



California Community Colleges



April 21, 2020



Chief Student Services Officers
Association



Senator Holly Mitchell, Chair
Senate Budget Committee
State Capitol Room 5019

Assemblymember Phil Ting, Chair
Assembly Budget Committee
State Capitol, Room 6026

**RE: California Community College Budget (6870-101-0001) –
2019-20 and 2020-21 Shared Budget Priorities**

Dear Senator Mitchell and Assemblymember Ting:

On behalf of the organizations listed in the letter, we write to share our appreciation for your past support of the comprehensive mission and indispensable role of California's community colleges. We also take this opportunity to offer our shared priorities for the 2020-21 State Budget. Our shared request focuses on the system's fundamental needs. It is crafted to support students and colleges through this health crisis while also mitigating disruption to instruction and our focus on equity.

Continuity of Education in Coronavirus Emergency and Economic Recovery

California Community Colleges rapidly mobilized in response to the coronavirus pandemic, converting from in-person to remote or online instruction for nearly every course while continuing to provide hands-on training for over 20,000 first responders and essential health care professionals who will be ready to enter the workforce this year. However, as a system of 2.1 million students, the largest in the nation, we still face many challenges in adapting to multiple technologies and strategies to serve the state's most vulnerable and deeply affected populations. In light of rising unemployment rates, historical trends indicate that Californians will turn to community colleges to improve their career prospects. It is critically important for colleges to be positioned and sufficiently funded to support the upskilling and reemployment needs of the millions of Californians displaced by the public health crisis. More than ever, maintaining the integrity of Proposition 98 is critical during this crisis. Specifically, we urge that community colleges continue to receive is 10.9% split and that the guarantee not be suspended, underfunded nor subject to manipulation.

The Education Trust–West





California Community Colleges
Classified Senate



As a broad coalition of stakeholders, we request an increased investment in our system and protection from year-over-year cuts. Specifically, as you consider budget decisions, we request resources from the state Rainy Day Fund and the Proposition 98 Stabilization Fund. Funding protections would enable continuity of quality, responsive education and ensure we can meet increased demand and prepare the workforce needed for California's economic recovery.

Further, although we appreciate the support from the federal CARES Act, the funds provided will not solve the ongoing financial problems associated with the COVID-19 crisis. More needs to be done. California will receive approximately \$1.7 billion for higher education through the CARES Act. However, community colleges will receive a disproportionate amount of this federal funding due to the fact that it is allocated based on the number of full-time equivalent Pell Grant recipients. It is estimated the California State University system will receive \$1,065 per student, University of California \$925 per student, and the California Community Colleges \$393 per student. Given this, we ask the Governor to take this into consideration when allocating the \$355 million for the Governor's Emergency Education Relief Fund and provide a significant portion for community colleges. Additionally, we ask state leaders to support and advocate to our congressional delegation for a fourth COVID-19 relief package, including significant funding for the Education Stabilization Fund.

Backfill of Property Taxes and Student Enrollment Fees - In the face of uncertainty and challenges, community college districts are making great efforts to fulfill their mission to provide for continuity of education for over 2.1 million students. Despite the admirable efforts being made by both students and community college districts to meet the challenges posed by the statewide state of emergency, some students must nevertheless withdraw from one or more of their courses. Further, the essential education functions and supports our system provides are not protected against revenue estimates that fall short. We respectfully request an automatic increase to the California Community College General Fund to backfill any shortfalls in apportionments, property taxes, and enrollment fees. Further, we seek reimbursement of enrollment fees refunded as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Ongoing Investments

Cost of Living Adjustment and Base Resources - This new economic reality requires a continued investment in and protection of the educational opportunities provided by California's community colleges. Across the system, there appears to be near-universal recognition of the insufficient level of funding provided to the California Community Colleges, even as faculty, staff, and other leaders work to do the vital work of preparing millions of students for active participation in our society and our economy under new and complex circumstances. The California



Fresno City College



Community Colleges request \$200 million in foundational resources. This request would fund the costs of existing obligations by providing funding for the cost-of-living adjustments (COLA) and other workload adjustments. Foundational resources are critical to keep pace with growing costs, including STRS and PERS pension liabilities that are at an all-time high, without compromising the quality of education as we transition to online and remote instruction.

Online Education Ecosystem - As California Community College (CCC) districts and colleges transition classes and student services online in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, districts and colleges are in need of a cohesive online infrastructure that is additive to existing infrastructure that support students, faculty, and staff. We request \$10 million for a suite of investments to provide a robust and equitable online infrastructure for all CCC students and faculty during the statewide emergency. The Online Education Ecosystem would include:

- expanded Canvas Daytime Support to Colleges Without Daytime Coverage,
- increased access to district-based online tutoring for all colleges,
- extended online proctoring platform for unlimited use by all colleges,
- extended counseling, student services, and mental health delivery to online platforms,
- ADA/508 compliant remediation support.

Support for Part-Time Faculty – California Community Colleges requests an ongoing investment to support programs for part-time faculty, including compensation, paid office hours, health care, and professional development. This investment will help part-time faculty be included in efforts to achieve the goals of students. In order to be fully effective in helping students reach their goals, part-time faculty “must be included more fully in all aspects of institutional work and the faculty/student support network” (FACCC, 2018).

