



**California Community College Chancellor Eloy Ortiz Oakley
Written Testimony**

**Little Hoover Commission
Public Hearing**

“Serving Students, Serving California: Updating the California Community Colleges to Meet Evolving Demands”

Introduction

Good morning Chairman Nava and members of the Little Hoover Commission. I am Eloy Ortiz Oakley.

Seven years ago, I testified in front of this same Commission as the superintendent and president of Long Beach City College. I spoke about the need for California Community Colleges to evolve beyond a loose confederacy of 72 locally governed districts and towards a unified community college system—a system that puts its 2.2 million students at the forefront of initiatives, policies, and legislation.

Since December of 2016, I have had the opportunity to lead the California Community Colleges in a direction that I believe will help us achieve these goals, so that all students have the opportunity to benefit from the high-quality, affordable college education that is increasingly necessary to achieve economic stability in this state. I am pleased to have the opportunity to update you on our progress to date, and provide an overview of our efforts on the horizon—which includes the expansion to 73 districts and 115 colleges.

Update on Student Progress

The California Community Colleges are the backbone of higher education in the state and the leading provider of transfer preparation and career training in the country. Our 115 colleges are founded on the principles of open access, affordability, and quality, and we believe that all students—including first-generation college students, low-income students, and students of color—should have the opportunity to reach their full potential.

In 2012, this Commission recognized the vital role that California Community Colleges play in meeting California’s social and economic needs, but also the gaps in student progress and completion that required immediate action. The Commission urged our system to foster measurable progress in the core areas of transfer, career education, and basic skills. While the data since 2012 shows some small measureable progress in these core areas, there is, unquestionably, more work ahead.

This year, the Chancellor's Office worked in collaboration with internal and external stakeholders to create the [Student Success Metrics](#), an online and public facing data resource to examine student progress and completion rates. The tool allows us to disaggregate data by college, based on race and ethnicity, and by student educational goal. The metrics show that our system has seen small, but measurable increases in the following areas:

- In 2017-18, more (85,870) students successfully transferred to University of California and California State University (from 77,431 in 2014-15).
- In 2015-16 and 2016-17, more students exited the community college system and were able to find jobs within their field of study, and experience wage increases and attainment of living wages. For students who exited the community colleges in 2016-17, 47 percent attained a living wage, as compared to 43 percent just two years earlier.
- In the area of basic skills, our system is in the midst of major reform. Through research conducted by the Multiple Measures Assessment Pilot, we have learned that far too many students are required to take remedial math and English courses, and that those students would be more successful if placed directly into college level courses. Assembly Bill 705, by Assemblymember Irwin, required our system to give all students a chance to succeed at college level work. For most of our system, this reform is in its early phases. For the early adopters, we see significant progress; for example, by placing more students into transfer level English and providing co-requisite support, Mt. San Antonio College almost tripled the number of students completing college English—from 1,155 students in fall 2017 to 3,151 students in fall 2018.

While these bright spots in our data show some progress, we must face head-on the reality that, still, far too many students fail to complete their educational goals. Only about half of all students who seek a degree/transfer are able to achieve that goal within six years; and, for our black and Latinx students, those numbers are even lower. For students that do complete, they often take far longer than is necessary, earning, on average, 91 units in programs that generally only require 60 units.

In recognition of these challenges, and to strengthen the role of the Chancellor's Office in providing leadership, advocacy, and support, the Board of Governors adopted the [Vision for Success](#) in 2017. The North Star for the California Community Colleges, the *Vision for Success* lays out a clear vision for our system, with goals centered on the current and future needs of Californians. The *Vision for Success* recognizes that the success of California's broader system of higher education and workforce development stands or falls with the California Community Colleges. To meet California's needs, the *Vision for Success* calls on the California Community Colleges to strive to achieve the following goals by 2022:

1. Increase by at least 20 percent the number of CCC students annually who acquire associate's degrees, credentials, certificates, or specific skill sets that prepare them for an in-demand job.

