

ECSU feted for serving African-Americans

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WILLIMANTIC — Eastern Connecticut State University scored high across Connecticut in a national study evaluating how well public universities serve black students.

The study, “Black Students at Public Colleges and Universities: A 50-State Report Card,” published by the University of Southern California’s Race and Equity Center, graded 506 separate institutions across the U.S.

Eastern’s average four-year-graduation rate for black students was found to be 7 percent higher than the national graduation rate for full-time black undergraduate students, according to the report.

“We work hard to respect each student’s talents and dreams,” said Eastern President Elsa Núñez. “We also recognize the importance of supporting the success of minority students.”

Eastern also ranked second in the state for the number of black faculty members available to black students, with a ratio of one professor for every 24 students.

Grading criteria were based on how well an institution’s black undergraduate population matched the black 18- to 24-year-old citizens in that state, the ratio of black male-to-female students, graduation rates and the ratio of black students-to-black faculty members.

Researchers then compiled grades to create an overall equity rating, which ranged from zero-to-four possible points, similar to a grade point average.

Eastern tied with Southern Connecticut State University for the No. 1 rank in the state, both with overall equity ratings of 2.75.

Connecticut’s average overall equity rating was 2.19, and the national average was 2.02.

Ranked first in gender equity, Eastern has 2.8 percent more black males en-

rolled than the national average.

All higher education institutions continue to struggle to bring up male enrollment numbers, according to Eastern Director of University Relations Ed Osborn.

Black citizens aged 18-24 represent nearly 10 percent of the full-time undergraduate population at Connecticut’s public universities.

In 2016, 4,244 black students attended the state’s public universities. Eastern accounted for 342 of those students.

Eastern acknowledges there is room for improvement to increase its diversity.

“We are in the middle of developing our new strategic plan, which surely will have strategies that focus on improving retention and graduation rates,” said Osborn. “We recently received a \$75,000 grant through Connecticut’s Office of Higher Education to increase our advising resources in support of students who need additional academic support.”