

Biology Scholars Program guaranteed funds ending after summer 2022

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Campus



Anthony Angel Pérez/Staff

The Biology Scholars Program, which supports roughly 400 underrepresented students in STEM, will lose its guaranteed funding after June 2022.

By [Shylie Ati](#) | Staff

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UC Berkeley's Biology Scholars Program, or BSP, primarily aims to help underrepresented students looking to forge a career in STEM; however, guaranteed funding of the program is expected to end after the summer of 2022.

BSP works to promote the success of students who may not have had the same pre-college opportunities as their peers, according to John Matsui, director and co-founder of BSP. Matsui noted the program requires \$800,000 a year to sustain its services and staff for the 400 students it serves.

“We build successes together by listening to our students and working with them from the student outward,” Matsui said in an email. “BSP helps level the playing field in STEM undergraduate education.”

Matsui added that most BSP students become health care professionals who address health inequities and disparities.

BSP alumnus Anthony Ndichu Muiru noted how the program helped him “thrive” on campus and prepared him for medical school and his career.

He added that he doesn’t believe there are many Black physicians who graduated from campus without a BSP connection and more Black doctors are needed to ensure equity throughout the industry. In addition, Muiru said BSP provides an opportunity for campus to demonstrate that it values Black lives.

“Berkeley is a beautiful forest, but it’s very easy to get lost,” Muiru said in an email. “Underrepresented students should enjoy the full Berkeley experience, undistracted.”

Campus senior Shelley Kong noted how BSP helped with her impostor syndrome by providing her with a safe space where she could talk about academic and personal struggles.

Kong added that she has benefitted from weekly study sessions, help from the alumni network and a peer advisor who would check in on her classes and overall well-being.

“It’s imperative that this program continues running for years to come, so that future alumni, such as myself, can continue to pay it forward,” Kong said in an email.

Dean of biological sciences, Michael Botchan said growing the program is “challenging” but with a newly formed and “devoted” faculty, promoting awareness will be easier.

In order to have enough funding for the program to continue, however, Matsui said they need a commitment from campus for sufficient and sustainable funding.

“Reserves in the BSP still may support student stipends for some time but the onus is on us to raise funds through philanthropy and grants for the long term sustainability into the future,” Botchan said in an email.

Genentech supplied BSP with a grant in January to help with academic and career mentorship, training and resources during the pandemic, according to Matsui.

Matsui said the program has a 30-year track record of student success and believes in its model in its support of the UC’s mission.

“The day that society provides equitable educational and financial opportunities to succeed in STEM for individuals from all backgrounds, is when (campus) will no longer need BSP,” Matsui said in the email.

