

Mt. San Antonio College 2021 State and Federal Legislative Priorities

Mt. San Antonio College, located in Los Angeles County, offers its students more than 260 degree and certificate programs, 25 support programs, and more than 50 student clubs and athletic programs. Our students come from all walks of life and go on to do great things. Our facilities rival university buildings, giving our students the opportunity to work with the best technology in the best space. Our professors and instructors are some of the best in their fields.

The College is active on policy issues at the state and federal levels in both Sacramento, California and Washington D.C. The College has identified state and federal legislative priorities to focus advocacy efforts for 2021. The priorities identified support the College's mission, student population, staff, faculty, and financial sustainability. These priorities allow staff and the College's advocates in Sacramento and Washington D.C. to act expeditiously on key budget and policy issues that impact the College and the students we serve; however, this is not an all-inclusive list of the issues the College will engage in and advocate.

Student Equity and Achievement Program (SEAP): SEAP was created in 2018 and merged funding for three formally separate initiatives: the Student Success and Support Program; the Basic Skills Initiative; and Student Equity. Integrating these efforts into a single program advances our goal of demolishing once and for all the achievement gaps for students from traditionally underrepresented populations. SEAP has never received a Cost of Living Adjustment (COLA) since its establishment; yet the need for these funds for our students continues to grow. The College supports a permanent annual COLA for SEAP.

Workforce Development: California Community Colleges (CCCS) will play a key role in the state's economic recovery needed due to the COVID-19 pandemic impacts. The recession we are experiencing most significantly impacts low income and minority populations, which are the populations that California Community Colleges serve more than any other higher education segment in the state. CCCs will play a large part in the economic recovery from this recession, with a focus on education our state's hardest hit communities. CCCs are the state's job training providers, as we partner with K-12 districts, universities, and industry to provide career ladder opportunities. Through the state's continued investments in the Strong Workforce Program, Guided Pathways, and Career Education, we stand ready to partner with the state and ensure our students are trained and prepared for the labor industries that are growing in our region. The College strongly supports ongoing investments and policies that support the CCCs in preparing our students for the workforce, including expanded work-based learning and short-term training, and retraining in high demand jobs.

Basic Needs: The College believes that student success is directly impacted by access to basic needs, such as food, housing, technology, transportation, and mental health services. The COVID-19 pandemic has increased the demand for these services by our students. The College strongly supports any policy and/or budget related efforts aimed at increasing CCC students' ability to access basic needs and mental health services. Efforts on these issues are underway through proposed policy changes by the California Community Colleges Chief Executive Officer's (CEOCCC) Affordability Housing and Food Insecurity Taskforce created in 2018. The College strongly supports the recommendations of the Taskforce, and additional resources at the federal level to support free community college.

Noncredit: The College has one of the largest noncredit programs in California. There have been several statewide community college initiatives and regulations that have not adequately considered the special challenges inherent to noncredit education, even when that inclusion would have been a valuable addition to the initiative. The College will continue to advocate for equitable legislative and regulatory considerations for noncredit students and programs. This includes how the California Adult Education Program (CAEP) funding is disbursed and for it to remain funded with adequate COLA ensuring that adults in the community will have equitable access to noncredit programs.

Reauthorization of the Higher Education Act: The Reauthorization of the Higher Education Act (HEA) is important to our College for many reasons, including that it governs federal financial aid programs for our students. Federal financial aid consists of student loans and need-based financial aid, such as the Pell Grant, Supplemental Educational Opportunity Grants (SEOG), and Federal Work-Study. The HEA expired in 2013 and was extended by Congress while debates over the reauthorization take place. With a new administration, we anticipate significant changes will be proposed in the reauthorization process, including increased student aid support through efforts to make community college free for students, as well as policy changes related to accreditation, regulation reform, student loans, and additional transparency. It is important during reauthorization of the HEA that any changes to law reflect the diverse student population and interests of our students. The College supports additional resources to lessen and/or eliminate the cost for students to attend community college in California.

Student-Veterans: The College is thankful for the service of our student-veterans and their families. We offer many resources and opportunities to help these veterans and their family members achieve their educational and vocational goals at Mt. SAC. In 2010 Mt. SAC was selected by the California Community College Chancellor's Office as a pilot site for the Veterans Resource Center (VRC) project. The VRC project established an innovative, collaborative effort to ease the transition for our student-veterans as they navigate our community college system. Today, Mt. SAC continues to demonstrate both its motivation to meet the needs of student-veterans and an ability to marshal resources to meet those needs through the VRC. The College strongly supports our student-veterans, and any state and/or federal policies or funding proposals to ensure they can reach their educational goals.

COVID-19 Relief: As the state and federal government continue to find ways to assist communities hit hardest by the COVID-19 pandemic, we will advocate for continued support of our students and those most underrepresented. The flexible funding we have been granted to support students through emergency grants has been a tremendous help, and a driving force in why many students have not given up on their educational goals during the pandemic. We will continue to support policies and financial resources to provide students with the access to technology they need to succeed in a distance or online learning format, including access to broadband, computers, and software. The College supports the need for resources for colleges to successfully transition courses to online and distance platforms, including the need for professional development, training, and technology support for staff.