is never finished. It requires sustained attention, investment, collaboration, and accountability. Most importantly, it requires that our students remain at the center of the decisions we make about their educational experiences and opportunities.

As President of El Camino Community College District, I proudly affirm El Camino College's continued commitment to advancing data-driven efforts, programs and initiatives that improves student success. We welcome the opportunity to join a community of Black-Serving Institutions committed not simply to expanding opportunity, but to transforming opportunity into measurable, meaningful, and lasting student success.

In Solidarity and Support,



Brenda Thames, Ph.D.
President/Superintendent
El Camino Community College District