

MARCH 2024

The Bentley BRRC Proposal

PREPARED BY JAYCHELE NICOLE SCHENCK

Introduction

Bentley University's commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion (DE&I) sets the stage to further support Black students. This proposal outlines a Black Recruitment and Retention Center (BRRRC), inspired by UC Berkeley's model, focused on recruitment, support, and empowering Black student success.

The proposal outlines the establishment of a Black Recruitment and Retention Center (BRRRC) at Bentley University to address the underrepresentation of Black students within the undergraduate population. Drawing inspiration from successful models like UC Berkeley's BRRRC, this initiative aims to enhance diversity, equity, and inclusion on campus.

The BRRRC will provide comprehensive support to Black students, including academic, cultural, social, and financial assistance, ultimately fostering a more inclusive campus climate and improving student success rates. By prioritizing proactive recruitment strategies and leveraging existing resources, Bentley University can reaffirm its commitment to diversity and position itself as a leader in promoting equitable access to higher education.

Objectives

Our goal is to establish a student-led Black Recruitment and Retention Center (BRRC) that attracts high-achieving Black students to Bentley University, fostering a sense of belonging, academic excellence, and lifelong connections, ultimately increasing Black student enrollment and reducing the yield rate disparity.

To uphold Bentley's commitment to diversity and inclusion, this proposal establishes a student-led Black Recruitment and Retention Center (BRRC). The BRRC's programs aim to attract high-achieving Black students by showcasing Bentley's strengths and fostering a strong community. Proactive outreach will increase Black student applications, while dedicated academic, social, and financial support will ensure their success at Bentley. This, in turn, will create a more welcoming campus environment, empowering Black students to excel, build networks, and become proud Bentley alumni. By measuring results and securing long-term funding, the BRRC becomes a key pillar in Bentley's strategy to attract top students from diverse backgrounds.

01 Increase Black Student Enrollment & Representation

02 Enhance Black Student Success

03 Foster an Inclusive Campus Climate

04 Build Sustainable Support Structures

Current State

The Problem and its Impact

Black students currently comprise only 4.11% of Bentley University's undergraduate population. This underrepresentation is a significant disparity, especially in the context of national conversations emphasizing the importance of diversity and equity in higher education. Such a disparity can limit the richness of the learning environment for all students, hindering the cross-cultural understanding and diverse perspectives essential for a well-rounded education in today's globalized world.

Bentley's Commitment and Need for Data

Fortunately, Bentley University's President and Admissions team demonstrate a clear commitment to improving Black student representation. They recognize the value of a diverse student body and have begun exploring strategies, including the potential of a Black Recruitment and Retention Center (BRRRC). To design the most effective BRRRC, it is crucial to collect in-depth data on why Black students are or are not choosing Bentley. This includes admission trends, financial aid considerations, and Black students' own experiences and perceptions of Bentley's campus climate.

UC Berkeley's BRRRC:

A Model for Success

Founded in 1983, the Black Recruitment and Retention Center (BRRRC) at the University of California, Berkeley is a pioneering example of student-led initiatives focused on diversity and inclusion. The BRRRC's mission to empower Black students to achieve academic excellence and become engaged leaders resonates with Bentley's own values and goals.

Core Values

The BRRRC's core values champion a just & equitable learning environment for all:

- *Social Justice & Inclusion:* The BRRRC addresses systemic barriers to create a welcoming campus.
- *Student Potential:* They believe in every Black student's potential, providing holistic support.
- *Intersectionality:* Programs acknowledge diverse experiences.
- *Student Empowerment:* Student leadership fosters ownership and future leaders for positive change.

Programmatic Impact

UC Berkeley's BRRRC offers a range of programs that inspire Bentley initiatives:

- *Outreach & Resources:* K-12 tours, community college events, resource guides, and scholarship databases empower students with information and build the applicant pipeline.
- *Community & Transition Support:* Events like the Welcome B(l)ack BBQ and transfer student support programs foster belonging and address specific needs.
- *Financial & Application Assistance:* Scholarships and workshops equip students for success throughout the college journey.

UC Berkeley's BRRRC demonstrates the long-term positive impact of a dedicated support center for Black students. Bentley can draw inspiration from their successes, adapting their programs to our own campus culture and resources, and addressing the specific needs of our Black student population. By prioritizing proactive recruitment, providing tailored academic and social support, and fostering a welcoming and inclusive campus climate, we can build upon their legacy.

BRRC Solutions:

Building on Success

01 Challenges + Opportunities

Few universities offer programs comparable to the proposed Black Recruitment and Retention Center (BRRC), offering Bentley a distinctive chance to lead in student diversity and support. With universities nationwide facing similar challenges in fostering a welcoming and inclusive environment, Bentley can gain insights from successful models at peer institutions to tailor a BRRC to our student population and community, ensuring Black students receive the necessary resources and support for success.

02 Auburn University's Success

Auburn's approach covers enrollment, financial aid, campus climate, and retention, serving as a blueprint for Bentley. We can adopt elements like holistic review in flexible admissions, prioritize Black students in need-based scholarships, use inclusive language in materials, foster connections with Black alumni and faculty through mentorship, and highlight Black history through campus cultural celebrations.

03 Additional Best Practices

- + *Data-Driven Decisions:* Bentley should track metrics on Black student recruitment, retention, and success to inform BRRC program development.
 - + *Targeted Partnerships:* Collaborate with local Black-owned businesses and Boston/Waltham community organizations to enhance outreach.
 - + *Exploring UC Models:* Explore models from UC Davis and UCLA, where support centers cater to specific student groups, potentially informing a future Black student support center.
-

The BRRC: A Hub for Black Student Success

A dedicated Black Recruitment and Retention Center (BRRC) would transform Bentley into a university where Black students feel actively celebrated and empowered to succeed. Inspired by models like UC Berkeley, the BRRC would:

- ➔ *Increase Black Student Yield:* Proactive outreach and dedicated BRRC resources could close the yield gap, turning interested applicants into enrolled Black students.
- ➔ *Enhance DEI Across Campus:* The BRRC is a visible sign of Bentley's commitment to diversity, making our university more attractive to all students who value inclusion.
- ➔ *Foster Student Leadership:* Black students would lead mentoring programs, cultural events, and campus advocacy efforts through the BRRC, building skills and strengthening our alumni network.