2. Increase by 35 percent the number of CCC students transferring annually to a UC or CSU.
3. Decrease the average number of units accumulated by CCC students earning associate's degrees, from approximately 87 total units (the most recent system-wide average) to 79 total units—the average among the quintile of colleges showing the strongest performance on this measure.
4. Increase the percent of exiting CTE students who report being employed in their field of study, from the most recent statewide average of 60 percent to an improved rate of 69 percent—the average among the quintile of colleges showing the strongest performance on this measure.
5. Reduce equity gaps across all of the above measures through faster improvements among traditionally underrepresented student groups, with the goal of cutting achievement gaps by 40 percent within 5 years and fully closing those achievement gaps within 10 years.
6. Reduce regional achievement gaps across all of the above measures through faster improvements among colleges located in regions with the lowest educational attainment of adults, with the ultimate goal of fully closing regional achievement gaps within 10 years.

The *Vision for Success* goals are paired with seven core commitments the community college system can make to achieve these ambitious goals and realize its full potential to meet the future workforce needs of California:

1. Focus relentlessly on students' end goals. Getting students to their individual educational goals—whether a degree, certificate, transfer, or specific skill set—should be the explicit focus of the CCCs. More than just offering courses, colleges need to be offering pathways to specific outcomes and providing supports for students to stay on those paths until completion.
2. Always design and decide with the student in mind. Colleges need to make it easy for all students, including working adults, to access the courses and services they need. Students should not bear the burden of misaligned policies between education systems.
3. Pair high expectations with high support. Students should be encouraged to go “all in” on their education, with support to meet their personal and academic challenges. Assessment and placement practices must be reformed so that students are placed at the highest appropriate course level, with ample supports to help them succeed.
4. Foster the use of data, inquiry, and evidence. Data analysis should be a regular practice used for improving services at all levels, not a compliance activity. Decisions should be based on evidence, not anecdotes or hunches.

5. Take ownership of goals and performance. The CCC system should be rigorously transparent about its performance, own its challenges, and adopt a solution-oriented mindset to those things it can control. Goals should be used to motivate and provide direction, not punish.
6. Enable action and thoughtful innovation. Moving the needle on student outcomes will require calculated risk, careful monitoring, and acceptance that failures will sometimes happen. Innovation should be thoughtful and aligned with goals; results should be tracked early and often.
7. Lead the work of partnering across systems. Education leaders across the education systems and workforce development systems need to meet much more frequently, in more depth, and with more personnel dedicated to the task. By working together these systems can strengthen pathways for students and improve results.

New Conditions to Foster Student Success and Ongoing Challenges

Since 2012, a number of new policies and fiscal incentives established by the Legislature and Administration aim to support colleges in better serving students and to ensure a relentless focus on student completion. Among these new policies and fiscal conditions:

1. [Strong Workforce Program](#) – Beginning in 2016-17, California invests \$250 million (annual/ongoing) to spur career education in California. Under the program, the 115 colleges are grouped into seven macro-economic regions, focused on strengthening collaboration with regional stakeholders through the creation of workforce plans. A new focus on data and student outcomes helps colleges use career education to better respond to labor market conditions.
2. [Guided Pathways Framework](#) – Launched with \$150 million, one-time, provided by the Legislature in 2017-18, the Guided Pathways framework creates a highly structured approach to student success that provides all students with a set of clear course-taking patterns that promotes better enrollment decisions and prepares students for future success. The Guided Pathways framework also integrates support services in ways that make it easier for students to get the help they need during every step of their community college experience. More detailed information on the Guided Pathways framework is provided below (See: Changes to Ensure Student Progress and Completion).
3. [California College Promise](#) – Launched in 2018, the College Promise leverages California’s historic commitment to “Free Tuition” for low-income students and establishes a framework for encouraging colleges to implement evidence-based practices that support student access and success. Under the framework established by AB 19 (Santiago, 2017) colleges must conduct a series of practices that focus on early outreach to low-income serving high schools, provide dual enrollment opportunities, participate in the Guided Pathways framework, implement reforms to

basic skills education, and leverage need based aid for low-income students by helping students complete the FAFSA and by providing students with all forms of need-based financial aid.

4. [Basic Skills Reform](#) – In 2017, the California Legislature mandated that all colleges use high school performance, rather than standardized assessment tests, as the primary factor in determining a student’s readiness for college-level work (AB 705, Irwin). In addition to changing the way in which students are placed into English and mathematics courses, AB 705 requires that the system rethink basic education by supporting curricular changes and just-in-time remediation over the traditional remedial sequences that very few students ever completed.
5. [Student Centered Funding Formula](#) – In 2018-19, the Legislature established a new formula for providing apportionments to the California Community Colleges. The new formula focuses on rewarding student equity and success, in addition to, but not fully focused on, enrollment. More information on the Student Centered Funding Formula is provided below (See: Aligning and Allocating Resources).
6. [California Online College](#) – In July of 2018, the California Community Colleges Board of Governors launched the California Online College, supported with \$120 million (\$100m one-time/\$20M ongoing) provided by the Legislature in the 2018-19 Budget Act. The online college focuses on career-focused credentials to support stranded working adult. The college will utilize competency-based education models to provide instruction to learners. The college recently selected a President and CEO and plans to launch the initial pathways by the Fall of 2019.

