

[REDACTED]

June 1, 2023

Jee Hang Lee
President/CEO, Association of Community College Trustees
1101 17th St. NW #300
Washington, DC 20036

RE: Nomination of [REDACTED] Board and Chancellor [REDACTED]
for the Charles Kennedy Equity Award

Dear President Lee,

We, the Board of Trustees of the [REDACTED], are pleased to submit this letter of support for the nomination of our esteemed Board and Chancellor, [REDACTED], for the Charles Kennedy Equity Award. We believe that their extraordinary efforts in advancing equity through dual enrollment programs exemplify the spirit of this prestigious recognition.

The Charles Kennedy Equity Award is bestowed upon individuals or governing boards that demonstrate an exceptional commitment to achieving equity within postsecondary institutions. This accolade serves as a testament to the late Charles Kennedy, a distinguished trustee who championed diversity and inclusion within the community college sector. It is with great pride that we nominate our own Board and Chancellor, recognizing their outstanding contributions to advancing equity in education.

Under the visionary leadership of Chancellor [REDACTED] and the guidance of our Board of Trustees, [REDACTED] has witnessed a profound transformation in our approach to dual enrollment programs. Recognizing the significance of dual enrollment as a catalyst for equity and student success, they have spearheaded initiatives that have reshaped the educational landscape of our community.

Through strategic partnerships with local school districts and community organizations, the [REDACTED] has significantly expanded access to dual enrollment opportunities for high school students. By removing financial barriers and streamlining administrative processes, they have ensured that all students, regardless of their socio-economic backgrounds, have equal access to college courses while still in high school. This has had a profound impact on traditionally underserved and underrepresented students, providing them with a head start on their college education and increasing their chances of success in higher education.

Furthermore, the Board and Chancellor have prioritized equity in the administration and delivery of dual enrollment programs. They have proactively addressed disparities in access and outcomes by implementing support systems, such as academic counseling and mentorship programs, that specifically target students from marginalized communities. By

[REDACTED]

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continuously monitoring and analyzing program data, they have been able to identify areas for improvement and make necessary adjustments to ensure equitable opportunities for all students.

In addition to their commitment to equity in dual enrollment, the [REDACTED] [REDACTED] Board and Chancellor [REDACTED] have embedded diversity, equity, and inclusion principles throughout the institution. They have prioritized hiring and retaining a diverse faculty and staff, implemented cultural competency training, and established inclusive campus environments that celebrate the richness of our student body.

In conclusion, we wholeheartedly endorse the nomination of the [REDACTED] [REDACTED] Board and Chancellor [REDACTED] for the Charles Kennedy Equity Award. Their unwavering commitment to achieving equity through dual enrollment programs and their dedication to fostering an inclusive educational environment align perfectly with the ideals represented by this esteemed recognition. We believe that their leadership and achievements serve as an inspiration to our institution and the broader community college movement.

Thank you for considering our nomination. We eagerly anticipate the announcement of the award recipient and look forward to celebrating the extraordinary accomplishments of the [REDACTED] Board and Chancellor [REDACTED]

Sincerely,

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

**Nomination for [REDACTED] Board of Trustees and Chancellor [REDACTED]
for the Charles Kennedy Equity Award**

Introduction

While [REDACTED] is widely known for providing over half of the fruits, vegetables, and nuts grown in the United States, it remains home to some of the most impoverished and uneducated communities in the state. [REDACTED] County has historically been one of the least educated counties in [REDACTED], with just over 16% of the entire population, 25 years and over, having a bachelor’s degree or higher, dropping to as low as 2% in some of the more rural areas¹. The cities of [REDACTED], and [REDACTED] are three of the twenty cities with the most people living below the poverty line in [REDACTED]². Something else that these three cities have in common is robust programming for high school students to begin taking college courses for free through the [REDACTED] as early as the 9th grade.

The [REDACTED] is a three-college district that serves over 24,800 square miles, making it, geographically, one of the largest community college districts in the nation³. The district serves over 40,000 students with diverse socioeconomic and ethnic backgrounds and has been a leader and champion in the state of [REDACTED] for several statewide efforts such as the Guided Pathways framework⁴, the Pathways Program Mapper⁵, and dual enrollment/early college efforts⁶. While the district has excelled in each of these, the dual enrollment program in [REDACTED] stands out as demonstrating exemplary commitment to equitable access and achievement for students that exceeds most dual enrollment or early college programs across the nation.

The dual enrollment program began in [REDACTED] in 2013 with a partnership with one rural high school and 168 students. With the success of this first partnership resulting in 38 high school students from the field-worker town of [REDACTED] earning an associate degree weeks before earning their high school diploma in 2018, the dual enrollment program quickly scaled to a countywide initiative. Under the leadership and vision of Chancellor [REDACTED] and the full support of the [REDACTED] Board of Trustees, the early college program rapidly increased dual enrollment opportunities across 60 high schools in [REDACTED] County; connecting all courses to certificate and degree pathways and creating an opt-out opportunity for all students to have access to college credits while in high school rather than an opt-in program that would leave out the most marginalized and underrepresented student populations. Today, the program has grown to serve over 14,400 students each year, with over 85% of these students being students of color and over 60% being the first in their family to attend college⁷.

