

05.05.2020

Open letter to Governor Gavin Newsom and California State Legislature Supporting Emergency Aid Grants to Devastated College Students

We the undersigned student representative organizations, segment representatives, and education equity advocates support the recent request made by the California Student Aid Commission (CSAC) and California Community Colleges Chancellor's Office (CCCCO) for an urgently needed increase in financial aid for some of the state's **lowest-income** and **desperately struggling college students** hit hardest by the COVID-19 pandemic.

- We urge your support of the CSAC and CCCCCO request of \$29.1 million for a **one-time \$500 increase to students receiving the Competitive Cal Grant B access award and all California Dream Act Application awardees receiving a Cal Grant B access award.**

In addition, we urge your support of the following actions in the 2020-21 State Budget:

- **Protect the current Cal Grant award amount from any budget cuts, for students attending California Community Colleges, University of California, California State University, and Independent Non-Profit Institutions.**
- **Identify strategic funding opportunities to support low-income and protect undocumented students via the Governor's Emergency Education Relief Fund (GEERF) or other funding sources.**
- **Protect previously allocated funds, such as those for the California Dreamer Service Incentive Grant (DSIG) programs, from being swept up and re-purposed during ongoing Budget conversations.**

Due to the U.S. Department of Education (ED) declaration on April 22, which **excludes undocumented students from relief** in the federal CARES Act, it is apparent this [population](#) of California students stand to receive no relief dollars. This reinforces the historical exclusion of this student population from federal financial aid programs such as the Pell Grant and Work-Study. While it is unclear whether the ED's guidance applies to the Governor's Emergency Education Relief Fund (GEERF), the call to action by our organizations is clear:

California needs to live up to its "California for All" values and target immediate emergency relief aid to undocumented students and our Competitive Cal Grant B recipients.

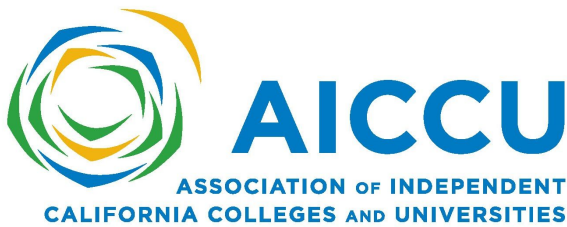
Even prior to the onset of COVID-19 and the closure of college and university campuses, the level of non-tuition support for Cal Grant recipients was inadequate to meet the total costs of attendance. As students face new and unexpected costs, like the purchase of technology to participate in distance learning or expenses associated with their housing/relocation, it is critical that the state provide additional support to ensure these do not pose obstacles to their academic success. Students receiving a Cal Grant B award – including **11,728** current **California Dream Act Application recipients** – have a great financial need that has been exacerbated by the COVID-19-induced economic crisis. These students are shut-out of federal emergency funds.

We fully support the CSAC and CCCCCO proposal; however, we believe this is but an initial investment to support some of our lowest-income students. We must keep comprehensive financial aid reform front and center. Moving forward, we ask that all stakeholders come together to find an innovative solution to guarantee that the [thousands of undocumented students](#) left out by this proposal also receive urgently needed emergency aid that can be distributed by institutions, such as the [commitment](#) made by the California State University (CSU) and University of California (UC) segments.

Please support these proposals to help these students continue and complete their education. This is essential, not just to these students' future, but to the future of California's workforce and economic recovery.

For further details, please see the **specific proposals** in the attached letters submitted April 21 and 24 to the Governor from CSAC Executive Director Marlene Garcia and CCC Chancellor Eloy Ortiz Oakley calling attention to those students being left out and left behind.

Respectfully,



CC: Lande AJose, Senior Policy Advisor for Higher Education, Governor's Office
Anthony Williams, Legislative Affairs Secretary, Governor's Office
Lieutenant Governor Eleni Kounalakis
California State Senate President Pro Tem Toni Atkins
California State Senate Minority Leader Shannon Grove
California State Assembly Speaker Anthony Rendon
California State Assembly Republican Leader Marie Waldron
Senator Richard Roth, Chair of Budget Subcommittee on Education
Assemblymember Kevin McCarty, Chair of Subcommittee on Education Finance
Chris Ferguson, Assistant Program Budget Manager, Department of Finance
Executive Director Marlene Garcia, California Student Aid Commission
Chancellor Eloy Ortiz Oakley, California Community Colleges Chancellor's Office