

The Campaign for
**College
Opportunity**

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Michele Siqueiros, Executive Director of the Campaign for College Opportunity, has issued the following statement regarding the “Day of Action” and California’s failed application for *Race to the Top* funding.

Today, as thousands of Californians took to the streets for a “Day of Action” to protest devastating cuts to public higher education, the U.S. Department of Education released disturbing news that California was not selected in Phase One of the Race to the Top competition for millions of dollars in funds for K-12. This news should sound an alarm at the State Capitol and serve as a lesson.

The unprecedented number of students, faculty, parents, and community members who rallied across California today call attention to widespread frustration with severe budget cuts to our public education, college and university systems. California’s failed Race to the Top application reveals that entrenched politics continues to put other interests ahead of students. The consequences are a troubling loss of federal dollars at a time when we need them most. Fortunately, California will have other opportunities to secure federal funding to improve K-12 and higher education, but our state leaders must take bold steps to ensure California is not only eligible but competitive.

For higher education, the Governor and Legislature need to articulate specific statewide goals for increasing college-going and improving student completion to access prospective federal funding through the proposed American Graduation Initiative and the College Access and Completion Innovation Fund. We must do this now because students have done everything we have asked of them but California is not upholding its end of the bargain – making sure there is a spot for all eligible students seeking the opportunity to go to college and succeed. Reductions in enrollment, cancelled classes, and student fee increases are moving us in the wrong direction at a time when California’s economy is demanding one million more college graduates to meet workforce needs by 2025. We call on the Governor and Legislature to focus their energy in the coming months on protecting and improving higher education by doing the following:

- **Preserve Access-** Prioritize our state spending on higher education to minimize cuts to capacity and strive to increase college-going by providing a spot in college for all eligible students.
- **Ensure Completion-** Promote efficiencies and reforms that produce more college graduates to meet our workforce needs. Identify improved pathways for students to earn college certificates and associate degrees or to transfer to a four-year university to receive a Baccalaureate degree.
- **Maintain Affordability-** Guarantee that financial barriers do not prevent qualified persons from reaping the benefits of an affordable higher education nor cause graduates to face huge debt

obligations. Cal Grants, work study opportunities, Pell grants and Community College Board of Governor waivers are all valuable programs that need to be preserved.

In order to meet these three principles, the governor and legislature must identify and adopt new sources of revenue for California higher education. Equally essential, all higher education segments must re-commit themselves to identifying and implementing new ways of operating more efficiently and effectively including a direct focus on graduating more students.

Now more than ever, the future of California depends upon its citizens and the education they acquire. Without strong proactive leadership from our policymakers, California will cede its competitive edge, fail to produce the workforce needed for a 21st century economy and all Californians will lose. The time to act is now!

About The Campaign for College Opportunity: The Campaign for College Opportunity is a broad-based, bipartisan coalition, including business, education and labor leaders, that is dedicated to ensuring the next generation of Californians has the opportunity to go to college. The Campaign works to create an environment of change and lead the state toward effective policy solutions. It is focused upon substantially increasing the number of students attending two- and four-year colleges in the state and significantly impacting the rate of student success and achievement of their post-secondary education objectives. For more information, visit: www.collegecampaign.org.