

2021-22 POLICY AGENDA

JANUARY 2021



California Community Colleges are uniquely positioned to assist in the transformation of our state's K-Shaped recovery and economy, where primarily the wealthy have prospered amidst historic social, economic, and racial inequality, to a more inclusive equity-based or E-shaped recovery and economy. Recognition that our community colleges serve the most diverse and lowest-income Californians necessitates flexible base investments to confront our historic educational, economic, and social disparities. We respectfully call upon both the state and federal governments to acknowledge California Community Colleges as integral to moving us from a K-Shaped to an E-Shaped recovery and economy by approving the necessary funding and policy changes to facilitate this essential work.

EQUITY FOR EDUCATIONAL QUALITY

Funding for a Cost-of-Living Adjustment (COLA)

We thank the Governor for proposing a 1.5% COLA. With fixed costs continuing to rise substantially and without a COLA in 2020-21, community colleges require a more robust COLA or separate unallocated supplemental increase to base appropriation.

Buying Down Deferrals

We applaud the Governor's proposal to buydown \$1.1 billion of the deferrals in the 2021-22 fiscal year. With the likelihood of turbulent economic times ahead, we encourage the Governor and Legislature to completely buy down the deferrals in 2021-22 if new monies are available. This would provide colleges with more funds for locally-determined needs while offering state policymakers with more options for possible future downturns.

Addressing Pension Obligations

We are grateful to the state for proposing to relieve some of the burden on community college and K-12 districts of increased employer-side pension contributions. We need to continue reducing the employer-side contributions and making permanent those reductions already proposed.

EQUITY FOR STUDENTS

Reforming Financial Aid

We appreciate the Governor's attention to financial aid, including his proposal for all high school seniors to complete a FAFSA or Dream Act Application starting in the 2021-22 academic year. We encourage the Legislature and the Governor to continue working on financial aid reform to account for the total cost of attendance. Despite comprising two-thirds of the California higher education population, community college students receive only six percent of Cal Grant resources. This disparity must end if we are serious about building a more equitable California.

Funding Mental Health Services

While we are grateful for the Governor's proposal of \$30 million in ongoing Proposition 98 General Fund dollars for mental health and technology, we encourage using dedicated Proposition 63 dollars for mental health and allowing community colleges to use this precious operating money for locally-determined needs.

Flexible Resources for Students and College Needs

The League believes that local decision-making is the cornerstone of community colleges and sets our colleges apart from the other segments of higher education. We encourage the Governor and Legislature to consider a more flexible block grant approach to funding student needs which can be determined locally and complement prior and future actions at the federal level. We additionally recommend a flexible block grant to address such critical institutional needs such as scheduled maintenance.

EQUITY FOR ACADEMIC OPPORTUNITY

Expand the Community College Baccalaureate Degree Program

California's 15 pilot colleges have demonstrated the value of the Community College Baccalaureate to the state's workforce. Graduates of these programs are now gainfully employed in such critical areas as health information management, biomanufacturing, respiratory care, dental hygiene, automotive technology, mortuary science, and interaction design. Policymakers should expand this extremely successful record and allow Californians to stay within our community colleges for these types of programs instead of directing them to other states or expensive proprietary schools.

Workforce Based Learning

The League shares the Governor's desire to strengthen linkages between community colleges and employment. We encourage the Governor and Administration to consider allowing employers to access the proposed \$250 million non-Proposition 98 General Fund dollars to expand capacity for apprenticeships while permitting community colleges to use their designated funds for other locally-determined purposes. With each community college district best able to evaluate the workplace needs of its community, we believe that a locally-based approach which prioritizes district needs is the best way to create these linkages.

Fund a Single Library Services Platform (LSP)

We are well past the time where our libraries should be able to make the critical transition to a state-of-the-art cloud-based library services platform. This investment is critical in times of social isolation as students need access to digital material and it will continue to pay dividends in student success when we return to the physical space.