

Dear Legislative Leaders:

The California Community Colleges appreciate your leadership and that of Governor Newsom in this ongoing pandemic. As the state looks to recover from the social and economic impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, it is paramount that we prioritize funding for the higher education system that serves the most affected Californians and brings an annual economic impact of \$128.2 billion to the state – the California Community Colleges. As the nation's largest system of higher education, California's 116 community colleges serve a critical role in reducing social inequities, serving the State's public health needs, and educating the workforce of tomorrow.

**Areas of Support Within the 2022-23 Budget Proposal**

We ask for your support of the overarching 2022-23 budget priorities of the California Community College (CCC) system:

***Enact, and fully fund, the Roadmap to California's Future.*** The Governor's proposed Roadmap for California Community Colleges, and compacts with the CSU and UC systems, set forth a bold new vision of higher education as a lever for economic opportunity and closing equity gaps in California. With a focus on equity and student success, this framework builds upon the *Vision for Success* goals, creates new avenues for data-sharing and cross-system collaboration, and funds additional resources for both community colleges and the system that help us close racial equity gaps. Lastly, the Roadmap will position the CCC system to help drive the goal of achieving 70% postsecondary degree and certificate attainment among working-age Californians by 2030.

***Advance Equitable Student Outcomes by Streamlining Academic Pathways and Funding Capacity.*** To ensure California Community Colleges and its system office have the essential resources to continue advancing the goals of the *Vision for Success* and the Governor's proposed Roadmap, we urge your approval of key funding proposals in the Governor's Budget. These include \$105 million one-time to implement common course numbering, \$65 million one-time to enact reforms to the transfer process, and nine (9) implementation capacity positions for the CCC Chancellor's Office to support the aforementioned policy reforms on transfer, student supports, and academic pathways. These critical resources will ensure that the CCC system and system office can continue working towards not just the *Vision for Success* goals but also California's Roadmap for the Future, breaking down barriers and closing equity gaps for students along the way.

***Support Investments in Faculty and Staff Resources.*** Building on investments made in the 2021 Budget Act, the 22-23 Governor's Budget proposes increases in ongoing funding to support equitable employment practices and improved part-time faculty access to health insurance. The CCC's faculty diversity has grown at a slower rate than that of the student population and the state of California's population as a whole. In response to this, the Governor's Budget proposes a proactive and structured investment in diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility through an increase of \$10 million in

ongoing Equal Employment Opportunity best hiring practices. Additionally, the Governor's Budget proposes \$200 million in ongoing funding to encourage and support colleges in providing health insurance to part-time faculty. This program has historically been funded at \$490,000 annually and the significant increase in ongoing funding reflects the valuable role that part-time faculty play in educating community college students.

**Support Technology Modernization and Security.** The pandemic required colleges to rapidly transition to remote instruction. Nearing two years into the pandemic, CCCs have gained a deeper understanding of the unique and ongoing needs surrounding a quality distance learning environment. Technology infrastructure, both at the system and local level, and the pandemic have further exposed vulnerabilities, especially as cybersecurity attacks have grown worldwide. The Governor's Budget supports improved and quality distance education and increased protection from ransom attacks by proposing \$75 million one-time and an increase of \$25 million ongoing to address modernization of technology infrastructure, including sensitive data protection.

**Set 2024-25 as the Student Centered Funding Formula Funding Floor.** The Student Centered Funding Formula (SCFF) incentivizes colleges to connect budgets to a student's journey – from access to success – evolving from siloed to integrated funding strategies that enable colleges to focus relentlessly on students' end goals. We support the Governor's proposal, which builds on the important tenets of access, equity and success and provides colleges with greater stability and predictability by setting 2024-25 as the funding floor for districts. Further, we support an augmentation to the Basic Allocation as a *Tech Basic* to support the operations of districts, districts long-term technology infrastructure needs, and enhanced student supports.

**Ensure Community College Infrastructure is Safe Through Deferred Maintenance Resources.** Today, the California's community colleges have a backlog of \$1.2 billion in deferred maintenance projects. Investments in facility infrastructure are essential in keeping existing community colleges in operational condition and in preventing any degradation in instructional services caused by degraded facility conditions. We support the proposed \$387.6 million one-time for deferred maintenance and energy efficient projects.

**Invest in Targeted Resources to Address Students' Needs and Equitable Recovery.** The Governor's Budget proposes a series of investments in college affordability and student needs aimed at closing equity gap among some of the populations most affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. These investments are also key to the economic vitality of the state. The proposed \$150 million one-time for student retention and enrollment efforts are timely and necessary as they will enable targeted strategies to engage students who may have withdrawn due to the impacts of the pandemic, and to connect with Californians who may be hesitant to enroll in college. Further, we support the investment in Black student success through \$1.1 million ongoing funding for the expansion of the African American Male Education Network and Development (A2MEND) Student Charters, and the proposed \$10 million ongoing to expand foster youth support services through the NextUp program.

***Improve College Affordability by Investing in Financial Aid Supports.*** In support of improved student access to college financial assistance, we support the Governor's initial proposed investments in financial aid. This includes \$100 million ongoing for students eligible for the Student Success Completion Grant due to expanded Cal Grant eligibility for community college students. We also strongly support the \$10 million ongoing investment to build capacity in our essential community college financial aid offices.

**Opportunities to Strengthen the 2022-23 Budget Proposal**

***Fund the Total Cost of Success.*** We urge you to consider the opportunity before the State for comprehensive reform and revitalization of programs to address college affordability and basic needs, including increasing the Cal Grant award amount and providing ongoing funding to campus mental health services. A student who cannot afford to cover costs such as textbooks, transportation, food, and housing, must make choices that often undermine their ability to complete their college education. While policymakers have enacted significant reforms to California's financial aid system in recent years, many students who arrive at the California Community Colleges live below the poverty line and some struggle with exceptional challenges like homelessness, mental illness, and food insecurity. Addressing the total cost of success will require simplified financial aid and student support systems that are easy to access, address both living costs and basic needs, and financial awards that grow over time to ensure purchasing power.

***Build Fiscal Resiliency Through A Supplanting Pension Payment.*** College employees deserve the certainty of a funded pension in retirement. Unfunded pension liabilities continue to represent a major fiscal burden to California's local education agencies. These cost increases consume nearly half of the 2022-23 proposed cost of living adjustment and are crowding out services intended for student success. We ask the Legislature to provide a supplanting CalSTRS and CalPERS payment to address unfunded liability rate increases.

Taken together, these requests position the California Community Colleges to meet economic and social demands. Thank you for your consideration of the California Community College budget priorities. We look forward to partnering with you in the budget process during this pivotal time.