

Umoja Black Scholars Program

Creating community and enhancing cultural and educational experiences of African-American students to improve college outcomes

The goal of Highline College's Umoja Black Scholars program is to address the disparate outcomes of African-American students. The Umoja curriculum builds upon students' strengths and respects and celebrates students' cultural heritage. Elements of the program include mentorship; academic advising and support; culturally relevant curriculum and linked courses; racially diverse faculty and staff; and student-led co-curricular activities that connect to students' interests and educational goals while building community and civic engagement. [Learn more at umoja.highline.edu](http://umoja.highline.edu).

Factoids

at a glance

- Highline is the first community college outside of California to have Umoja
- Umoja students begin the program as a cohort; first cohort started winter 2015 and fourth cohort is underway (2018-19)
- 17% of Highline's 17,000+ students are African American; having resources to expand the program would allow more of these students to participate and succeed

Who Are Umoja Students at Highline College?

DATA FROM COHORTS 1-3

71
number of students

73%
18 to 22 years old

66%
first generation

49%
low income (receiving need-based financial aid)

51%
women

84%
African-American or multiracial

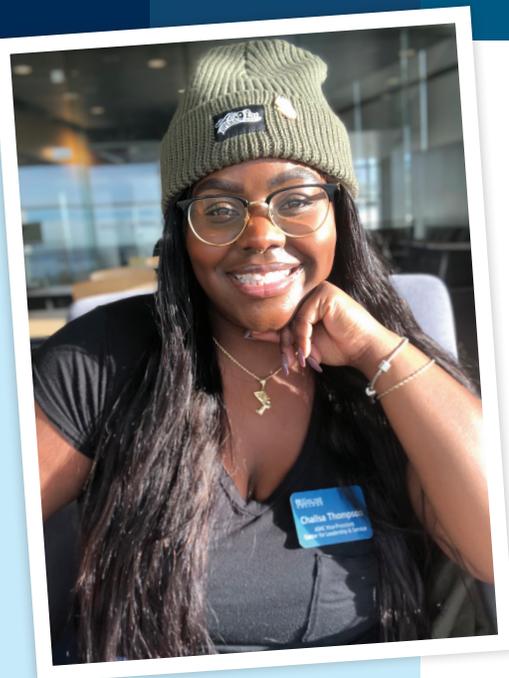
Students Succeed With Umoja

Within One Year of Enrollment at Highline College

African American Transfer Students

Umoja Students (Cohorts 1 + 2)

Earned Quantitative Reasoning credit	13%	30%
Completed college-level English (ENGL 101)	33%	47%
Earned 15 college credits	43%	89%
Earned 45 college credits	29%	47%



“HIGHLINE IS ABOUT COMMUNITY AND INVESTING IN THE PEOPLE THAT MAKE UP THE COMMUNITY.”

— Chalisa Thompson



MEET Chalisa Thompson

“Highline is dedicated to the success of people who look like me; that is what got me to where I am today,” says student Chalisa Thompson, who is black and lives in Seattle. “Getting back on track with my education here at Highline started with the Umoja Black Scholars Program.”

Thompson shares that through Umoja, she and her fellow scholars “build communal intelligence and a deeper understanding of how to navigate the world we live in, in the skin we live in.”

Being a child of an incarcerated parent, Thompson was often left to “figure it out” without the guidance and support she needed.

“Starting my post-secondary education with [Umoja] challenged me and inspired me to rewrite my narrative. To tell my own story of overcoming my past obstacles. Umoja pushed me to utilize my full potential, to understand how I walk in this world and all the complexities that I come with. This program gave me hope.”

Thompson is living up to her potential, serving as student body vice president and a role model for others.

“My goal in life is to become the person that I didn’t have, but desperately needed,” says Thompson, who plans on transferring to the University of Washington for its social work program. “We need more social workers that have lived and experienced life at its lowest and highest in order to work with and encompass a diverse group of people.”

Read more about Thompson and the Umoja program at highline.edu/umoja-2018.

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