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## **Community College Capacity Issue Represents ‘Broken Promise’ to State’s Students**

**(LOS ANGELES, CA – September 8, 2009)** A new report from the California Postsecondary Education Commission—which advises Governor Schwarzenegger on issues related to higher education—finds that California’s community colleges will soon be unable to accommodate all the students who wish to enroll. The report, entitled “Ready or Not, Here They Come,” will be presented at the Commission’s quarterly meeting to be held later this month in Sacramento.

According to the report, the state’s 110 community colleges will need to increase their capacity over the next decade in order not to turn away the 222,000 additional students who will seek to enroll. It estimates that the number of students during the next decade will increase by 12.3 percent. The report follows a recent announcement that community college enrollment had surged 4.9 percent – representing 135,000 students – during academic year 2008-2009. Fueling the increase is the current recession, which is sending many unemployed and underemployed workers to community colleges to train for new skills and careers.

“California’s Master Plan for Higher Education makes a promise to each and every student – that if you want to go to college, we’ll save a spot for you,” said Michele Siqueiros, Executive Director of The Campaign for College Opportunity, a Los Angeles-based nonprofit that advocates for higher education in California. “Unless we address these capacity issues in our community colleges, that promise will be broken.”

The report found that a full 75 percent of community college districts are facing capacity pressures, in that they are serving more full-time equivalent students (FTES) than recommended by state classroom utilization standards. The current capacity deficit on a statewide basis is 186,000 FTES, which the report projects could eventually grow to 350,000 FTES. Recommendations for addressing the need for additional capacity included utilizing a combination of new capital projects, improved efficiencies, shared facility use, enhanced distributed learning arrangements, and expanded evening and weekend course offerings.

According to John Perez, chair of the commission, the projections cited in the report are conservative — the problem might actually be worse. He said that the commission used both a baseline projection based solely on population growth and a higher mid-range projection that included recent trends in enrollment patterns. He and other commission members agreed that it was very likely that the mid-range projection would be a more likely scenario.

“We agree with Chancellor Scott that continued divestment in higher education will hurt California for years to come and undermine our state’s economic recovery,” Siqueiros said. “The community college sector is by far the largest of the higher education systems in our state. If students can’t get in, they can’t graduate or transfer, and this could severely impact our future workforce.”

Compounding the problem is that the state is unable to provide any funding for community college enrollment growth. In fact, state investment in community colleges was decreased by 8 percent for the current school year. Yet, in order to catch up with growing enrollment demand, community colleges will need at least 3 percent enrollment growth funding annually over the next decade.

“The Governor and California’s legislature need to identify ways to fund the investment required to meet the capacity at our community colleges, particularly if enrollment continues to surge 5 percent a year,” Siqueiros said. “Our community colleges must also continue to pursue innovative solutions that focus on serving as many students as possible and getting them through to meet their college goals of achieving a community college certificate, Associate Degree, transferring to a four year university or gaining valuable workforce preparation.”

***About the Campaign for College Opportunity:*** The Campaign for College Opportunity is a broad-based, bipartisan coalition, including business, education and labor leaders, and 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 that students succeed and achieve their post-secondary education objectives. For more information, visit: [www.collegecampaign.org](http://www.collegecampaign.org).

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