



June 3, 2015

The Honorable Mark Leno
Chair, Budget Conference Committee
State Capitol, Room 5100
Sacramento, CA 95814

The Honorable Shirley Weber
Budget Conference Committee
State Capitol, Room 6012
Sacramento, CA 95814

RE: Budget Conference Committee Proposals for California Community Colleges

Dear Senator Leno and Assemblymember Weber:

On behalf of the Community College League of California (League), I write to express our gratitude for Governor Brown's, the State Senate and State Assembly revised budget proposals for California community colleges as they support meaningful student access, success, and equity efforts while reflecting a real understanding of the need to continue rebuilding from years of deep cuts.

Serving the largest population of students in higher education, California community colleges are one of the state's most important strategic investments for meeting growing workforce demands and providing, for many Californians, the best chance to escape poverty. Below is a summary of the impact of items under consideration by your committee upon community colleges. For more information on how the faculty hiring and adult education proposals affect our districts, we have sent two separate letters explaining these complex issues.

On-Going Funds

Base Allocation. We are grateful for both the Senate and Assembly's support for Governor Brown's addition of unallocated funds to support general operations and more specifically to help relieve the burden of increased PERS/STRS contribution rates, employer health rates, and increasing energy costs. These funds will help stabilize and better prepare colleges for the "roller coaster" revenues that are likely to occur in future years. This budget augmentation is the League's highest priority and we strongly urge you and the conference committee to approve the unallocated funds increase as proposed in the May Revise.

Student Success and Student Equity Plans. We support both houses' decision in agreement with Governor Brown's decision to allow colleges to address their unique student achievement challenges through their individual Student Equity Plans, which emphasize local decision-making authority and implementation. This investment will continue the current momentum on college campuses to identify best practices that work for all students and address longstanding systemic equity and opportunity gaps. As a statewide organization, the League has committed its own resources through training programs to assist colleges in their efforts to fully implement their equity plans, integrate them with other local college processes, and institutionalize them using equity funding

from the state. We urge the committee to support both houses' plan of investment in these two programs.

Growth. The League is grateful for the targeted investment in enrollment growth as supported by both houses. These dollars will help our colleges serve more students, particularly in regions where access to higher education has been constrained. Specifically, we strongly support the Governor's proposal to allow the community college system to revise the enrollment growth allocation formula, if necessary, to accommodate increased operating costs and improve instruction. The proposed growth rate (3 percent) also recognizes the importance of serving high-need student populations such as displaced Corinthian College students, foster youth, veterans, inmates in state correctional institutions, and those in poverty. We encourage the conference committee to support this augmentation during your budget deliberations.

Financial Aid Equity. The only part of the Cal Grant program that community college students are eligible for is the access portion of Cal Grant B, currently set at \$1,473. This has resulted in an inequitable system of financial aid in this state, with community college students receiving only 6% of the resources awarded by the program. The Assembly has presented a proposal that recognizes that the cost of tuition is not the only financial obstacle affecting community college students. The League supports the Assembly's proposal to augment financial aid for community college students by increasing the competitive grants and inserting a Proposition 98 add-on for community college students receiving the access grant. These resources will help our students take more classes and ultimately improve student success.

Categorical Restoration. Many of community colleges' critical categorical programs have not been fully restored to their pre-recession levels. These programs serve disadvantaged populations on every campus in California. We request that the committee adopt the Senate's proposals to fully restore CalWorks and the EOPS to their 2008 levels and provide a COLA for all other categoricals. Additionally, we support the Assembly's significant investments in professional development and part-time faculty office hours.

One-Time Funds

Mandate Backlog Paydown. For many years California's community colleges have performed functions mandated by the state without receiving funds for those items. This mandate paydown will provide districts with flexible dollars to assist them in meeting their operational needs. The League supports the Assembly's proposal to increase the mandate backlog paydown by \$299.7 million.

Deferred Maintenance and Instructional Equipment. In order to maintain access for students during severe budget cuts resulting from the great recession, our colleges delayed purchasing instructional equipment and performing non-essential maintenance. We support the Senate's proposal of \$173 million in one-time funds for these essential programs.

Basic Skills. Basic skills course and curriculum improvement are essential ongoing needs for all colleges. While we support an investment in basic skills, we believe the structure

should allow more colleges to receive basic skills funds (instead of via a grant program which would only benefit a limited number of colleges) since this an area of need for all colleges. More importantly, it should build on system-wide initiatives the Legislature has already invested in, such as the common assessment and the education planning initiatives, and professional development. We ask that you approve the Assembly's one-time augmentation but add some flexibility to the current proposal that ensures that resources are distributed on a per full-time equivalent student basis to all colleges with basic skills initiatives.

Incarcerated Adults Project. Community colleges are a place for second chances, even for those who are in prison. Districts can provide valuable educational services to these inmates which has been shown to significantly reduce the recidivism rate and therefore ultimately save money for the state. The League supports the Assembly's proposal to invest \$15 million in this program.

Baccalaureate Degree Start-Up. Last year the California State Legislature made a historic decision to authorize a pilot program for a select number of colleges to start offering Baccalaureate degrees. These degrees are in high demand and will improve the lives of the recipients of the degrees and the communities that they live in. The 15 colleges that will begin offering degrees need support with the start-up costs associated with these programs. Therefore the League supports the Senate's proposal to invest \$16.5 million in one-time funds towards these programs.

Overall, we support the Governor's direction and the augmentations by the legislature focused on the continued restoration of California Community Colleges. If you have any questions or need additional information on any of the League's budget perspectives, please contact Lizette Navarette, Legislative Advocate, at lizette@ccleague.org or Ryan McElhinney at ryan@ccleague.org.

Thank you for your consideration.



Thuy Thi Nguyen
Interim President/ CEO
Community College League of California

CC: Members, Budget Conference Committee
Members, Senate Budget and Fiscal Review Committee
Members, Assembly Budget Committee
Members, Senate Education Committee
Members, Senate Subcommittee 1 on Education
Members, Assembly Higher Education Committee
Members, Assembly Subcommittee 2 Education Finance

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