ABOUT US

The Student Senate for California Community Colleges (SSCCC) is recognized by the California State Legislature, Office of the Governor, California Student Aid Commission, and other state agencies as the official voice of 2.1 million community college students in legislative and policy advocacy. The SSCCC develops its legislative priorities based on the resolutions passed by the Delegate Assembly, its membership including representatives from all 116 community colleges. maintains legislative and policy advocacy as one of its mission’s three pillars of engagement and acts through Legislative Affairs Directors from each Region to facilitate the involvement of students in the same.

Mission

The SSCCC works to promote and safeguard access for current and future students to California public higher education in accordance with the Master Plan for Higher Education through system participatory governance, legislative and policy advocacy, and regional support and development.
State Priorities
The Student Senate's primary focus is on advocating for legislation that affects California Community Colleges students. The Student Senate in consultation with the Regions and the Legislative Affairs Committee has developed the following state legislative priorities for the 2020-2021 legislative cycle.

- COVID-19 Relief
- Equity Training
- Technology
- Unemployment
- Financial Aid
- Student Enfranchisement
- Basic Needs
- Increasing Resources

Federal Advocacy
In addition to state legislation, the SSCCC advocates for federal legislation that provides significant support for students. The Student Senate for California Community Colleges have identified the following federal legislative priorities in consultation with the Legislative Affairs Committee to continue advocacy for:

- Financial Aid Programs
- DACA Students
- International Students
- Campus Safety
- Foster Students
COVID-19
Relief for Disproportionately Affected Students
Since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, many groups of students have been disproportionately affected by the sudden transition to online learning. Some students do not have access to basic needs and adequate connection, while others have put a halt to their education entirely. Between food and housing insecurity, the COVID-19 pandemic presents a multitude of new challenges for students who already experience such uncertainties. The Student Senate is dedicated to the fight for much needed resources that allow students to succeed during this unprecedented time.

EQUITY
Cultural Sensitively Training
While cultural understanding between peers is a key element to fostering healthy and diverse communities, the same is required from instructors and administrators. Transgender students, LGBTQIA+ students, and Student of Color frequently experience microaggressions and discrimination, such actions create an unwelcoming environment and greatly impedes on the students success. It is critical that our professors are equipped with the sensitivity and understanding to promote an equitable atmosphere and are properly trained to deescalate classroom situations.

TECHNOLOGY
Expanding Access
49% of community college students across California are struggling or unable to maintain consistent internet access; a necessity amidst the online semesters required across the state to prevent the spread of COVID-19. Community colleges have shown a deep commitment to innovating and increasing access and infrastructure aimed to help more students be successful in their journey to higher education. This is why we need to see investments that:

- Enable more individuals to have access to technology that will assist them in their pursuits of higher education.
- Provide adequate training on how to use said technology to ensure student success.
- Create the technology infrastructure support California community colleges.
UNEMPLOYMENT

Unemployment

Within California, we advocate for better student access to and aid through the state unemployment insurance system for the remainder of the crisis. Specifically, we ask for students who were forced to relocate and stop working when their on-campus dormitory closed, but whose place of unemployment remained operational, to become considered eligible for benefits. More broadly, we ask for long-term reform to the State's unemployment compensation eligibility requirements, so that they no longer preclude any part-time, full-time, or contracted working student and also allow unemployed students to remain UI beneficiaries while pursuing a larger range of educational and training programs. We also urge our State to forego levying any state taxes on Californians that are recipients of unemployment benefits (UI or PUA) and on California student federal work study (FWS) earnings.

FINANCIAL AID

The Total Cost of Attendance

California Community Colleges serve students with diverse financial needs. Thousands of students face housing insecurity and homelessness. These students are not properly equipped for success when they must live paycheck to paycheck. Such stressors can prevent individuals from starting their academic career with California's institutions of higher education. We stand by our student population to fight for a future that:

- Recognizes the magnitude of basic needs for all college students
- Addresses the ins and outs of the full cost of college, not exclusively tuition
- Increasing state aid through Cal Grant reform
- Offers more support for summer enrollment.
Student Trustee Full Vote
Currently students are under represented on their local board of trustees. While local boards are required to have student members they are only granted the ability to participate in discussion and denied most privileges that other board members receive. The SSCCC is seeking an amendment to California Education Code that would secure a full vote for Student Trustees in order to ensure adequate student representation in district decision making processes.