One-Time Investments

Student Emergency Supports and Transition to Quality Online Instruction Block Grant:

California Community Colleges request a block grant investment for purposes of transitioning to quality online instruction, sanitation, and costs associated with addressing the COVID-19 pandemic. The block grant would focus on two primary areas, outlined below, to enable student success and college responsiveness during this crisis:

- **Basic Needs and Emergency Supports** – The rapid but necessary transition to online education to complete the academic year has resulted in additional hardship for many students. One of the biggest challenges facing colleges is the fact that many students lack access to laptops, internet, or other basic needs key to succeeding academically in this new environment. To address this issue while also advancing student equity and success, we request one-time Basic Need and Emergency Supports grants. This investment would



help colleges provide supports, equipment, food, housing, or retention grants for students as they transition to learning in an online environment, especially noncredit, career technical education (CTE), and undocumented students who were not included in counts for federal resources. Such an investment can prevent students from dropping out as a consequence of the public health crisis.

- **Transition to Quality Online Instruction and Maintenance/Sanitation -** Although learning looks different across California Community Colleges, our core principles remain the same and student success continues to be at the center of everything we do. However, online and remote classes, from the way they are designed to how they are taught, are vastly different from in-person classes. Much work and professional development is still necessary to ensure courses are high caliber and can meet the learning needs of all students. The block grant investment would aid colleges ongoing response to the crisis, including conversion to online class delivery, scaling of innovating education models such as virtual labs and competency based education, professional development of faculty and staff, and facilities sanitation. These resources will enable continuity of education, assist colleges in supporting students through their education path, and allow colleges to play a critical role in our state's recovery.

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion: Pilot Fellowship Program for Diverse Hiring - Improving faculty and staff diversity is vital to ensure students can identify with faculty and staff, and faculty and staff can connect with students from diverse backgrounds to help them succeed. California Community Colleges continue to support the creation and implementation, on a pilot basis, of a fellowship for current and recent graduate students. The purpose of the fellowship program is to improve faculty diversity at community colleges through recruitment and mentorship. Funds would be used for supporting a portion of the fellows' salary, faculty mentorship, and professional support, and development activities. Analogously, we ask for protection of existing funding for full-time faculty hiring so that this diverse pipeline can have opportunities to join community colleges as full-time faculty.

Non-Proposition 98 Investments

Cal Grant Reform - Across the state, community college leaders support a meaningful commitment to community college student affordability and request the approval of a new Cal Grant framework which focuses resources on our most financially vulnerable students. The COVID crisis has not lessened our students' challenges; if anything, it has exacerbated them, with many students losing their jobs and finding themselves unable to afford the basic needs to succeed in college. California Community Colleges request and strongly support Cal Grant reform aligned to the following principles:



- Grant aid should be based on the total cost of attendance, not just tuition, including costs for room and board, transportation, textbooks, and all other college costs.
- Focus implementation resources on serving students with the greatest financial need, including our lowest income students with a zero Expected Family Contribution.
- Aid should be based on student need, not the institution the student is attending.

As we look to the State's recovery from the impending economic downturn, cost cannot be perceived as a barrier to students enrolling and succeeding in college. A modernized Cal Grant program is a critical investment not just in equity and access but in California's future.

Bonds: Fund All Projects in 2020-21 Capital Outlay Plan – We support continued inclusion of funding for the 25 new and 39 continuing community college capital outlay projects for 2020-21. These construction projects keep Californians working. The cost of raw materials such as steel and wood are rising sharply and workforce expenditures reflect high demand. It is imperative that State leaders recognize the severity of cost escalation and its impact on community college facilities projects. Further, in the midst of a recession, these projects are an economic stimulus for an essential workforce industry. We respectfully request that you maintain funding for all community college capital outlay projects in the 2020-21 Budget Act.

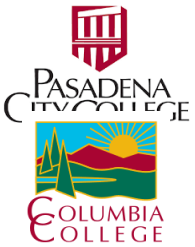
Budget Neutral Requests

California Community Colleges System Support Program - We support continued inclusion of the Governor's 2020-21 proposal to consolidate \$125 million in funding from existing set-asides funds to a new CCC System Support Program. As you may know, the Chancellor's Office is required by statute to administer several statewide support and technical assistance activities for California Community Colleges, including:

- Statewide and regional professional development training
- Systemwide technology services
- Statewide outreach campaigns supporting student recruitment
- Technical assistance for colleges and districts

Since programs were established at different times and independently of each other, they lack consistency, fiscal transparency, and are not always well-aligned with current district or student needs. The System Support Program proposal addresses this concern by establishing a new program account that would eliminate silos while also promoting transparency. This proposal would require the Board of Governors to annually adopt a budget for set-asides. To the extent the System of Support achieves savings from administrative efficiencies and leveraging of services, those funds shall be used to increase levels of service consistent with the objectives of the Vision for Success. The System Support Program would result in savings from economies of scale, the elimination of duplicated administrative fees,





and an opportunity to meet emerging system needs without reducing services or displacing staff.

In its entirety, our 2020-21 shared request represents new and ongoing investments that are necessary for the California Community Colleges to contribute to California's health and economic recovery in the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic. California's community colleges are an indispensable investment that provide an accessible path to a better life for generations of low-income and working-class Californians. Our highest priority is to protect quality higher education opportunities and assist our state in putting Californians back to work. Thank you for your consideration and continued support.

Sincerely,

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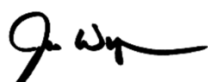
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