FIRST MONDAY

Memorandum

DATE: October 5, 2015
TO: California Community College CEOs
FROM: Brice W. Harris, State Chancellor
SUBJECT: First Monday – October 2015

Colleagues,

The following are items of interest and importance for our system, and are provided for your information. If you have comments or concerns on any of these items, feel free to email me at bharris@cccco.edu, or call me at (916) 322-4005.

1. **Accreditation Task Force Report Presented to Board of Governors:** As I mentioned in the September First Monday, the Accreditation Task Force report was presented as information to the Board of Governors at its meeting two weeks ago. At the meeting, I told the Board that it was my intention to listen carefully to the field's reaction to the report over the next few weeks and then return to them in November with a recommendation for their consideration. I also told them that if my recommendation in November suggested that other options for accreditation for our system should be considered, that it would be my intention to come back to them at their March 2016 meeting with a specific proposal for change. In receiving the report, the Board, through a unanimous motion with one recusal, directed me to transmit the task force report to the National Advisory Committee on Institutional Quality and Integrity (NACIQI) a committee of the US Department of Education Office of Postsecondary Education. They asked that the report be forwarded in accordance with the NACIQI comment period in advance of their December meeting, at which time a change of scope for the Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges (ACCJC) will be considered. Conversations about the Task Force report have already begun and comments and reactions to the report are being received in the Chancellor's Office. I strongly encourage all of you to participate in those conversations through your representative groups and provide me with your feedback in advance of the November 16–17, 2015 Board of Governors meeting. If this process were to result in modifications in the way our colleges approach regional accreditation, those would be conducted in a careful planned manner and would occur over an extended period of time.

2. **Stability of Equity and Student Success Funding:** As our system continues to implement the initiative that was launched by the Student Success Task Force, it is clear that there are tremendously innovative and exciting strategies taking root across our 113 colleges. Much of this activity is supported by the Student Success and Support Program (SSSP) and Student Equity Program, both of which have been strongly supported by the Governor and Legislature with a significant infusion of resources. The 2015-16 Budget provides $285 million for SSSP and $155 million for student equity. These programs allow our colleges considerable latitude to craft local strategies and programs to promote student success and close achievement gaps. As you continue to implement those strategies, it is imperative that you leverage these funds to create permanent, institutionalized change. That is the reason that state leaders have given us these funds and it is only through lasting change that our students will sustain improvement in their success. These funds are now considered part of our base funding by both the Chancellor's Office and state leaders, so you should allocate them with confidence that they will reoccur and use the funds to make permanent improvements in how your college improves student success. When we face another recession, which we will at some point, our system must commit to treating SSSP and Student Equity as base funding, and spread any necessary budget reductions across general apportionment funding as well. While this is a departure from past practice, it is the only way we will sustain the strides you are making in student success through good budgets and bad. We have entered a new era as a system and we cannot turn back.

3. **US Department of Education Scorecard:** The Obama Administration has rolled out their college scorecard. As you would expect with any system of this type, the reviews were mixed. There is general support for more transparency in American higher education, and for the administration's decision to not actually rate or rank colleges with this tool. However, the administration's scorecard is less pertinent to community colleges than to the traditional bachelor degree-granting institutions where the vast majority of students enroll full time on a clearly prescribed pathway to a degree. I have enclosed the response to the new tool from our national association, The American Association of Community Colleges, which explains the scorecard and its strengths and weaknesses in looking at our colleges. Like any new tool of this kind, changes will be made in the future and the instrument will improve. However, all of us should feel good about the increasing transparency of colleges across the country, and be proud of our own scorecard and the leadership role of California community colleges in the area of accountability.

4. **President Obama's "America's College Promise":** Also in the past month, President Obama rolled out his America's College Promise program designed to provide citizens with free access to American community colleges if they maintain certain academic standards and attend at least half-time. If realized, a program of this type could significantly improve the ability of Americans to get the education they need to compete in an increasingly challenging world economy. Those of us in California just have to look back to the time when community college tuition was free to see how it can impact the college-going-rate of the population. Our own Board of Governors Fee Waiver is arguably the largest "promise" program in America today, investing more than $5 billion in access in the past two decades alone. I have enclosed two op-ed pieces from of our own leaders, Constance Carroll and Brian King, discussing this proposal. They, along with several others in our system, are participating in the California's College Promise committee including our own Martha Kantar, former Under Secretary of Education and Chancellor of Foothill-De Anza, who is heading this effort at the national level, and Eloy Oakley, who is co-chair of the national effort and coordinating the campaign in California. We are all aware that federal funding for this program will be a challenge in the current political environment, and we also know that returning to free community colleges in California could cost nearly $400 million annually. However, this is certainly a goal worthy of undertaking even if it were to be phased-in over several years in California. If we are to remain globally competitive and provide the opportunity for a better life for our citizens, we must drive down the cost of higher education in California and in America. President Obama is to be applauded for his leadership on this important issue, as are our California leaders who have taken up this cause.

5. **Board of Governors Fee Waiver Anniversary:** Speaking of supporting students, we began last week a celebration of the 30th anniversary of this country's greatest promise program – the Board of Governors Fee Waiver. As the enclosed press release announces, the program is currently serving more than a million of our students and since its inception, has provided more than $5 billion in public support for more than 5.1 million students. These numbers are remarkable and evidence of the tremendous public commitment to support economically disadvantaged citizens in California. You will hear more about our plan to promote this program and celebrate its success in the weeks to come.

6. **Activity on Proposition 30 Renewal and State Facility Bond:** Earlier this month, not one but two potential initiatives were filed with the Secretary of State's Office to extend taxes related to Propositions 30. The first, entitled "The School Funding and Budget Stability Act of 2016" is supported by CTA and other education groups and would allow the sales tax increase to expire as planned in 2016 and simply extend the income tax provisions of Prop 30 until 2030. The funds from this extension would be removed from the Budget Stabilization Account (Rainy Day Fund) the Governor was able to pass last year. A second initiative, "The Invest in California's Children Act" is supported by SEIU-UHW, the California Hospital Association and other groups and would let the sales tax expire and permanently extend Prop 30's income taxes, plus would add additional taxes for very high earners. Unlike the CTA measure, the funds from this initiative would be divided three ways: 1) 50% to K-14 education, 2) 40% for health care access for children and other Medi-Cal enrollees, and 3) 10% for child care and child development. Next steps in this process include an LAO fiscal analysis, the provision of a title and summary by the Attorney General's Office, and then supporters must collect 586,000 signatures to get on the ballot. Note, that if both measures make the ballot and receive over 50%, the initiative with the higher vote percentage would supersede the other. In other ballot news, the $9 billion K-14 facilities bond supported by CASH and CCFC has qualified for the November 2016 ballot. This measure would provide $7 billion for K-12 projects and $2 billion for community colleges. The Governor has expressed concern over the state's role in taking on debt for these projects, so it is not clear that he would support the ballot measure, and some are suggesting that the ballot is becoming too crowded.

7. **Student Health Insurance:** Enclosed is an article on activities to promote new health insurance options for students at our colleges, I recommend it for your reading. Health insurance is one of the many financial barriers our students face in attending college, and many of them do not know what help is available. I know all of you have worked to make choices known to students, but this article may include some strategies you have not previously employed.