



The Campaign for College Opportunity

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New Report: There is No Quick Fix for California's College Crisis

California Colleges Face "Perfect Storm"

Labor, Civic and Business Leaders Form Unprecedented Campaign for College Opportunity to Overcome Conditions

(San Francisco) –A new report released today by The National Center for Public Policy and Higher Education reveals that the crisis in California's public colleges is deeper, more severe, and longer-term than previously expected. According to the report, "Ensuring Access with Quality to California Community Colleges," without a significant new statewide commitment to public colleges, the state's promise of extending college opportunity to all adults who could benefit will be broken for the foreseeable future.

The report, commissioned by the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation, integrates 10-year demographic and enrollment projections in community college districts statewide with first-hand interviews with educators on the frontlines. The report outlines how the college crisis is projected to worsen throughout this decade due to a "perfect storm" of factors that will send the higher education system, especially community colleges, into an even greater state of emergency.

"California's promise of higher education has been broken, and if we don't make changes right away, our children – and California's economy – will pay the price," according to Pat Callan, President of the National Center for Public Policy and Higher Education. "You can't succeed in today's knowledge-based economy without a good education. This report shows that the problem can't be solved without a renewed effort to commit to California's public colleges for the long-term."

In response to the growing crisis, business, civic and labor leaders today announced the Campaign for College Opportunity. The unprecedented collaboration will bring together a diverse set of partners – from business leaders to civic and union leaders – to develop and promote fresh, collaborative long-term solutions to the state's higher education economic crisis.

"The crisis we're facing is unprecedented," said Bill Hauck, president of the California Business Roundtable and Chairman of the Campaign for College Opportunity.

"California's higher education system has never faced a perfect storm like this: budget

shortfalls, dramatic enrollment increases, and an economy that depends on an educated workforce. We created this campaign because every California student who is motivated and prepared to attend college should have that opportunity.”

The report shows that community colleges will be hardest hit. The demand for higher education is expected to grow by more than 700,000 students by 2010 and three-fourths of that increase will be at community colleges. Other factors contributing to the “perfect storm” for community colleges include:

- Dramatic increases in Latino, low-income and first-generation students graduating from high school and seeking to enroll in community colleges. The counties that will experience the brunt of this trend are Los Angeles, Orange, Riverside, San Diego and San Bernardino counties;
- A “hidden” tidal wave of nearly a million 18- to 24-year-old Californians without high school diplomas. These Californians will demand far more from society than they return to it, unless community colleges play a significant role preparing them for jobs in today’s knowledge-based economy;
- Reduced admissions at the UC and CSU level, pushing up to 25,000 students a year to community colleges.

The report points out that all these factors are in addition to the existing problems that are already stretching community colleges to the breaking point. An estimated 175,000 students were turned away from community colleges last year. Course sections are being slashed by 25% at some colleges and students are even resorting to sitting on the floor or in the hallways in college classrooms across the state.

Abdi Soltani, executive director of the Campaign for College Opportunity, said that Californians must unite. “Together, we can solve this problem,” said Soltani. “Providing college opportunity for every qualified Californian won’t be easy, but it can be achieved in three steps: more state funding, more efficient use of existing resources, and reasonable increases to student fees tied to more financial aid.”

The Campaign for College Opportunity is being funded by the Ford Foundation, the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation, the James Irvine Foundation, and the David and Lucile Packard Foundation.

The full report is available online at www.collegecampaign.org.

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