

**Little Hoover Commission Panel**  
**Thursday, May 26, 2022**  
**Tomás D. Morales, President**  
**California State University, San Bernardino**

Thank you to the members of the Little Hoover Commission for inviting me here today to speak to you about Cal State San Bernardino and our efforts to support inclusive economic development here in the Inland Empire. I'm Tomás D. Morales, President of CSUSB, located in the heart of the IE. We are the only California State University which has a campus in both San Bernardino and Riverside counties.

CSUSB sees itself as an anchor institution in the IE. This means we are embedded in the community where the majority of our students come from and remain to pursue their careers after graduation. This also means strong working relationships are vital with our K-12 school districts, our community colleges, our fellow nearby universities, our community groups, our local governments and the business community. It is only by taking a cradle-to-career approach involving the entire community that we can begin to build both our students' success as well as grow the economy and future prospects for our region.

We need to graduate students who possess a flexible skillset that they can continue to update as conditions change. And students should graduate understanding a need for ongoing education even as they build their careers.

Permit me a brief introduction to CSUSB itself. We are part of the California State University system (CSU), the largest system of four-year higher education in the country. CSUSB has grown from its founding in 1965, as a state college with an inaugural class of 293 students, to a major metropolitan R2 Research University with over 19,000. An R2 designation is a Carnegie Classification indicating "high research activity."

CSUSB has been a designated Hispanic-Serving Institution (HSI) since 1994. We are now the 2<sup>nd</sup> largest HSI in California and the 16<sup>th</sup> largest in the country. In addition, since 2009, we are a designated Minority-Serving Institution as well. We graduate close to 5,000 students annually, and today have more than 120,000 alumni, who reside in all 50 states and 99 countries. More than two-thirds of CSUSB alumni remain in the IE, helping to attract and fill jobs in key

industries that drive our local economy, including: computer science, business, healthcare, accounting and finance, education, social work and government.

Our alumni who remain in the Inland Empire earned incrementally higher earnings of nearly \$2 billion in 2019 due to their CSUSB degrees. This increased spending power of CSUSB alumni in the IE supported an additional 10,500 jobs, and it generated \$1.5 billion in industry activity, as well as \$118 million in state and local tax revenue.

The university offers over 70 traditional baccalaureate and master's degree programs, education credential and certificate programs and a doctorate program in educational leadership, all within five academic colleges: the College of Arts and Letters, the Jack H. Brown College of Business and Public Administration, the James R. Watson and Judy Rodriguez Watson College of Education, the College of Natural Sciences and the College of Social and Behavioral Sciences.

Over 2,000 faculty and staff at our San Bernardino and Palm Desert campuses are dedicated to helping students succeed. The student-to-faculty ratio is 1:25. In 2021, our vibrant research agenda resulted in \$41.2 million in research and grant awards.

We are committed to our students' success, because not only does this transform their lives, it transforms their families, their communities and, ultimately, our Inland Empire region.

This is what CSUSB does to ensure that success:

First is addressing the question of affordability. We offer robust financial aid packages to our students at CSUSB, with over \$150 million in grant-based aid and another \$3.5 million in scholarships disbursed in the 2021-22 academic year. These resources support students without expectation of repayment. At CSUSB, only 23% of students take out loans, and for those that do, the average debt at graduation is \$15,000. In comparison, the national average for debt post-graduation is \$39,350.

We also look at other college-related costs. For example, course materials can be a significant college expense. CSU's Affordable Learning Solutions (AL\$) enables faculty to choose and provide more affordable, quality educational content for their students. Since 2013, the AL\$ program has saved CSUSB students more than \$4.2 million on course materials.

Working with our local school districts, beginning as early as middle school but at least by freshmen year in high school, we can provide the information that college is an option, even to those who never believed it could be. Next, we have asked school districts to encourage students to take the A-G requirements as a default and/or ensure that schools are graduating college-ready students. These are the required subjects students must take to be eligible for admission to the CSU and University of California. We know that the need to take college prep courses freshman year impacts students' persistence. We have created relationships and built pathways between area schools and CSUSB through mechanisms such as Memoranda of Understanding.

CSUSB's Coyote First Step and Coyotes Rising free summer pre-college programs aim to address any lingering preparation gaps so that students are not only more fully acclimated to college by the start of fall term but have fewer college prep required courses to take during their freshman year. Ensuring that our students have a thorough orientation to what it means to be a college student is especially important when 80% are first-generation, that is, their parents are without a bachelor's degree. By breaking new ground in their families and communities, these students become mentors and role models for others to learn that college is a real possibility for those who never dreamed it might be.

Once they arrive on campus, it is important that students be aware of the support available to them through academic advisors for their classwork and degree progress as well as a range of co-curricular opportunities including cultural affinity centers, athletics and arts programs, study abroad and community engagement options.

The result of our efforts has been an increase in our retention and graduation rates: our first-to-second year retention rate of first-time full-time freshmen is 78% and our graduation rate has more than doubled since 2012.

CSUSB's pledge to diversity, equity and inclusion is not meant to be just words but instead a structural commitment that comprises all aspects of the university. We aim to provide a learning and working environment where all who come feel safe to grow their lives and their careers.

