



Los Angeles Southwest College, 1600 W. Imperial Hwy., Los Angeles, California

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**Los Angeles Southwest College to host Black Graduation Celebration on May 23**

More than 360 students from Los Angeles Community College District schools to participate

To commemorate the unique African American historical journey and educational milestones of graduating students, the Los Angeles Community College District Chancellor's Office and the *African American Outreach Initiative* will present the annual Black Graduation Celebration – a cultural event honoring students – at 3 p.m. this Tuesday, May 23, at Los Angeles Southwest College (LASC).

The ceremony will celebrate the accomplishments of graduates while helping them remember the unique historical educational struggle of African Americans as well pay homage to their elders and ancestors. The event will be held in the Lakin Fitness and Wellness Center gymnasium and will consist of an expression of African and African American rituals, traditions, and rites of passage activities, such as African drumming, Kente cloth stole draping, pouring of libations to honor ancestors and the singing of the Negro National Anthem, all of which are symbolic representations of the spirit and traditions of a rich African heritage that reaches back to before slavery.

More than 360 students from the nine colleges in the Los Angeles Community College District (LACCD) will participate in the Black Graduation Celebration that will serve as a complementary celebration to a college's Commencement and reinforce bonds of scholarship that extend the sense of community created from the time the students first arrived on campus. Tuesday's ceremony, for many students, will be an additional highlighted experience that closes the loop to their initiation to college and serves as further motivation toward future academic and/or personal aspirations. It also aims to serve as an opportunity to inspire other African Americans to attend college and/or stay in college.

The Los Angeles Community College District (LACCD), the nation's largest community college district, serves one-quarter million students a year in more than 36 cities in Los Angeles County at its nine colleges. LACCD covers nearly 900 square miles and has educated and trained the region's diverse workforce since 1969. The *African American Outreach Initiative* (AAOI) is a district-wide collaboration of faculty, staff, and administrators dedicated to improving the access and success rates of African—American students in LACCD.