

Mt. San Antonio College 2023 State and Federal Legislative Priorities

Mt. San Antonio College (Mt. SAC), located in Los Angeles County, offers our students more than 260 degree and certificate programs, 25 support programs, and more than 50 student clubs and athletic programs. Our professors and instructors are some of the best in their fields. 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.

Mt. SAC is active on policy issues at the state and federal levels in both Sacramento, California and Washington D.C. Working with our state and federal advocates, Mt. SAC has identified several important legislative priorities to focus our advocacy efforts on for 2023. The priorities identified support Mt. SAC's mission, student population, staff, faculty, and financial sustainability. These priorities allow staff and Mt. SAC's advocates in Sacramento and Washington D.C. to act expeditiously on key budget and policy issues that impact Mt. SAC and the students we serve; however, this is not an all-inclusive list of the issues Mt. SAC will engage in and advocate on.

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) in the State Budget since its establishment, yet the need for these funds for our students continues to grow. SEAP funds are flexible dollars that help support students from minoritized populations to achieve their education and career goals. These funds are critical to restoring enrollment, which the Legislature has raised concerns about. Mt. SAC supports the inclusion of a permanent annual COLA for SEAP in the State Budget.

Workforce Development: California Community Colleges (CCCs) are the State's job training providers, as we partner with K-12 districts, universities, and employers 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. We strongly believe CCCs need adequate support to provide retraining for displaced and underemployed workers and the changed economy. This effort includes infusing the impact of technology on employability skills and assuring transitional training to value existing skills and add additional labor market demand skills such as technology and working conditions. Mt. SAC 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 under the current economic realities.

Basic Needs: Mt. SAC believes that student success is directly impacted by students' access to basic needs in two distinct, but interwoven areas: a) economic basic needs, including food, housing, technology, and transportation, and (b) life skills basic needs, including mental health and social support services. The COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated the necessity for these services to be provided to our students. Mt. SAC strongly believes ongoing resources for the CCC system should be provided to institutionalize basic needs supports for credit and noncredit students, including mental health and social services. Providing basic needs services, specifically focused on the mental health and social services needs of our students, has proven to lead to greater student success. Mt. SAC supports any policy and/or budget-related efforts aimed at increasing CCC students' ability to access basic needs, mental health, and social services, such as adjusting policies that don't provide Cost of Living Adjustments to categorical funding that are primary sources of resources for basic needs (such as SEAP and EOPS). 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. Mt. SAC strongly supports the recommendations of the Taskforce, and additional resources at the federal level to support free community college.

Noncredit: Mt. SAC has the largest noncredit programs in California. There have been several statewide CCC initiatives and regulations proposed and implemented that have not adequately considered the unique challenges inherent to noncredit education, even when that inclusion would have been a valuable addition to the initiative. Mt. SAC will continue to advocate for equitable state budget and legislative and regulatory considerations for noncredit students and programs. This includes how the California Adult Education Program (CAEP) funding is disbursed and held accountable, and for it to remain funded with adequate COLA, ensuring that adults in the community will have equitable access to noncredit programs. We support the inclusion of noncredit in credit discussions regarding the improvement of community college educational outcomes.

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 has been expired since 2008 and extended by Congress while debates over the reauthorization take place. We anticipate significant changes to 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 the law reflect the diverse student population and interests of our students. Mt. SAC is in favor of expanded Pell for short-term noncredit career trainings that lead to immediate employment and credit transitions. Mt. SAC supports additional resources to lessen and/or eliminate the cost for students to attend community college in California. The basis of financial aid should include subsistence costs and loss of earning power when students attend school. The recent effects of economic impacts on the cost of living are not reflected in federal standards for financial aid.

Student Veterans: Mt. SAC is thankful for the service of our Veteran students and their families. We offer many resources and opportunities to help student Veterans, including disabled student Veterans, and their family members achieve their educational and career goals at Mt. SAC. Mt. SAC has a thriving and expansive Veterans Resource Center (VRC) that is a 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 disabled student Veterans, and an ability to marshal resources to meet those needs through the VRC. Mt. SAC strongly supports our student Veterans, and our disabled student Veterans, and will advocate in support of any state and/or federal policies or funding proposals to ensure they can attain their educational goals. Without direct federal support, colleges, including Mt. SAC, provide support to Veterans who need mental and physical support to achieve learning outcomes. Further, Mt. SAC strongly supports better opportunities for credit for prior learning for skills obtained in military training as applied to credit for degrees and certificates in higher education and to provide more work-based learning opportunities for Veterans, similar to work-study opportunities now offered for those with financial aid eligibility.

New Immigrant Populations: Mt. SAC's service area is heavily impacted by immigrants in need of socioeconomic mobility. The College supports improving career and community engagement for immigrants by promoting integrated career training and language acquisition programs. Mt. SAC will advocate for federal and state programs that target immigrant services and education with dedicated ongoing funding.

Public Meetings: With the Governor's announcement that the COVID-19 State of Emergency ends on February 28, the Board of Trustees will need to adjust, as conducting remote meetings will need to follow more onerous requirements under the new AB 2449 (2022, Rubio) guidelines. Mt. SAC will continue to monitor and engage on public policy proposals related to the Brown Act and open public meetings, as necessary.