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Friday, October 31, 2025

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Umoja Community Education Foundation Announces XXI Annual Conference: Voices of the Future II in San Jose, California

San Jose, CA — The Umoja Community Education Foundation (UCEF) proudly announces its XXI Annual Conference, Voices of the Future II, taking place November 5–8, 2025, at the San Jose McEnery Convention Center. This premier professional development gathering brings together scholars, educators, and community leaders dedicated to advancing equity and transforming institutional practices. Esteemed philosopher and social critic Dr. Cornel West will serve as a keynote speaker.

Rooted in culturally responsive pedagogy and high-impact practices, the Umoja Annual Conference convenes over 2,000 participants for four days of learning, inspiration, and collective empowerment. With a network of more than 16,000 students across over 80 Umoja campus programs in California and Washington, UCEF continues to lead equity-centered education, leadership development, and institutional redesign. “This conference celebrates and strengthens the intellectual, social, and cultural capital of the Umoja Community as scholars, practitioners, and administrators share insights and actionable strategies for college and career success,” said Dr. Eric Mayes, Chief Executive Officer of the Umoja Community Education Foundation.

As a pre-conference event, UCEF and Ed Trust–West, a nonprofit research and policy organization dedicated to dismantling racial and economic barriers in education, will co-host the Black Student Education Summit. This collaborative convening unites leading organizations, including BLU Education Foundation, UNCF, A2MEND, Black Student Success Week, the HBCU Transfer Initiative, and Black Students of California United (BSCU) to engage in solution-driven dialogue and strategy building around Black student success and systems change.

Sandra Williams-Hamp, Associate Vice Provost of Strategic Partnerships and Community Engagement at University of California Office of the President (UCOP), stated, “UC is honored to stand alongside the Umoja Community Education Foundation in celebrating the transformative power of connection, culture, and community. The Umoja Annual Conference embodies what it means to create spaces where students can see themselves reflected, supported, and inspired. Our continued partnership reflects UC’s commitment to advancing equity through community and ensuring every student can thrive and lead in ways that strengthen our collective future.”

The conference officially opens on Wednesday, November 5, with an evening reception, an intimate gathering of 150 artists, donors, and alumni featuring live Afro-House music and a silent auction benefiting Umoja Scholars. A major highlight is UCEF’s partnership with Black Students United of California, a nonprofit empowering Black high school students through leadership training, civic engagement, and project-based learning. BSCU will host its annual conference within Umoja XXI, bringing more than 500 students, teachers, and administrators for workshops, mentorship, and intergenerational collaboration, strengthening the K–20 educational continuum for Black students.

The conference will also debut UmojaCon, a groundbreaking showcase merging Afrofuturism with Science, Technology, Engineering, Art, and Mathematics (STEAM). Designed to celebrate Black creators and innovators, UmojaCon highlights the intersection of speculative storytelling, culture, and technology, creating a dynamic space where creativity and education converge.

Another signature feature, the Faculty Institute, offers specialized training for instructional and counseling faculty from California Community Colleges, CSUs, UCs, and other institutions. Sessions will explore culturally responsive, evidence-based strategies to foster belonging and dismantle systemic inequities affecting student success. In partnership with the California Community College to HBCU Transfer Guarantee Pathway Project, the conference will also feature on-site admissions with 39 participating HBCUs and distinguished presidents, including Dr. Anthony L. Jenkins of Coppin State University and Dr. Monique Guillory of Dillard University. The Umoja XXI Annual Conference reflects UCEF’s enduring mission to affirm the lives, voices, and brilliance of Black and other students, empowering institutions to transform systems of learning through creative expression, scholarly dialogue, and cross-generational collaboration. For more information, visit www.umojacommunity.org.

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