	2017-2018	2018-2019	2019-2020	2020-2021	2021-2022	2022-2023
Dual Enrollment/Early College Student Count	6,763	9,107	10,996	10,050	12,412	14,443

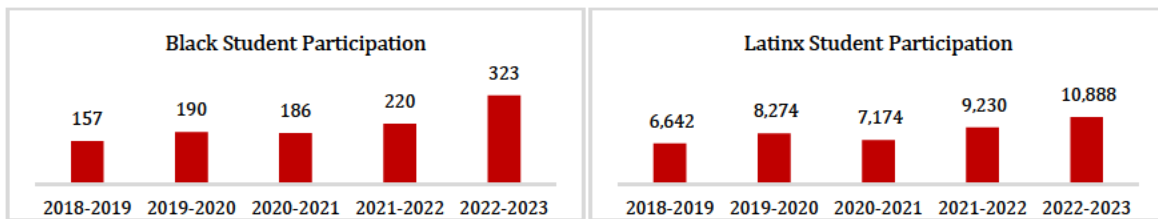
[REDACTED]

The early college program in [REDACTED] serves as a model to the state and to the nation as to how removing barriers to college access and achievement as early as the 9th grade can transform degree attainment rates and economic mobility in our most rural communities. The resources invested into this program and the outcomes detailed below demonstrate [REDACTED]

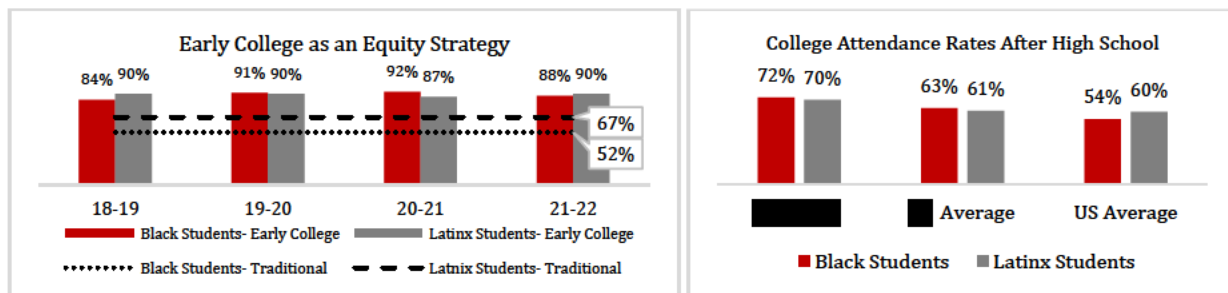
[REDACTED] Board of Trustees' and Chancellor [REDACTED]'s fierce commitment to serving students of all ages, backgrounds, abilities, and needs through educational programs like dual enrollment and early college.

Criteria 1: Increases in access by underrepresented or underserved populations and increases in completion of the educational objectives (attainment of a degree, certificate, credential, transfer, or gainful employment) of those populations.

Since 2018, the number of black students accessing early college opportunities has grown by 106% and the number of Latinx students has grown by 64%. There has been a tremendous increase in the number of Black and Latinx students participating in dual enrollment courses through [REDACTED] while in high school over the last 5 years. Chancellor [REDACTED] and the [REDACTED] Board of Trustees supported equitable access to dual enrollment opportunities for students of rural and impoverished communities by collaborating with high school district superintendents to ensure that all courses were offered at the students' high school locations at no cost to the student and their family. It is estimated that the Early College program in [REDACTED] has saved students over \$35 million in tuition, fees, and travel costs over the last ten years.



In addition to increasing access for Black and Latinx students, Early College has also served as a strategy for equitable student success, college matriculation, and certificate and degree completion in [REDACTED]. The graph below shows how Black and Latinx high school students have consistently succeeded at higher rates in their college courses than their counterparts enrolled in traditional college courses. A recent study between [REDACTED] and Career Ladders Project also found that Black and Latinx students who participated in dual enrollment were more likely to attend college than the average rates for Black and Latinx students in the state of [REDACTED] and across the United States⁸.

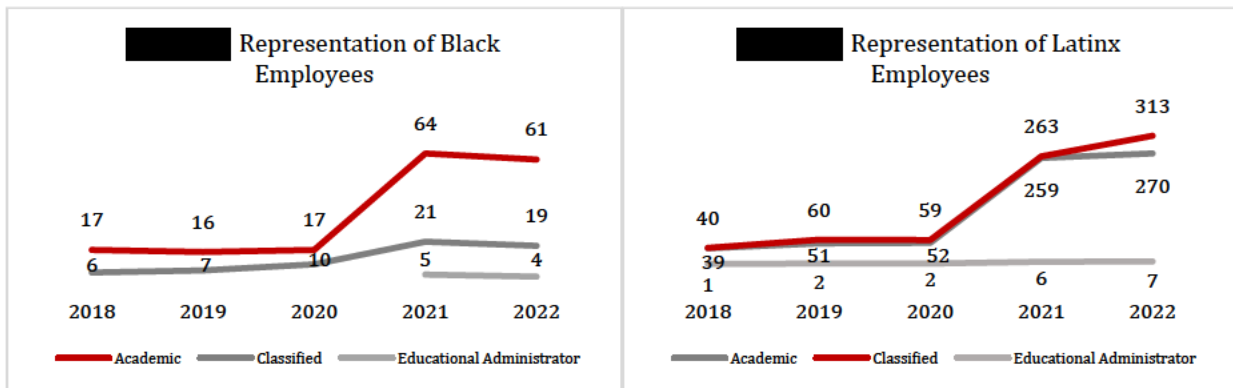


⁸ [REDACTED]

