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California Community Colleges Chancellor Eloy Ortiz Oakley to Leave Post to head Equity-focused Higher Education Foundation

*Oakley led focus on equity
and oversaw significant gains in student success; System focus will remain on Vision for
Success*

Sacramento, Calif. – California Community Colleges Chancellor Eloy Ortiz Oakley today announced that he will leave the post he has held for nearly six years to head a leading private foundation committed to increasing the share of students of color and low-income students who complete college.

Oakley, who has led reforms resulting in steady and significant gains in student success across the 116-college system, will step down effective Aug. 1 to assume his new position at the [College Futures Foundation](#).

“Chancellor Oakley has been an incredible leader and champion for higher education, setting California’s community colleges on a course for transformational change,” Gov. Gavin Newsom said. “As we execute on



the vision for a more equitable, affordable, and student-centered system of higher education, I look forward to continuing to work with Chancellor Oakley in his new role, along with the strong leadership in the Chancellor's Office and at campuses throughout the state."

Oakley and the Board of Governors ushered in the community college system's [Vision for Success](#), a student-centered strategic roadmap to close equity gaps, increase transfer and boost the number of students earning certificates and degrees.

"So much of our work has been informed by the *Vision for Success*. It has been and will continue to be our North Star, and the Board of Governors is steadfast in its commitment to those principles and values," Board of Governors President Pamela Haynes said. "We are indebted to Chancellor Oakley for his vision, his unwavering commitment to our colleges and most importantly our students. He has been the catalyst for reforming and transforming our system and directing our focus on closing equity gaps, meeting students where they are and designing our institutions with them in mind."

Haynes added that the board will meet in July to appoint an interim chancellor and engage in a comprehensive search for a permanent chancellor.

Over the course of Oakley's tenure, all student groups and all regions of California have seen improved outcomes. Since 2015-2016, the number of students earning a college credential increased by 32% and the number of students earning Associate Degrees for Transfer more than doubled.

"Serving as chancellor of the community college system that gave me the opportunity to succeed in higher education has been the most rewarding experience of my life," Oakley said. "I am so proud of what the Chancellor's Office team has accomplished and of the amazing students that we serve. I am forever grateful to Gov. Newsom, former Gov. Jerry Brown, and the members of the Board of Governors for the opportunity and the privilege to serve the California community colleges and the great State of California."

With a keen focus on equity and elevating the student voice in policy and program reform, the system has become a national leader in dismantling barriers to student access and success.

The California Community Colleges has ended flawed, high stakes student-placement testing and became the largest college system to end required remedial education. One-year completion of [transfer-level courses](#) increased from 49% to 67% in English, and from 26% to 50% in mathematics over four years.

In 2018, the community college system adopted a new [funding system](#) that supports student equity by targeting funds to districts serving low-income students and student success by providing districts with additional resources based on students' successful outcomes. Also in

that year, the system established [Calbright](#), an online college helping working learners get the skills and credentials needed to move ahead in the economy.

Galvanized by the racial reckoning in the spring of 2020 and the inequities laid bare by the pandemic, a system-wide [Call to Action](#) was issued to tackle campus culture issues and confront systemic racism. In response, the Board of Governors recently established a regulatory framework for colleges to incorporate [Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Accessibility](#) competencies and criteria in performance evaluations and faculty tenure review as well as changes to how policing is done on college campuses.

Oakley has focused attention on meeting students' basic needs, such as housing and food insecurity. Progress has been made in expanding financial aid opportunities to community colleges through the California College Promise and changes to Cal Grant eligibility. The system is also moving forward with a significant investment of state resources to holistically address [student housing](#).

Under Oakley's stewardship, the California Community Colleges exerted significant influence on national higher education policy. The system successfully sued the previous U.S. secretary of education to prevent the implementation of arbitrary student eligibility requirements for pandemic relief. The [suit](#) stopped a policy that could have denied emergency assistance to hundreds of thousands of community college students, including veterans and undocumented students.

During a five-month leave as chancellor in 2021, Oakley served as a senior advisor to the current education secretary, Miguel Cardona.

Oakley embodies the impact that community colleges have in transforming lives. He grew up in the Florence-Firestone area of South Los Angeles. After serving in the Army, Oakley enrolled at Golden West College and transferred to the University of California, Irvine, where he earned his bachelor's degree in environmental analysis and design and a master's degree in business administration.

Oakley was appointed superintendent-president of the Long Beach Community College District in 2007. Partnering with the Long Beach Unified School District and Cal State Long Beach, Oakley helped form the nationally recognized Long Beach College Promise. In 2014, he was appointed to the University of California Board of Regents.

As part of his work at the College Futures Foundation, Oakley said he will help state higher education leaders work to achieve bold new goals outlined in Gov. Newsom's comprehensive multi-year framework that seeks to close equity gaps, reduce cost of attendance, improve transfer and time-to-degree for students.

The California Community Colleges is the largest system of higher education in the nation, composed of 73 districts and 116 colleges serving 1.8 million students per year. California community colleges provide career education and workforce training; guaranteed transfer to four-year universities; degree and certificate pathways. As the [state's engine for social and economic mobility](#), the California Community Colleges supports the [Vision for Success](#), a strategic plan designed to improve student success outcomes, increase transfer rates and eliminate achievement gaps. For more information, please visit the [California Community Colleges website](#) or follow us on [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#) and [Twitter](#).

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