Student Representation on the Student Aid Commission
The California Student Aid Commission (CSAC) is composed of two rotating student members charged with representing the interests and needs of students in all four higher education segments in California. While each higher education segment enjoys undivided administrative representation, students are decidedly divided in their capacity as members. A single student cannot be fully in tune with the complex financial situations of students at both community colleges and the University of California. Student representation from all four segments is needed to ensure the all student voices are heard and adequately represented.

Student Vote on the Board of Governors
Two student members serve for two years on the Board of Governors of the California Community Colleges (BoG). The student in the second year of their term is afforded a vote, but the first year student is not. The student members on the CSU Board of Trustees and the student member on the UC Regents are entrusted with the rights and privileges of other members, including the right to vote. If a student proceeds through the intensive recommendation process conducted by the SSCCC and is ultimately selected by the Governor of California, they should be trusted and empowered with the charge bestowed to them upon assuming office. Currently, they are forced to wait an arbitrary period while their leadership is desperately needed by 2.1 million community college students.
BASIC NEEDS

Student Health Services
In California, the 2018 National College Health Assessment reported that 63% of college students surveyed felt overwhelming anxiety, 42% felt so depressed that it was difficult to function, 62% felt lonely, and 12% seriously considered suicide. California community colleges are woefully unequipped to provide a reasonable level of care to the many health issues that affect students. “The International Association of Counseling Services advises there to be one professional for every 1,000 to 1,500 students with the staffing ratios at the UC and CSU are close to that ratio (about 1,100 students per counselor at UC and 2,000 students per counselor at CSU); however, ratios at the CCC exceed more than 7,000 students per counselor”. These issues exist at the intersection of all forms of inequality and primarily affect those students who are most defenseless to get access for themselves. Additionally, the SSCCC urges legislators to prioritize funding for a wide range of health services including mental health.

Food Insecurity
70% of our students in the community college system are experiencing food insecurity. Not only did COVID-19 affect the educational structure of community colleges, it led to a surge of students seeking food assistance. The SSCCC is asking the legislature and the Governor to make a serious investment in addressing food insecurity on our community college campuses. No student should have to make the choice between their education and sustaining themselves.

Housing Insecurity
61% of California community college students experience housing insecurity, an additional 16% of students in the community college system are completely homeless. With a number of community colleges requiring students to leave campus and finish the semester online, many are scrambling to figure out if they can find and afford housing. Thus, the Student Senate for California Community Colleges is asking both the state legislature and the Governor to make a serious investment in increasing funding for programs that address housing insecurity in the community college system.
INCREASING RESOURCES

Low Income Students
Low income students can invest in a brighter future by attending California Community Colleges, but there is a severe lack of adequate resources to meet the needs of those impacted by financial uncertainties. Additionally, low income students struggle to repay college debt while their higher income peers may not owe a cent. The SSCCC pushes for state legislators to hone in on the issues that prevent these students from receiving the necessary means for success.

Currently & Formerly Incarcerated Students
California Community Colleges give students the ability to thrive in the community, that's why the Student Senate is asking lawmakers to author legislation that will increase access to education for currently and formerly incarcerated student, provide funding for programs for both currently and formerly incarcerated students, and create reentry programs that focus on an educational model.

Undocumented Students
As a result of their status, many undocumented students are left out of federal financial aid and other resources. California has the opportunity to step in where federal support is absent and provide critical resources to undocumented students including financial aid, legal resources, and specialized counseling. Many undocumented students are fearful that their status will jeopardize their educational aspirations and their livelihood. California must continue to affirm their humanity and provide support to these community college students.
Foster Students

Foster students face greater risks of behavioral health and academic challenges than their peers and often do not have an emotional support system to aid them in achieving their academic goals. To face these challenges, only 45 of the 116 community colleges have a NextUp program which provides critical assistance to foster students including academic supports, child care, housing, and other non-tuition costs. The SSCCC urges the Legislature to make continued investments in foster students by implementing NextUp programs at every California community college and raise the age limit for homeless assistance and other foster student services.

Veterans

We value that sacrifices made by those who have served our nation. California would not enjoy the freedoms we have today without the brave men and women of the United States military. Many of our veterans return home with inadequate resources to succeed during the transition back to civilian life. The SSCCC recognizes that the Veteran population on our campuses is currently under served and is asking California lawmakers to support our student veterans with legislation that will address the needs of veteran students.