These reforms are fueled by a clearer understanding of the needs of the economy and students of today, and of the institutional barriers that have traditionally prevented students from achieving their educational goals. Through a focus on student outcomes in the Student Success Metrics, we will be able to evaluate our system’s progress on implementation and achieving the goals of the *Vision for Success*.

While recent investments and reforms are showing promise, challenges remain:

1. [College Affordability](#): While our state maintains the lowest fees in the nation, and most of our students pay no fees under the Promise Grant program, our low- and middle-income students still experience significant financial barriers in covering the total cost of attendance. Today, 50 percent of community college students face food insecurity, 60 percent struggle with housing insecurity, and 19 percent experience homelessness, according to the [California Community Colleges #RealCollege Survey](#) conducted by the Hope Center for College, Community, and Justice. Consequently, students are often forced to choose between eating breakfast and purchasing a textbook for class, while others find themselves sleeping in their cars because it is the only home they have. Because community college students struggle to cover the non-tuition costs of college, which can exceed \$19,000 annually, the Board of Governors is sponsoring SB 291 (Leyva). This bill would provide a community college student with a grant linked to the cost of attendance, one that accounts for the gift aid they already receive and the resources they

have to contribute. This aid would help students eliminate loan debt and reduce excessive work obligations, giving them the support they need to complete their programs on time.

2. **Inequitable Funding:** While California has made strong investments in the California Community Colleges in recent years, funding for our system remains inadequate and, on a per-pupil basis, California Community Colleges receive the least amount of funding of California's educational systems. When colleges have insufficient funds to fulfill core missions, they face difficult choices. One area where additional investment is needed is in the faculty and staff that are essential to fulfilling the goals of the *Vision for Success*; including, ensuring that the faculty and staff reflect the rich diversity of our student population. Faculty and staff provide critical services beyond direct teaching and support duties, such as performing counseling and advising, carrying out curriculum development and non-academic program planning, and participating in institutional shared governance. The Chancellor's Office and the Academic Senate for California Community Colleges will continue to use strategies within the existing funding structures to support faculty and staff professional development and [equal employment opportunity hiring practices](#). Ultimately, as recently outlined by [the Century Foundation](#), without new investments in community colleges in California and across the nation, the ability of the community college system to deliver on the promise of higher education for all will be limited.
3. **Inadequate Oversight of For-Profit Education:** The California Community Colleges have been severely impacted by the abrupt closures of for-profit colleges. When Corinthian Colleges Inc. closed, the Chancellor's Office performed direct outreach and worked with our colleges to serve the approximately 16,000 former Corinthian students living in California. Yet our ability to effectively serve these and other displaced students is hampered by the poor-quality educational programming and the expiration of financial aid awards and incurred debt loads they carry with them from their for-profit institution. To address this challenge, the Board of Governors is supporting a [package of bills](#) pending in the California Legislature aimed at improving oversight of this sector.

California will need an estimated 2.4 million more holders of credentials and degrees by 2025 to remain economically competitive. As the largest postsecondary education provider in the nation, California Community Colleges will be key to meeting this demand. Moving forward with financial aid reform, eliminating barriers toward a degree or certificate, expanding online opportunities, and thoughtfully investing in our system—all are needed if our *Vision for Success* is to become a reality.

Prioritizing Student Enrollment in Academic and Career Courses

Situated at the nexus of workforce training and higher education, the California Community Colleges are essential to preparing California's young people for this future and for helping middle-aged and older Californians navigate the changing environment of the present-day workforce. To this end, our system provides priority enrollment for students making clear educational progress, while underscoring the responsibility of the community college as a whole for student success.

Consistent with SB 1456 (Lowenthal, 2012), the Board of Governors established the Student Success and Support Program (SSSP) in 2013. The goals of this program include ensuring that all students complete their college courses, persist to the next academic term, and achieve their educational objectives. The program targets funding to support every step of the students' journey, including admissions, orientation, assessment and placement, and counseling, and establishes policies for requiring students to complete orientation, identify a course of study, and develop an education plan.

