

PRESS RELEASE



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AS LEGISLATURE CONVENES AND BUDGET IS RELEASED, POLL FINDS THAT CALIFORNIA VOTERS BELIEVE LACK OF COLLEGE ACCESS IS A SERIOUS PROBLEM

(Oakland and Los Angeles, CA) – A new statewide poll conducted by Fairbank, Maslin, Maullin & Associates found that 66% of likely voters believe that the state should continue its promise of providing a college education to all who are eligible and motivated to seek it. The poll also found that voters are aware of funding cuts to higher education in recent years and 71% expect an increase in the number of Californians likely to seek college in the coming years. Furthermore, voters support an increase in efficiency in the state’s higher education system and more state funding as part of the solution.

The poll of 800 registered voters, conducted during a three-day period in December, was commissioned by the Campaign for College Opportunity, a nonprofit organization devoted to ensuring that the next generation of Californians has the opportunity to go to college as promised by the 1960 Master Plan of Higher Education.

“Voters are fully committed to supporting California’s community colleges and public universities,” said Ben Tulchin, Senior Vice President of Fairbank, Maslin, Maullin & Associates, who conducted the poll. “They are aware of the fundamental problems facing higher education, both in terms of budget cuts and increasing enrollment, and voters of all parties want their elected officials in Sacramento to address these problems.”

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Some of the poll's highlights include:

- 77% of voters agree that state funding for higher education had been cut in recent years
- 71% of voters expect an increase in the student population, with 47% of all voters expecting it will grow a lot
- 72% perceive the fact that “1.8 million students could be denied a place in California’s public college and universities over the next 10 years” is an extremely or very serious problem
- 66% of voters demand that California continues its commitment to the 1960 Master Plan, which says that any eligible person who wants to go to college in California should have the opportunity
- 95% thought that community colleges and public universities should be more efficient as a way to accommodate the expected growth in student population
- 82% said that we need to increase state funding for higher education to meet the growth

These findings show that improving college access is an important issue to Californians, says Abdi Soltani, Executive Director of the Campaign for College Opportunity.

“Over the next 10 years, 1.8 million additional students are likely to seek college in California above our current enrollment,” he says. “Californians fundamentally believe that we should provide college opportunity, instead of turning students away. We have a chance to solve this problem before it becomes a full-scale crisis.”

Bill Hauck, President of the California Business Roundtable and Chair of the Campaign’s board of directors, believes that a college-educated workforce is crucial to the state’s economy.

“California’s universities and community colleges train much of the workforce that contributes to the social and economic well-being of the state,” he says. “Nurses, teachers

and engineers educated at our colleges provide our health care, teach our children, and address our infrastructure needs. If we are unable to ensure college opportunity for our growing number of young people, they, their families and their communities will be negatively impacted.”

The Campaign for College Opportunity was co-founded by the California Business Roundtable, the Mexican American Legal Defense and Educational Fund and the Community College League of California. The Campaign is currently conducting a statewide College Opportunity Listening Tour to raise awareness about the college-access crisis and to listen to potential solutions from various sectors, including higher education, business, labor, religious groups, community-based organizations and others. The Tour will conclude March 18.

If you would like more information on the poll or the Listening Tour, please contact Elisa Bongiovanni, Communications Director, at 510-645-1362 or elisa@collegecampaign.org. You can also visit the Campaign’s website to download this release, the executive summary and the poll findings at <http://www.collegecampaign.org>.

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