

SUPPORTING BLACK AND LATINA SINGLE MOTHER COLLEGE STUDENTS

By Diane Sanders, Widener University

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It is no secret that the Covid-19 pandemic has exposed a multitude of injustices in the United States. It has hit mothers especially hard. The sudden shutdown of childcare centers and schools caused an overwhelming burden for working and college-going mothers, especially single [mothers](#). According to [Rothwell \(2021\)](#), 42% of college student parents, mostly mothers, considered ending their higher education classes within the past six months of the pandemic. The [Institute for Women's Policy Research \(IWPR\)](#) states that 1.7 million American college students are single mothers, and most are Black and Latina. Additionally, [according to a report by the IWPR \(2021\)](#), "Black and Latina mothers in particular, who are likely to be the sole breadwinners in their families, are facing greater employment loss than men and white women as a result of the pandemic."

Therefore, access and support systems for Black and Latina single mother college students are necessary to help these mothers get back into the workforce. As higher education institutions across the country reevaluate the way they operate, there is no better time to develop a robust support system for Black and Latina single mother students.

Black and Latina single mothers are an underserved, yet growing percentage of American college students. According to [Zinshteyn \(2016\)](#), the number of low-income, Latino, Asian-American, Pacific Islander, and nontraditional college students will continue to increase over the next two decades. Mainstream higher education institutions now possess the opportunity to create pathways of equitable access and support for America's Black and Latina single mother students.

Unfortunately, the odds are stacked against these mothers. According to [IWPR \(2021\)](#), Black and Latina single college-going mothers are at the highest risk of not completing their college degree. Many Black and Latina college-going mothers are also first-generation college students. Oftentimes, they have little to no support systems outside of the classroom, making the need for a supportive college imperative.

However, many mainstream American college campuses lack support systems, such as on-campus childcare facilities for single mother students. In fact, the trend of on-campus childcare facilities has been on the decline. According to [White \(2014\)](#), 54% of public four-year colleges in America had on-campus childcare for students in 2002, but that number dropped to 51% in 2013.

Therefore, one effective strategy is to provide Black and Latina single mother students access to affordable childcare. Affordable childcare for single college-going parents results in improved retention and degree completion. According to an [IWPR \(2020\) report](#), access and use of an on-campus child care facility tripled the on time degree completion rate for student parents.

Additionally, the [Child Care Access Means Parents in School \(CCAMPIS\) program](#), which provides four-year federal grants to higher education institutions that support on-campus childcare, requires an increased budget. According to [Douglas-Gabriel \(2019\)](#), the 2018 CCAMPIS budget of \$50 million allowed 196 American colleges to provide low-income students with on-campus child care.

However, this dismal budget had an impact on only a handful of America's single parent college students. In fact, ["The Student Parent Equity Imperative"](#) (2021) recommends that the budget for CCAMPIS should be \$500 million, which would be enough to support "five percent of Pell-eligible student parents of children ages 0-5-- and ensure CCAMPIS grants are targeted to institutions that serve high numbers of low income and historically excluded students."

For a Black or Latina single mother, getting a college degree will not just benefit her own future, but the future of her children as well. Simply put, a shot at earning a college degree is a shot at breaking the cycle of poverty. Therefore, developing an effective system of support for Black and Latina single mothers at America's mainstream colleges and universities must be at the forefront of higher education administrator's current decision-making.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



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