

Student Senate for California Community Colleges

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1102 Q Street, Third Floor
Sacramento, CA 95811-6549

SACRAMENTO, CA - Governor Jerry Brown unveiled his proposed budget for the 2013-14 fiscal year today. As representatives of the 2.4 million students of the California Community Colleges, the Student Senate views the annual budget as one of the most significant pieces of legislation that impacts its constituency. While we applaud the Governor for increasing funding to the California Community Colleges, for the first time in years allowing for growth, there are significant concerns with certain policy provisions in the budget that must be addressed.

Firstly, the proposed "reforms to census accounting practices" would shift California's Community Colleges from an enrollment-based funding method to an outcomes-based method, commonly known as performance-based funding. At the Fall 2012 General Assembly, we adopted Resolution 9.01, "Guiding Values for Funding California Community Colleges" which strongly opposes performance-based funding models. Such funding is counter to the Master Plan for Higher Education and endangers equity of access to higher education to communities that some consider "under-performing". Performance-based funding punishes districts for serving populations that may not be adequately prepared for college upon entry (i.e. low income or minority students), and prioritizes the pursuit of educational quantity over quality. For us, this is not merely a matter of policy, it is a matter of principle.

Secondly, the proposed 90-unit cap on students is reminiscent of policy proposals that we opposed throughout 2011 and 2012 when similar language appeared in the Student Success Task Force Recommendations pertaining to the Board of Governors Fee Waiver. Our concerns are that the imposition of such a cap eliminates the ability of the student to be flexible in determining their educational pathways and even punishes students who change their major. Since the onset of the recession, California Community Colleges have received students seeking retraining for the workforce, many of whom had already received degrees. Such a cap could eliminate access for these students before they have an opportunity to complete their goals. By enacting similar policies on students in the University of California and the California State University, transferring students in high unit majors or who were in remediation may find themselves subjected to successive appeals processes.

Thirdly, we are concerned that the attachment of Area B of the Board of Governors Fee Waiver to the Free Application for Federal Student Aid would now require the applicant to have a Social Security number. Currently, many students who are beneficiaries of the California Dream Act are able to receive the Fee Waiver despite not being eligible for Federal student aid. This policy change would close the doors on many students simply because they are not United States citizens.

We look forward to the opportunity to effectively engage the Governor and the State Legislature to ensure that student needs are truly served by the State of California. We encourage the leaders of our state to be attentive to the views and experiences of *all* California's Community College students, not merely students seeking transfer to universities or associate degrees. The previous year was very productive in the beginnings of needed educational reform, and we encourage the State of California not to endanger this progress by hasty legislation. At no point should those who benefited from the open door policy of California higher education have the ability to shut that door behind them.

- Vice President of External Affairs James Varble
- james.varble@studentsenateccc.org (209)202-0506