

ABSTRACT

Applicant: University of California, Berkeley (UCB, OPEID 00131200)

Project Title: Project Excel

Priorities: This proposal addresses PSSG Absolute Priority One - Early-Phase Selection Criteria and the Competitive Preference Priority

The University of California, Berkeley (UCB) proposes to conduct a PSSG program that provides high-need populations of underserved undergraduate students with comprehensive support. Proposed to be launched as “Project Excel,” the project aims to improve the academic progress, re-enrollment, and degree completion of high-need, underserved students by leveraging support interventions that have shown strong evidence or promise in their effectiveness. The project will serve high-need underserved UCB students, including low-income students (as determined by Pell Grant eligibility), first-generation college students, and students of color, by:

- Providing 500 students in the Project’s target population with individual success counseling and co-curricular group programming (such as a first-year experience course and group workshops) based on strong evidence or promise of effectiveness;
- Providing 500 project participants with access to Peer Mentors;
- Providing 30 participants with supplemental financial aid to address their unmet needs;
- Providing 50 students in the Project’s target population who have stopped-out with individual counseling to help facilitate their re-enrollment and degree completion.

In 2022, UCB’s total enrollment included 10,492 first-generation students and 9,240 low-income undergraduates. Given UCB’s academically competitive environment (the undergrad admit rate was 13.3% in 2022), the need for the proposed project to provide UCB underserved students with innovative support is significant. Data shows that students in the project's target population have lower rates of degree completion compared to the campus average and experience academic probation at three times the average rate for frosh and twice the average rate for transfer students. The project aims to improve underserved students' academic progress, re-enrollment, and degree completion by implementing innovative supports that have shown strong evidence or promise of effectiveness. The proposed project innovatively combines several high-impact strategies to form one “ecosystem” of robust support that include: Comprehensive Success Counseling; Peer Mentoring; a First Year Transition Course; and Supplementary Financial Aid.

Project performance targets include: Participants earned 32 or more units in year one; 95% of participants are retained after year one; 90% of project participants complete their degrees in a timely manner (with 6 years for Frosh entry and 3 years for Transfers).

Project Excel has developed a thorough and rigorous formative and summative evaluation plan to produce strong evidence of the project’s effectiveness aligned with What Works Clearinghouse standards. The evaluation plan consists of internal and external components to monitor project progress, measure performance outcomes, and improve and refine project services. Project Excel will utilize a logic model methodology consisting of quantitative and qualitative methods.

UC Berkeley (UCB) FY23 PSSG: ABSTRACT