



The Education Trust–West



May 6, 2020

*Via Email*

Senator Holly Mitchell  
Chair, Budget & Fiscal Review Committee  
State Capitol, Room 5019  
Sacramento, CA 95814

Assemblymember Phil Ting  
Chair, Assembly Budget Committee  
State Capitol, Room 6026  
Sacramento, California 95814

Chris Ferguson  
Assistant Budget Program Manager  
Department of Finance  
915 L St. Sacramento, CA 95814

RE: Special Budget on COVID-19 Response for California College Students

Dear Senator Mitchell, Assemblymember Ting and Mr. Ferguson:

The undersigned organizations represent the interests of California college students, particularly marginalized students attending the three public higher education institutions. We write to ensure they are prioritized and benefit not only from the recent federal Coronavirus Aid, Relief and Economic Security (CARES) Act funding but also from state and institutional funding. College students were already facing challenges to completing their education including food and housing insecurity. Higher education is critical to our state’s economy,<sup>1</sup> and without adequate funding, this pandemic will derail many low-income and immigrant students’ educational pathways and dreams.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Jackson, Jacob. Public Policy Institute of California, “Higher Education is a driver of economic mobility in California,” January 2020, <https://www.ppic.org/wp-content/uploads/californias-future-higher-education-january-2020.pdf> (Accessed April 23, 2020).

<sup>2</sup> Quilantan, Bianca. Politico, “‘We’re on the edge of the precipice’: How the pandemic could shatter college dreams,” April 12, 2020, <https://www.politico.com/news/2020/04/12/coronavirus-pandemic-shatter-college-dreams-179509> (Accessed April 27, 2020).

On March 27, Congress passed the CARES Act, a \$2 trillion stimulus package.<sup>3</sup> California is eligible to receive \$15.3 billion and of those funds, higher education is to see \$1.7 billion.<sup>4</sup> California has approximately 3 million college students<sup>5</sup> and in order to ensure complete transparency on how the funding is spent and on institutional priorities, we make the following recommendations and requests:

- **Transparent Spending:** All institutions receiving CARES Act and state funding should prioritize transparency. We request the legislature provide a template for institutional use, including 1) a budget detail regarding how they plan to spend the federal dollars, 2) how they included student input, 3) the criteria they used to distribute direct emergency aid to students, and 4) any institutional or private dollars the institution has spent or received in response to the Coronavirus, including refunds and emergency aid to students. Subsequently, we request a report outlining how the funds were implemented and what was spent and on who and what the colleges remaining financial need is and for what purposes.
- **Part-time and Undocumented Students:** Any state funding should prioritize support for part-time and undocumented students as they are excluded from CARES Act funding calculation.<sup>6</sup> Undocumented students are specifically ineligible from receiving CARES aid.<sup>7</sup> And if institutions choose to make awards to part-time students, this will decrease the funding available to all. Subsequently, in response to the Department's exclusion, the CSU and UC vowed to support undocumented students with "other institutional funds."<sup>8</sup> The state should track these efforts and step in where inequities exist in emergency aid to students, particularly those in the community college system where there are high percentages of part-time and undocumented students.
- **California Community Colleges:** We urge the state to provide additional financial support to the California Community Colleges (CCC) as they are poised to receive significantly less federal assistance (\$393 per student) than their CSU (\$1065 per student) and UC (\$925 per student) counterparts.<sup>9</sup> It is well known that the CCCs serve

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<sup>3</sup> Banerjee, Asha. CLASP, "How the CARES Act Supports Higher Education," April 17, 2020 <https://www.clasp.org/blog/how-cares-act-supports-higher-education> (Accessed April 22, 2020).

<sup>4</sup> Legislative Analyst Office. Budget and Policy Post, "State Budget Effects of Recent Federal Actions to Address COVID-19," April 5, 2020, <https://lao.ca.gov/Publications/Report/4217>, (Accessed April 23, 2020).

<sup>5</sup> Johnson, Hans and Cuellar Mejia, Marisol. Public Policy Institute of California, "Higher Education in California: California's Higher Education System," October 2019, <https://www.ppic.org/wp-content/uploads/higher-education-in-california-californias-higher-education-system-october-2019.pdf> (Accessed April 23, 2020).

