

THE EDUCATION TRUST—WEST POLICY AGENDA

COLLEGE AFFORDABILITY

PROBLEM:

Although the state has one of the most generous financial aid programs in the nation, providing over \$2.2 billion in need-based aid, many students continue to struggle with the cost of education, not to mention food and housing insecurity. State leaders have a responsibility to first make sure the neediest students have the resources they require to attend college with the necessary supports and graduate without crushing debt. **We recommend state policymakers make progress on the following:**

- **Improve financial aid awareness and interventions.**
 - Provide The California Student Aid Commission (CSAC) with additional resources so it can broaden its communication and engagement with districts, schools, students, colleges and universities, and communities.
 - Explore the impact of early commitment financial aid and student-tested, technology-enabled outreach and platforms
- **Simplify the financial aid application process.**
 - Eliminate the GPA requirement to reach more students, as colleges already consider academic performance for admissions.
 - Require that high schools create structured opportunities for students and families to complete the FAFSA and California Dream Act Application.
- **Broaden and guarantee access to the Cal Grant.**
 - Invest more in our financial aid system so that it reaches more Californians and so that all eligible applicants are entitled to receive a Cal Grant.
 - Increase the number of annual authorized competitive Cal Grants.
- **Adjust financial aid programs to address non-tuition expenses.**
 - Recommit to keeping college affordable, explore reasonable options for covering unmet need, and implement changes to the Cal Grant.
 - Increase the maximum Cal Grant B access award so that more students can cover the non-tuition costs of college including books and supplies, transportation, and living expenses.

Over the last 30 years, state disinvestment in public higher education in California has shifted the burden of balancing the state budget onto the backs of students and families.

To read the full ETW Policy Agenda visit: <http://edtrustwest.org/policyagenda2018>



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