In order to receive priority registration, students must meet all of the program's requirements, including: 1) the development of a Student Education Plan (SEP) that leads to an appropriate degree, transfer, or certificate; 2) satisfactory academic progress; and 3) have not earned more than 100 degree-applicable units. Assuming these conditions are met, community colleges provide further priority to veterans, foster youth or former foster youth, and Disabled Student Program and Services (DSPS) Extended Opportunity Programs and Services (EOPS), and California Work Opportunity and Responsibility to Kids Program (CalWORKs) students.

The reforms outlined earlier in this testimony, including Guided Pathways, College Promise, and the Student Centered Funding Formula, further incentivize community colleges to implement student-centered reforms and to focus on student completion.

Changes to Ensure Student Progress and Completion

As previously outlined, the California Community Colleges are implementing a number of systemic reforms aimed at ensuring students' progress and completion of their educational goals. At the center of these reforms is the Guided Pathways framework. This \$150 million one-time state investment over five years will give colleges the means and motivation to spur transformational change by engaging college administrators, faculty, and staff to implement an integrated, institution-wide approach to student success through the following:

1. *Creating clear curricular pathways to employment and further education* by simplifying students' choices with default program maps and establishing transfer pathways.
2. *Helping students get on a path* by bridging K-12 to higher education and redesigning traditional remediation.
3. *Helping students stay on their path* by supporting students through a strong advising process and embed academic and non-academic supports throughout a students' journey.
4. *Ensuring that students are learning* by establishing program-level learning outcomes, integrating internships and other applied learning experiences, and incorporating effective teaching practices.

The Guided Pathways framework is intended to help students reach their goal by creating highly-structured, crystal clear roadmaps that lead to a defined educational or career objective based on one's interests. By integrating student support, instruction, and administrative services into a coherent

system, California Community Colleges will boost the number of students earning a certificate or degree or transferring to a four-year college or university. As stated earlier, in order to receive AB 19 funding, community colleges must implement the Guided Pathways framework.

The Guided Pathways framework supports significant improvements in student success outcomes and is thus key to the *Vision for Success*. In fact, the *Vision for Success* identifies Guided Pathways as the primary vehicle for achieving six key goals to improve student outcomes and promote equity and economic mobility in the California Community Colleges system. The structural reforms endemic to the Guided Pathways framework are designed to address improving student achievement and transfer, reducing the total number of units earned at transfer, increasing career certification, and reducing and eliminating equity gaps.

Aligning and Allocating Resources

In its 2012 report, the Little Hoover Commission recognized the serious flaws of an enrollment-based funding formula. “State funding policies encourage community colleges to focus on getting students *into* the system, not *through* the system successfully,” the Commission wrote. While our system has made significant strides in improving student success, we recognize that we could do more to encourage progress towards the *Vision for Success* goals, provide groups of students with additional supports, and make resources stable, predictable, and flexible for community college districts.

Given these factors, as previously outlined, the Chancellor’s Office supported, and is in the process of fully implementing, the new Student Centered Funding Formula. Introduced in the 2018-19 budget, the new formula bases general apportionments—discretionary funds available to community college districts to use pursuant to local priorities—on three calculations:

- A base allocation, which largely reflects enrollment at the district.
- A supplemental allocation based on the numbers of students who received a College Promise Grant (formerly known as the Board of Governors Fee Waiver), students who received a Pell grant, and AB 540 students.
- A student success allocation based on outcomes related to student success.

Outcomes measured include: the number of associate degrees for transfer (ADTs) awarded; the total number of associate degrees awarded; the number of baccalaureate degrees awarded; the number of credit certificates awarded; and the number of students who completed transfer-level mathematics and English within their first academic year of enrollment. The 2018-19 budget legislation also created an oversight committee to consider several questions and resolve several issues, including the funding for non-credit courses and instructional service agreements.

The objective of the new funding formula is to create a system that focuses on rewarding equity and success in addition to access, especially by targeting disadvantaged students.

Conclusion

This is a legacy moment for the California Community Colleges. Our system is committed to remaining the backbone of higher education in the state and the leading provider of career training and transfer preparation by keeping up with the changing needs of California and its residents. We will continue to put students first in our efforts to reform our system. We look forward to continuing to work with the Little Hoover Commission. Thank you for your time.