<sup>6</sup> Department of Education, "Methodology for Calculating of Allocations per Section 18004(a)(1) of the CARES Act," <https://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ope/heerf90percentformulaallocationexplanation.pdf> (Accessed April 29, 2020).

<sup>7</sup> Department of Education, "Frequently Asked Questions about the Emergency Grant Aid to Students," April 21, 2020, <https://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ope/heerfstudentfaqs.pdf> (Accessed 4/28/2020).

<sup>8</sup> Murakami, Kerri. Inside Higher Education, "DACA Students to get Emergency Aid from California Systems" April 29, 2020, <https://www.insidehighered.com/news/2020/04/29/university-california-and-cal-state-give-emergency-aid-daca-students> (Accessed April 29, 2020).

<sup>9</sup> Smith, Ashley and Gordon, Larry. Edsource, "California Colleges and Universities share in 1.7 billion in emergency stimulus funds," April 9, 2020, <https://edsources.org/2020/california-colleges-universities-share-in-1-7-billion-in-emergency-stimulus-funds/628763> (Accessed April 29, 2020).

a more diverse student population<sup>10</sup> with unique needs and a higher cost of attendance compared to the CSU and UC.<sup>11</sup>

Recently, The Foundation for California Community Colleges in partnership with the California Community Colleges launched an online fundraiser to provide direct assistance to community college students affected by the pandemic.<sup>12</sup> We applaud this effort and we are concerned this funding will be unable to level the playing field for the CCC system and the students it serves.

- **Stimulus Funds Loophole for College Students:** As has been documented,<sup>13</sup> college students claimed by their parents as dependents are ineligible to receive the \$1200 one-time stimulus checks, and as adults they are ineligible for the \$500 award generated by minors. For students who already live with their parents or can easily move back into their childhood homes, this loophole is not as impactful, but for low-income students and other marginalized groups in the LGBTQ+ and undocumented communities, expecting food and housing from family is not an option. While the emergency grants to students will certainly be helpful, they are no substitute, with awards to UC and CSU students likely to be in the \$400-700 range, and awards to CC students in the \$100-300 range. The state should consider targeting additional dollars, particularly to community college students, when basic needs cannot be met by their families during this crisis.

We thank you and your staff for your hard work during these difficult times and we stand ready to further discuss our requests.

Thank you,

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<sup>10</sup> Gordon, Larry. Edsource, "Whites dominate California college faculties while students are more diverse, study shows," March 5, 2018, <https://edsource.org/2020/california-colleges-universities-share-in-1-7-billion-in-emergency-stimulus-funds/628763> (Accessed April 23, 2020).

<sup>11</sup> The Institute for College Access and Success, "What College Costs for Low Income Californians," January 2019, [https://ticas.org/wp-content/uploads/legacy-files/pub\\_files/what\\_college\\_costs\\_for\\_low-income\\_californians\\_0.pdf](https://ticas.org/wp-content/uploads/legacy-files/pub_files/what_college_costs_for_low-income_californians_0.pdf) (Accessed April 28, 2020).

<sup>12</sup> Foundation for California Community Colleges, "Campaign Launched to Raise Relief and Recovery Resources for California Community College Students Impacted by COVID-19 Pandemic" April 13, 2020, <https://foundationccc.org/News-Room/News-Archives/2020-Archive/Campaign-Launched-to-Raise-Relief-and-Recovery-Resources-for-California-Community-College-Students-Impacted-by-COVID-19-Pandemic> (Accessed April 29, 2020).

<sup>13</sup> Woodward, Samantha. The Minnesota Daily, "Woodward: The Stimulus Package loophole," April 16, 2020, <https://www.mndaily.com/article/2020/04/opeds-woodward-the-stimulus-package-loophole> (April 23, 2020).

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Senator Richard D. Roth, Chair, Senate Budget Subcommittee #1 Education  
Special Budget and Fiscal Review Subcommittee on COVID-19 Response  
Dr. Lande Ajose, Senior Policy Advisor on Higher Education, Governor Gavin Newsom  
Carolyn Nealon, Assembly Republican Consultant  
Robert Becker, Assembly Republican Chief Consultant  
Cyndi Hillery, Republican Consultant, Vice Chair of the Budget Committee  
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