

Racial Justice Grants Support Local Black Students

Spotlighting the Male Success Alliance at California State University Dominguez Hills

In honor of Black History Month, we're spotlighting a community partner that benefits Black students in the South Bay with Kaiser Permanente grant funding: [The Male Success Alliance \(MSA\)](#) at California State University Dominguez Hills.

The idea for the program came from Matthew Smith, Ph.D., who is now Associate Vice President of Student Life/Dean of Students at CSUDH. Originally a MSA program director, Smith recently shared some insights on how Kaiser Permanente's grant dollars have influenced many lives, including his own.

"My work with MSA shaped my understanding of higher education in terms of the critical importance of student emotions," says Smith. "One of the things that's often missing when we're working with communities of color, and especially the Black community, is operating from an unconditional place of love, care, and support.



"[MSA] made education more about community and creating space for us to be our authentic selves, be vulnerable and learn from one another. That's a special space to be with young men of color who very rarely have opportunities to engage in those spaces."

"It taught me that mentoring wasn't about what I thought my mentee *should* do, but about supporting them on whatever journey they go on in their life and being there for them no matter what."

Smith has brought these lessons with him into his current role, where he can impact the lives of even more students of color. He reflects, "Higher education wasn't necessarily designed to support communities of color. I can now advocate for how to operate within that system and transform practices that marginalize portions of our student population."

This includes working with his colleagues to secure millions of dollars in grant funds that support students' basic needs – such as rent, food, and transportation – which can often serve as barriers to success. Smith is also co-chairing the university's strategic planning process to ensure that justice, equity, and inclusion are at the heart of the university's future operations.

Kaiser Permanente has helped fund MSA annually since 2016, investing a total of \$135,000, in addition to our grants for CSUDH at large. This includes funding from Kaiser Permanente's National Advancing Racial Justice Grant Initiative.

Kaiser Permanente is proud to help elevate the voice, leadership, and influence of Black-led grassroots organizations in the communities we serve.