The COVID-19 pandemic affected our students, just as it has colleges and universities across the U.S. But I am proud of our consistent advancement in meeting the goals established by the CSU's GI 2025 initiative, to grow retention and graduation rates. I am also immensely proud that CSUSB has climbed in CollegeNet's [2021 Social Mobility Index \(SMI\)](#). We are now 6th in the nation, from 39<sup>th</sup> in 2016. The SMI benchmarks four-year U.S. colleges and universities according to how effectively they enroll students from low-income backgrounds and graduate them into good-paying jobs. Additionally, our campus was recently recognized as a 2021 Equity Champion of Higher Education for Excellence by the [Campaign for College Opportunity](#) for leading the state and working with intentionality to support Black and Latinx students through the associate degree for transfer program. These rankings, along with CSUSB's recent recognition by U.S. News & World Report as one of the [best universities](#) in the western region of the U.S., demonstrate that affordability does not cancel quality.

As I stated at the beginning of my remarks, it is through collaboration and building partnerships with all the parts of our community that we can develop and implement initiatives that support inclusive economic development in the IE. I believe these can serve as models throughout our state, with California's public institutions of higher education acting as leaders.

[Inland Empire Growth and Opportunity](#): as founding members, we are proud to be part of this organization of private and public sector leaders "to forge a strategic agenda for advancing inclusive growth and opportunity that will benefit residents of both counties and put the region on the path to a more prosperous and secure future." IEGO is involved, for example, with the effort to submit a unified application for the *Regional K-16 Education Collaboratives Grant Program* (part of the 2021 Budget Act) along with the Inland Empire Community Foundation (IECF), Growing Inland Achievement (GIA) and numerous other regional stakeholders.

[Growing Inland Achievement](#): At CSUSB, we were proud to lead the bi-county effort to apply for a \$5 million Governor's Innovation Award, which included: K-12 school districts, our community colleges, fellow nearby universities, local governments and the business community. Our successful application has led to the creation of this organization, and we remain deeply engaged with GIA to grow the number of four-year college graduates in the IE. For example, 34% of the general California population of those 25 and older have a 4-year degree. Here in the

IE, it is 22%. It is even lower in the Coachella Valley portion of the IE, with only 17% of permanent residents holding at least bachelor's degrees. So, we clearly have work to do.

[Aspen Institute's Latinos and Society City Learning and Action Lab](#): CSUSB serves as the anchor institution for this initiative, which is part of the Aspen Institute Latinos and Society Program. Last fall, we hosted a steering committee meeting for the City of San Bernardino, which was selected as one of the initial cohorts to participate in the Aspen Center's newest initiative, its City Learning and Action Lab. This program is working "with five Latino-majority communities to spur economic growth in regions where COVID-19 exacerbated long-existing inequities." The goal is to form, in each city, "an entrepreneurial ecosystem steering committee composed of 8 to 10 key cross-sector leaders."

[CSUSB's Cybersecurity Program](#): Recognized by the National Security Agency (NSA) as the National Cybersecurity Education Center for our leadership role in workforce development at the federal level, we're now the lead academic institution in the Inland Empire Cybersecurity Apprenticeship Consortium to build a diverse pipeline of cyber experts for the region, as well as attract cyber businesses to the IE. In addition, CSUSB is working with the Coachella Valley Economic Partnership, the City of Palm Desert and the Governor's GOBiz Office in the recent establishment of the Palm Desert iHub which aims to grow the diversity of industries in the Valley.

[CSUSB's Supply Chain, Logistics and Transportation Management Program](#): The IE contains the largest concentration of logistics facilities in the Americas and is part of the Southern California logistics corridor. Our Jack H. Brown College offers degrees which provide multiple routes to careers in this growing field. In addition, our Leonard Transportation Center offers research and other opportunities to supplement classroom learning. The LTC has brought the community together to leverage programming and investments through a collaboration model. Our new high school Pathway to Logistics program is the result of a collaboration among Amazon, San Bernardino County Unified School District, Chaffey College and CSUSB to prepare students for professional careers in the industry. And that partnership continues to grow.

[Inland Empire Center for Entrepreneurship](#): Established in 1999, IECE is the largest provider of small business support programs and services in San Bernardino and Riverside counties.

Through programs such as the Women's Business Center, Small Business Development Center, and State Trade Expansion Program, IECE serves between 10,000 and 15,000 small businesses in the region through business counseling, training, and mentoring programs. These small businesses represent the core businesses in our region, and many are minority-owned firms with low- to moderate-income customers.

I hope that everything I have laid out for you amply demonstrates how incredibly impactful and effective a degree from CSUSB can be for the residents and communities of our region.

I will conclude on this final note: The biggest help that the state can give is providing consistent levels of funding to institutions of higher education so that we can maintain and plan for the future. In addition, considering future initiatives similar to the Governor's Innovation Award, which encouraged and supported community partnerships in building more robust regions, are incredibly useful tools.

We view ourselves as key partners with our state's leadership and government in building a better California, starting with right here, where we are planted.