

Governor Names Higher Education Advisor Lande Ajose, Economic Advisor Lenny Mendonça

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Lande Ajose



Lenny Mendonça

College Futures Foundation congratulates **Dr. Lande Ajose**, our longtime grantee partner, on her appointment as Governor Newsom's **Senior Advisor on Higher Education**, and **Lenny Mendonça**, our board member and thought partner, on his appointment as **Chief Economic and Business Advisor and Director of the state's Office of Business and Economic Development**.

Generating economic opportunity and upward mobility are top concerns for leaders and families across the state. If we are to close California's wide and increasing income gaps, we must clear the path for students to succeed. Education is a critical factor in significantly improving socioeconomic status for a family and for generations to come.

"Lande Ajose's policy expertise, bold yet practical thinking, passion for the work, demonstrated commitment to students, and relationships with leaders across the state make her an excellent fit for this role," said Monica Lozano, President & CEO of College Futures Foundation.

"Lande understands that no system is more connected to economic opportunity and mobility than higher education. Meaningful employment and prosperity for all in California requires a

seamless, student-centered educational path to opportunity—and one that’s available to every student, regardless of zip code, skin color, or income. Her work with the new administration will surely help to make that vision a reality."

In her role as executive director of California Competes, Ajose has developed and advocated for better policies and practices to equitably boost California’s postsecondary degree attainment while strengthening its economy. She serves as Chair of the California Student Aid Commission as well as on the WASC Senior College and University Commission.

Through her work at California Competes, Ajose has been a grantee and partner of College Futures Foundation for many years. In the fall, the two organizations hosted a forum on higher education and economic mobility featuring the candidates for Lieutenant Governor, Dr. Ed Hernandez and Eleni Kounalakis. Lande’s appointment was announced on Friday, January 11.

The appointment of Lenny Mendonça, who currently serves on the board of College Futures, was announced just before Governor Newsom’s inauguration.

“Lenny Mendonça is a brilliant and tireless leader with a deep understanding of California, its economic and social systems, and the challenges that face hardworking low-income families. He tackles complex problems with bold and creative solutions, unflagging energy and compassion, and a constructive cross-sector approach,” said Lozano.

“I have seen him address some of California’s toughest challenges around educational attainment and economic vitality—and rally others to do the same. He is the right choice to move us from problem diagnosis into thoughtful and effective action.”

Mendonça is senior partner emeritus of McKinsey and Co., a global management consulting firm. He is co-chair of government reform group California Forward and serves on the UC Merced Foundation Board of Trustees. He is also chair emeritus of the Bay Area Council and their Economic Institute.

Ajose said she is “looking forward to advancing Governor Newsom’s bold agenda to ensure that higher education meets the interconnected goals of expanding economic opportunity, promoting equity, and stimulating economic growth. Whether it’s addressing issues of affordability or implementing an integrated statewide data system to promote student success, this Governor has California’s students at the center of his thinking.”

According to Mendonça, his highest charge will be “growing a sustainable economy for *every* Californian. That means reimagining how our state approaches economic development to ensure that our economy is strong, resilient, and inclusive and that economic opportunity and mobility are truly available to all.”

“Congratulations to Lande and Lenny. California needs your big yet pragmatic ideas, visionary leadership, and true partnership,” said Monica Lozano. “We look forward to working with you to make the dream of educational and economic opportunity a reality for many more of California’s diverse students and families.”