Criteria 2: Increases in the institution's workforce and leadership positions by underrepresented or underserved populations.

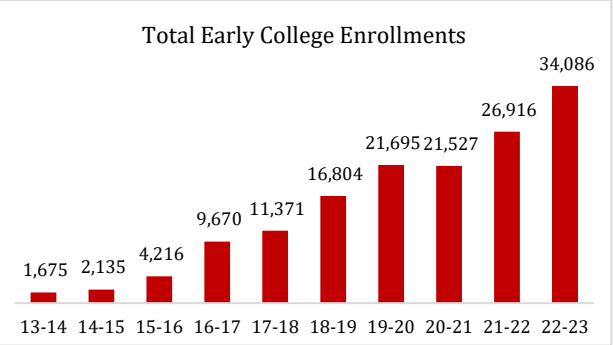
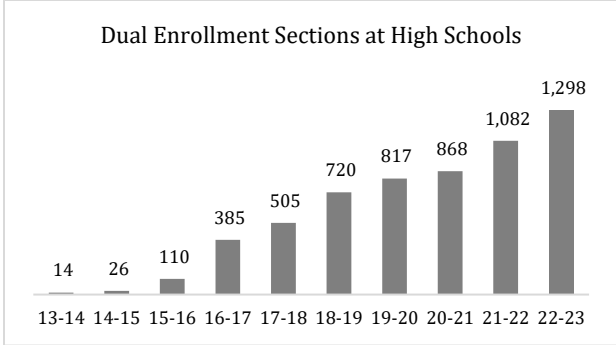
Representation of Black and Latinx employees in academic, classified, and administrative positions in [REDACTED] has increased significantly over the past five years. The largest increase in Black employee representation has been in academic positions, as the district has made several strategic efforts, including partnering with universities and teacher preparation programs through the [REDACTED] to diversify their workforce so that it proportionally represents their student population⁹. Approximately 5% of the students attending a college in [REDACTED] are Black, and the district's diversification efforts have also increased the representation of Black employees to 5% as well.

Latinx employee representation has also increased over the last five years, mostly in academic and classified staff. With the largest percentage of students, approximately 65%, enrolled in [REDACTED] [REDACTED] being of Latinx descent, the Board of Trustees is committed to increasing opportunities and representation of Latinx faculty and staff. Over the last five years, this representation has increased by 12% and is expected to continue increasing because of the district's faculty diversification efforts and partnerships.



Criteria 3: Success of the institution's community engagement or outreach efforts in attracting and maintaining the interests of underrepresented or underserved populations regarding the institution.

The colleges within [REDACTED] each serve as a pillar of education, support, and opportunity for the communities that they serve. Student outreach efforts begin in the 8th grade with student and parent information nights, application workshops, and field trips to expose students to college culture and future industry opportunities. The district involves K12 partners, industry partners, and community-based organizations in various levels of planning and integration to ensure that [REDACTED] consistently meets the needs of its communities. The maintained interest of [REDACTED]'s high school partners and dual enrollment students is demonstrated by the consistent increase of sections offered between the colleges and their high school partners and the tremendous growth in enrollments of high school students each year.



By bringing early college opportunities as well as student and family support services to 60 high school locations across the county, [REDACTED] has drastically broadened their ability to increase college access and degree attainment, even in the most rural areas. These outreach efforts have in turn resulted in an increase of students of color matriculating into college after high school, with over half of them already having some college credits earned through dual enrollment. As the [REDACTED] Board of Trustees and Chancellor [REDACTED] have continuously worked to close equity gaps in college access, degree attainment, and gainful employment in [REDACTED], their effort to bring dual enrollment opportunities to their most underrepresented student populations stands out as deserving of exemplary recognition and commendation.

[REDACTED] is home to the fastest growing dual enrollment program in the state of [REDACTED]. The [REDACTED] Board of Trustees and Chancellor [REDACTED] have prioritized college access beginning for all students as early as the 9th grade and are fiercely committed to removing the barriers that underrepresented students traditionally face when attempting to access postsecondary education. Through intentional outreach efforts in rural communities, strong partnerships with local high school districts, and support services that range from the fields to the classroom, [REDACTED] is radically moving the dial on college attendance and completion rates in some of the most impoverished communities of California. The dual enrollment and early college work in [REDACTED] provides an exceptional example of the equity work that must be done to increase access and success for all students.