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**A²MEND INSPIRES AFRICAN AMERICAN MEN TO ENROLL AND SUCCEED
IN CALIFORNIA'S COMMUNITY COLLEGE SYSTEM**

***As African American Male College Enrollment Declines in the U.S., Particularly During the Pandemic,
A²MEND Aims to Increase College Attendance and Graduation Rates Among Black Men***

LOS ANGELES – November 9, 2021 – With African American male college enrollment steadily decreasing over the past two decades, a progressive statewide nonprofit is working to reverse this troubling trend in California and potentially across the nation. The African American Male Education Network & Development (A²MEND) organization is led by African American male educators who voluntarily use their scholarly and professional expertise to foster institutional change within California's community college system to increase success of Black male students. Since forming in 2006, A²MEND has mentored hundreds of African American students to inspire them to enroll and succeed in community colleges based throughout the state.

The A²MEND Mentoring Initiative provides support, guidance, professional development and networking opportunities for new and existing African American students enrolled in a community college. Students are matched with a vetted mentor based on similar educational and career interests. A²MEND provides both mentor and mentee training to ensure that students and professionals receive maximum benefit from being a part of this game changing initiative.

"Representation matters and is vital to the success of our Black Male students. A²MEND has been instrumental in being the leading voice and a pioneer in racial equity, anti-racism and social justice efforts within the California community college system," said Dr. Amanuel Gebru, President of A²MEND. "Ensuring that policy and practice are congruent in dismantling systemic barriers that both Black students and professionals face is the *why* that informs our work."

A²MEND's mentoring efforts have proven to effectively work. Within the most recent academic year, two-thirds of A²MEND's mentored students remained in college during the COVID-19 pandemic, with most continuing their studies by transferring to a CSU, UC or HBCU institution. These figures are especially notable, given that U.S. college attendance among African American males dropped 8% since the onset of the pandemic compared to the previous year, according to a recent report published by the National Student Clearinghouse Research Center.

As part of its mentoring initiative, A²MEND offers scholarships to provide mentees with financial support for tuition, books and living expenses as they pursue their education in community colleges or while transferring to four-year educational institutions. Scholarships are awarded to students with special qualifications, such as academic achievement, artistic abilities, demonstrated leadership and/or athletic talents. Scholarships also are awarded to students who are in a particular field of study, are members of underrepresented groups or demonstrate a financial need. Since launching the scholarship program a decade ago, A²MEND has awarded more than \$500k in scholarships to African American students.

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A²MEND's services have expanded beyond a traditional mentoring program by offering ongoing events, trips and webinars in an effort to keep students engaged in the organization's network while giving them an opportunity to learn more about their heritage as well as strategies to rise above issues often faced by young Black men.

Since 2008, A²MEND organizes an African American Male Summit held annually in March in Los Angeles, where more than 1,000 policymakers, trustees, faculty, staff, administrators and students come together to identify solutions to the barriers that African American men may encounter in community colleges. The summit, which also hosts a job fair and HBCU informational booth, aims to counteract the dismal forecast of the African American male in higher education by focusing on their role in the community college system. Similarly, A²MEND hosts a webinar series, which has featured such distinguished speakers as Dr. Cornell West and Dr. Michael Eric Dyson, to moderate dialogue about the history and impact of anti-black racism in U.S. society, including higher education institutions.

A²MEND mentee Amofah Brobbey was so influenced by the annual summit that the conference ultimately impacted his college academic performance. "With all the motivation and knowledge received from the conference, I was able to complete my first semester at Moreno Valley College with a 4.0 GPA," said Brobbey.

Through A²MEND's Annual African Cultural Excursion Program, the organization has escorted student mentees on a once in a lifetime trip to Africa. Since 2018, student mentees have been able to journey to their ancestors' home in Africa for a life-changing experience. African countries that have been visited include Dubai, Egypt, Ethiopia, Ghana, Morocco and Senegal.

While A²MEND is regarded for its premiere mentoring program, the organization's executive board has broadened the nonprofit's mission by becoming a mentoring support system for African American college faculty members and administrators. With this additional mission in mind, the executive board is prioritizing efforts to increase the participation of African American educators who seek to network with other like-minded collegiate professionals.

Currently, 23 A²MEND student chapters with more than 400 student members are active at community colleges throughout California. As statistics continue to show that African American male college enrollment in the U.S. is declining, A²MEND's leadership is strategizing their next expansive move of planting future student chapters in other regions across the country. "The alarming decline in enrollment of African American men in community colleges across the nation is not a problem devoid of a solution. When colleges are intentional around providing direct resources and support to specifically address the cultural and educational needs of African American men, colleges can greatly improve their educational outcomes," said Dr. Edward Bush, A²MEND Co-Founder and Board Member. "The A²MEND student charters represent this type of direct and focused high impact of institutional practice that community colleges around the country can adopt. Having an A²MEND student charter demonstrates to African American men on campus that their presence matters while simultaneously conveying a critical message to institutional stakeholders that perpetual underachievement of this population of students would not go ignored or unsolved any longer."

The African American Male Education Network and Development (A²MEND) organization is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit led by African American male educators who utilize their scholarly and professional expertise to foster institutional change within California's community college system to increase success of African American male students. Since establishing the organization in 2006, A²MEND has served as the premiere nonprofit solely focused on addressing the lack of educational success for African American male students in community colleges.