



NEWS

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For Immediate Release

May 16, 2019

Financial Aid Reform Needed for Community College Students' Success

Compton College President Keith Curry Weighs in on Important Legislation Past Due

California Community colleges do an outstanding job offering degree attainment and education opportunities that lead to rewarding careers for the 2.1 million students who attend. But far too many of those students do not have the means to cover enrollment fees and basic living expenses, putting them at risk.

“The current financial aid formula does not fully address the needs of students working to meet their academic goals, and in many cases, working full-time to support themselves and their families,” said Compton College President/CEO Keith Curry. Current legislation, Senate Bill 291 by Sen. Connie Leyva, aims to change that by focusing on financial aid that covers the true cost of attendance.

“At Compton College, our students face many obstacles in their academic journey,” said Curry, who also serves as president of Compton College. “The facts are staggering!” In 2017-2018, 7,939 Compton College students (44 percent of our student body) received some form of financial aid. The most widely used program was the California College Promise Grant, formerly the Board of Governors Fee Waiver (BOGFW)—with 43 percent of Compton students receiving the award which only covers enrollment fees. In the same year, the proportion of Compton College students receiving a College Promise Grant dropped by nearly two percentage points.

The [California Community Colleges #RealCollege Survey Report](#) recently released by The Hope Center for College, Community, and Justice and the California Community Colleges Chancellor's Office reflected, 59 percent of Compton College students said they are food insecure, 68 percent are housing insecure, and 18 percent of students said they experienced homelessness in the past year.

“It’s a jarring reality that is far too prevalent throughout the California Community Colleges, as well as nationwide, and it is imperative that need-based financial aid be available to California community college students,” Curry said. “While enrollment fees have remained low at California Community Colleges, it is extremely difficult for most low-income students to achieve their educational goals due to our state’s higher cost of living and the lack of adequate financial aid to cover non-tuition expenses such as textbooks, transportation, basic housing, and food.”

The new grant program aims to ensure a greater state investment in financial aid by focusing on need-based awards. Under California's current financial aid structure, too little grant money is available to help community college students cover essential, non-tuition costs.

This limited state aid means it can be more expensive for low-income students to attend a community college than the University of California. Eighty percent of community college students who qualify for federal Pell Grants do not receive a Cal Grant. Many community college students work multiple jobs to make ends meet but continue to struggle to meet basic needs.

Current financial aid options simply do not cover costs that make up the majority of student expenses. The annual average cost for California community college students to pay for textbooks, transportation, room and board, and personal necessities totals approximately \$18,441. Annual enrollment fees are approximately \$1,380 for a full-time student. Even with enrollment fees waived, financial challenges remain the greatest obstacle to college completion.

Advocates for financial aid reform believe a key strategy for California's long-term prosperity is to have a larger and more equitable investment in community college students. "I believe a student's financial aid should be linked to the true cost of attendance – not just enrollment fees, but also housing, food, transportation, and supplies," said Curry. "We all have a stake in this. A new grant program for this important population is necessary to ensure a meaningful commitment to college affordability by providing significant additional financial support to students with the greatest financial need. Compton College students, which serves 60 percent Latinx students and 25 percent African American students, would benefit greatly from the passage of Senate Bill 291."

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About the Compton Community College District

Board meetings are usually held the third Tuesday of each month and are open to the public. The District is located at 1111 E. Artesia Boulevard, Compton, CA 90221.