The Value of a BRRC for Bentley

- ➔ *Attracts Top Talent:* A BRRC demonstrates Bentley's action-oriented DEI commitment, appealing to high-achieving Black students seeking a truly inclusive environment.
- ➔ *Boosts Student Success:* By directly addressing challenges Black students may face, the BRRC improves retention and graduation rates, benefiting the university's reputation.
- ➔ *Enriches the Community:* Diverse viewpoints enrich classrooms and campus life. Everyone gains from a more complex, authentic learning experience.

Equitable Funding for Cultural Organizations

Current Challenges

- *The current funding model, primarily reliant on the student activity fee, often falls short in adequately supporting the diverse needs of cultural organizations, especially those actively engaged in recruitment and retention efforts.*
- *This can lead to disparities in resource allocation, hindering the ability of these organizations to effectively contribute to the university's diversity and inclusion goals.*

The BRRC's Role

- *The BRRC would play a pivotal role in addressing this issue by establishing a dedicated fund to support cultural organizations involved in recruitment and retention activities.*
- *This fund would operate independently of the general student activity fee allocation, ensuring that these organizations receive the necessary financial resources to fulfill their mission.*

Proposal for a Dedicated Fund

- *We propose the creation of a dedicated fund managed by the BRRC, specifically earmarked for cultural organizations that demonstrate a clear impact on attracting and retaining Black students.*
 - *This fund would be overseen by a committee comprising BRRC staff, student representatives, and faculty advisors, ensuring transparency and accountability in the allocation process.*
-

Equitable Funding for Cultural Organizations

Assessment & Allocation

- *Cultural organizations seeking funding would submit proposals outlining their planned activities, target audience, expected outcomes, and budget.*
- *The committee would assess these proposals based on their alignment with the BRRC's mission, potential impact on Black student recruitment and retention, and overall feasibility.*
- *Funding would be allocated based on merit, ensuring that resources are directed towards the most impactful initiatives.*

BUB as an Example

- *BUB's significant contribution to the historic increase in Black student enrollment this year underscores the critical role cultural organizations play in recruitment and retention efforts.*
- *With adequate funding, BUB and similar organizations can expand their programming, outreach initiatives, and support services, further enhancing their impact on the Black student experience.*

Benefits of Equitable Funding

- *Equitable funding for cultural organizations would empower them to create a more welcoming and inclusive campus environment for Black students.*
 - *It would enable these organizations to develop and implement innovative programs that foster a sense of belonging, celebrate Black culture, and support academic and personal success.*
-

Bentley's Leadership Opportunity

Proposition 209 (1996) banned affirmative action in California, impacting college admissions, which led to UC Berkeley creating their BRRC. Recent legal shifts nationwide have renewed focus on supporting diverse student populations. This creates a unique opportunity for Bentley to step up.

Universities nationwide are grappling with how to attract diverse students in a post-affirmative action landscape. By establishing a Black Recruitment and Retention Center, Bentley would demonstrate a clear commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion. This isn't just about compliance – it's about aligning actions with our stated values. This positions us as a leader, attracting students who seek a campus actively working to dismantle systemic barriers. It's a chance to differentiate Bentley as a place where social justice isn't just a slogan, but a practice.

Making it Happen

Action 1

To ensure the BRRC's success, Bentley must follow a strategic implementation process. Here are the key steps:

01 Establish BRRC Task Force

- *Purpose:* Guide the planning process with diverse perspectives and ensure buy-in across Bentley.
 - *Membership:* Include students (Black and non-Black), faculty with DEI expertise, and key staff from Admissions, Student Affairs, and potentially the Multicultural Center.
 - *Tasks:*
 - Research models across higher education.
 - Analyze Bentley's Black student data.
 - Conduct comprehensive student needs assessment.
 - Develop budget proposals and explore funding sources.
 - Draft a detailed BRRC implementation plan (programs, staffing, launch timeline).
-

Making it Happen

Action 2 + 3

02 Campus-Wide Needs Assessment

- *Purpose:* Center student voices in the BRRC design.
- *Focus:* Academic support, financial aid, social experiences, sense of belonging, and any perceived barriers to success.
- *Method:* Anonymous survey developed in collaboration with Black student leaders and faculty with expertise in Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI).

03 Outline a Sustainable Budget

- *Premise:* Prioritize student leadership with administrative support for long-term success.
 - *Priorities:* Compensated student roles, modest program budget, and a plan for ongoing funding (scholarships, targeted fundraising).
 - *Collaboration:* The BRRC leverages existing resources within Admissions, the Multicultural Center, and other student support programs, avoiding duplication of services.
-

The BRRC:

An Investment in Bentley's Future

Bentley has a historic opportunity to be a leader in DE&I. The Black Recruitment and Retention Center (BRRC) is a roadmap for progress, a commitment to transform our campus into one where students from all backgrounds can thrive. This isn't just about increasing enrollment – it's about creating a stronger Bentley, where everyone's potential is recognized and celebrated. By taking the important step of forming a BRRC Task Force, the university can begin laying the groundwork for a future where a diverse student body propels Bentley to even greater heights of excellence.

Questions?



Contact Jaychele Nicole Schenck!

Shoot me an email at jschenck@falcon.bentley.edu!