Homeless Students

18% of community college students experience homelessness to some degree, whether that be couch-surfing, vagrancy, or car living. This has prevented students from accessing higher education as with homelessness often comes a lack of consistent internet access, few resources for their emotional and mental needs, and little support for job searches that can help homeless students finance their education. The SSCCC is urging legislators to prioritize legislation which recognizes the plight of homeless students, addresses the root cause of student homelessness, and prioritizes the resource needs of this community.
CONTINUING ADVOCACY

Financial Aid Programs
As Congress continues to deliberate on the reauthorization of the Higher Education Act, it is essential that the financial aid programs students rely on will be protected. During the 2017-2018 academic year, 7 million students nationally received Pell grants. Programs like the Supplemental Educational Opportunity Grant (SEOG) and Work Study help millions more achieve success at colleges and universities across the United States. More recently, we support the Second Chance Pell Experiment that was introduced to a cohort of colleges that grants financial support for incarcerated student pursuing their education. Additionally, low interest Stafford Loans allow students to fill gaps in funding contrary to private options with higher interest rates. Without this vital federal support, millions of American college students would struggle to complete their academic programs. We urge Congress to ensure that these programs are protected and reinforced for America's next generation of college students.

DACA Students
The Trump Administration’s decision to revoke President Obama’s executive order granting protection to over 800,000 young Dreamers has created uncertainty and fear for college students across the nation. While the legality of the administration’s decision continues to be litigated in the courts, DACA recipients face uncertainty for their future in the only country many of them have ever known. Additionally, the Trump Administration took action to end DACA, but it was struck down by the Supreme Court. These young people, who entered the United States through no fault of their own, are an integral part of the American fabric and should be given the affirmation that they will always be welcome in our country. We continue to urge Congress to pass legislation that would grant legal status for DACA recipients and put an end to the uncertainty created by the status quo.
CONTINUING ADVOCACY

International Students
We must also reexamine ICE’s relationship with higher education and its role in F-1 visa policy making, and question if ICE should continue to possess such authority. International students are the most intensively tracked category of visa holders in the US, and face severe and immediate consequences, if they fall out of status. Many international students already live with fears and concerns of ever-changing travel and visa policies. A more just and humane system must be created that provides international students access to educational opportunity and assurances of legal security; that neither forces current international students out of the country nor bars the entry of new international students; and potentially places responsibility for INTL students within the DOE’s purview, not ICE/DHS.

Campus Safety
Under the U.S. Code, Title 10, Section 2576a, the Department of Defense is authorized to transfer excess military-grade equipment to local authorities, including a large portion of state peace officers trained by community colleges. With very little oversight, the acquisition of these equipment can lead to more violent police responses, unaccounted inventory, and potential situations of mayhem in and out of our campuses. The alarming provisions of this program, along with a lack of accountability, gives opportunity to easily turn safe environments into places of turmoil and disorder. Therefore, the SSCCC recommends:

- Pursuing campus demilitarization and prohibiting acquisition and use of military weaponry by CCC policing forces through ending our system and its member institutions' relationships with the US Department of Defense and involvement in the LESO Program.
- And system-wide collection of police-stop demographic data to determine if and where racial biases exist in CCC policing forces.
Foster Students
State legislation derives definitions of homelessness from federal statute which uses outmoded concepts of homelessness, often limiting the definitions of homeless individuals to below the ages of 25 or 26. These definitions are not representative of the homeless crisis facing the California community college student population. Approximately, 42% of California community college students are over 26 years of age, nearly half of the student population. Many foster students do not enroll in postsecondary education until age 26 and are left out of critical academic and homeless support programs because they do not fit the traditional conception of a homeless individual. Congress must take action to create a new understanding of homelessness and ensure no student is left behind.

National Unemployment
Complex federal eligibility guidelines for unemployment aid often preclude students from assistance at the state-level. The exceptions of the Pandemic Unemployment Assistance (PUA) program provide some access to aid for formerly working students, but exhaustion of PUA funds, the program’s impermanence, and Congressional inaction will create hardships for many students in the coming months. On the federal level, we advocate for continuation of the $600 PUA weekly benefit, the inclusion of students in beneficiary categories for the duration of the crisis, and permanent reform of federal unemployment guidelines so that they no longer exclude working students. The SSCCC also recognizes that many students were employed in Federal Work Study (FWS) positions on currently closed college campuses. We urge conversion of FWS funds into non-taxable grants, disbursed directly to students. We also urge that for the duration of the COVID-19 crisis, neither independent nor dependent FAFSA applicants are required to report unemployment benefits as part of their adjusted gross income (AGI).
STAY UP TO DATE
Follow Us on Social Media!

/StudentSenateCCC
@SSCCC_Official
@SSCCC_Official
VPLA@StudentSenateCCC.org
www.StudentSenateCCC.org