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# FIRST MONDAY

CALIFORNIA COMMUNITY COLLEGES CHANCELLOR BRICE W. HARRIS

## Memorandum

**DATE:** December 7, 2015  
**TO:** California Community College CEOs  
**FROM:** Brice W. Harris, State Chancellor  
**SUBJECT:** First Monday – December 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](mailto:bharris@cccco.edu), or telephone me at (916) 322-4005.

1. **Accreditation:** As I am sure you now know, at their November meeting the Board of Governors unanimously approved (with one recusal) the enclosed resolution regarding our current system accreditor the Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges (ACCJC). The Board based the passage of the resolution on the field's overwhelming supportive response to the work of the Accreditation Task Force. All of the constituent groups in Consultation endorsed the report except for the Chief Business Officers who took no position. In addition, our office received more than 200 endorsements of the report from regional groups and individuals, as well as two stating their opposition to the report. The Board directed me to work with the field to develop a recommended pathway forward to a new model of accreditation for our 113 colleges to be presented at their meeting in March of next year. Toward that end, I am currently working with the augmented Accreditation Task Force to consider our options. Those include either reforming our current commission, or seeking to join another accreditor. It is too early to tell in which direction we will head, but in either case the change will be a significant one. It is our intention to complete a draft recommendation by late January in order to have time to receive feedback from the field and Consultation prior to making the recommendation in March. I want to thank all of you who communicated your support or opposition to the work of the Task Force. In my tenure in California I know of no other issue that has generated as much dialogue as has this one.
2. **Workforce Task Force Recommendations Approved:** Also at their November meeting the Board of Governors approved the 25 recommendations from their Task Force on Workforce, Job Creation and a Strong Economy. I want to personally thank the three CEOs who served on the Task Force; Sunny Cooke, who chaired the group, Bill Scroggins and Carole Goldsmith. I encourage you to read their report and would suggest that we are likely to see the same kind of impact on our system from this work as we saw from the Student Success Task Force recommendations over the past three years. As was the case with the Student Success work, the changes resulting from this report will come in the form of some legislative changes, some regulatory modifications and much work to change practice at each of your institutions. As you know, we have requested that the Governor and Legislature consider making an investment in the funding of these recommendations in the upcoming budget.
3. **Budget for 2016-17:** By now I am sure you also know that the Legislative Analyst's Office (LAO) has released their projections on state revenues for the coming budget year. Their suggestion that we may see nearly \$400 million in additional ongoing money and as much as \$253 million in one-time-only funds would normally be a



banner year. However, on the heels of a year in which we received more than \$1 billion, some may feel disappointed. To make matters more complicated we must all remember that there are still STRS and PERS increasing obligations on the horizon, and the LAO has also stated that they expect the Cost of Living Adjustment (COLA) to be approximately 2 percent (or about \$135 million for our system). All of this is likely to mean that our \$900 million proposal to the Governor and Legislature for the coming year will likely be reduced significantly in the Governor's January budget message. We all knew last year was a positive anomaly in our funding, and that we would need to be prepared for more realistic budgets in the future. Managing expectations in the next few years will be increasingly difficult especially if the economy turns negative and/or Proposition 30 is allowed to completely sunset.

4. **California Earned Income Tax Credit Initiative:** As some of you might be aware, Governor Brown's 2015-16 budget established our state's first-ever Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC), which is designed to complement the federal EITC. California's poorest working families are now eligible for both state and federal EITC benefits. Including the nearly \$400 million available through the state EITC, an estimated total \$2.3 billion is available for Californians. To help get the word out, the Governor's Office is launching a statewide campaign, CalEITC4me that involves community, faith, civic, labor and business leaders to help raise awareness of this new state benefit. The CalEITC4me campaign will also focus on increasing the availability of free tax preparation services locally, which is where our community colleges can be of most help. I have been asked to support the campaign and access to free tax preparation services by disseminating information about the state EITC to our colleges and asking CEOs to take the following steps: 1) issue an all-campus call to action for a community service commitment to the EITC by students, faculty, and staff; 2) ask the finance, accounting, math, business, and other relevant department heads for their advocacy and support in recruiting volunteers to participate in tax preparation assistance; 3) ask the Academic Senate president and individual campus senate leaders for their support in encouraging faculty to have their relevant classes get involved in the EITC campaign; 4) provide access to a free on-campus space for a tax preparation event; 5) send communications directly to students about EITC eligibility; 6) display posters on campus about the new state EITC; and, 7) establish a campus point person to encourage volunteer recruitment and provide possible event site coordination. I'm confident that you share my enthusiasm in supporting this effort and in making our local communities aware of this important benefit.
5. **Associate Degrees for Transfer:** I have enclosed the most recent summary of your collective progress on the Associate Degrees for transfer. As you know, your colleges are now working on the implementation of SB 440 (Padilla) and this report shows that progress. Although the vast majority of colleges have either completed their goal or are within one or two of completing, there are still a few colleges struggling to meet their goals. The work of your faculty and instructional staff has been remarkable with now nearly 2,000 new transfer degrees on the books and nearly 21,000 students taking advantage of these degrees in the past year. If you have not already done so, I encourage you to work with your staff to ensure that your college meets or exceeds your goal.
6. **Completion of the System Strategic Plan and Looking Forward:** In January I will make a report to the Board of Governors on the completion of the System Strategic Plan, which was approved by the Board in early 2013. I am pleased to report that the system has completed the vast majority of the things we agreed to accomplish in that plan and we are well-positioned for the future. I have enclosed a chart that I shared with the Board, which details the current status of our major initiatives and clearly shows that this is an excellent time for a leadership transition in the system. You should all be extremely proud of the work you have accomplished on behalf of our students and the state of California over the past three years. It would be hard to look back on our past two or three decades and find a time when our colleges have made so much progress in such a short period of time. As you know, the Board has begun the process of identifying the next system Chancellor and they will also begin the next strategic planning process early next year. Thanks to Governor Brown, our Board is now more fully appointed than in recent history and the members are uniformly committed to this system and to serving our students.
7. **Personal Note:** At this time of the year we all tend to reflect on the last eleven months and look forward to the coming year. I want to again thank all of you for your work over the past year in moving the system's agenda forward. You have all made marvelous progress in a short period of time. This is a great time to be involved in California community colleges and as we end yet another calendar year, I hope you will all take some time over the holiday for some well-deserved rest.