



ASSOCIATION OF INDEPENDENT  
CALIFORNIA COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES

**Testimony for Dr. David Poole, Vice President, California Baptist University**

**Joint Hearing of the Assembly Higher Education Committee and  
Budget Subcommittee #2 on Education Finance  
“Closing the Degree Gap”**

**February 6, 2018**

**9:30 a.m. to 12 p.m.**

**State Capitol Building, Room \_\_\_**

Good morning Chairs Medina and McCarty, and members of the committee. Thank you for the opportunity to speak today on this very important and timely issue. Today, we’ve heard about the challenges facing the state. I want to talk about solutions.

My name is David Poole, and I am vice president of the division of online and professional studies at California Baptist University. CBU Online was established to respond to the very different needs of the “new normal” generation of students – the non-traditional student that balances professional and family responsibilities while advancing their education. Our online and hybrid programs offer students the 24/7 flexibility expected for 21st century learning. CBU Online offers degree programs utilizing the latest technologies in distance education through faculty and staff who are committed to student’s academic and professional success.

Cal Baptist is a WASC-accredited, nonprofit university headquartered in the City of Riverside, with a presence throughout Riverside and San Bernardino counties. The university was founded in 1950, and currently enrolls nearly 10,000 students at the undergraduate, graduate, and doctoral level. Of our undergrads, close to 3,200 are currently enrolled in CBU Online. Each year CBU Online graduates approximately 1,400 with bachelor's degrees, helping them achieve their higher education and career goals. Remember: These are primarily nontraditional students—adults that have some college units but not a BA or BS. They want to go back to school, finish their degree, and advance in their careers or shift to a new one.

According to the Lumina Foundation, there are 4.5 million Californians with some college credit but no degree. There is huge untapped potential here—for the state, for its economy, and especially for the students and their families. This is a population that the state needs to serve if we are to close the 1.1 million bachelor's degree gap. We know about the problems—but what are some solutions?

CBU Online was established in the fall of 2010 as a separate operating division from the main campus. We call it a University within the University. The division has its own faculty, administration, admissions, retention, assessment, and operating budget. This allowed CBU to hire a team of professionals that are focused specifically on the adult student. This set up the conditions for success. In 2010 there were just over 500 degree completion students who were offered 12 majors and concentrations housed in the various schools and colleges on our main campus. These were moved under the oversight of CBU Online and seven and

a half years later, CBU Online services just under 4,000 students and now offers 42 majors and concentrations including 14 masters programs and two doctoral programs. We now have 26 majors at the bachelor's level.

Most important, our focus on student engagement between faculty and students have resulted in significant retention and persistent rates for adult online students. The six year graduation rate for private, not for profit institutions U.S. institutions in the same Carnegie classification as CBU, Master's Large Programs, offering all programs completely via distance education is 26.3% CBU Online is 65.2%. First to second year cohort retention rate for U.S. institutions in the same Carnegie classification as CBU, Master's Large Programs, offering all programs completely via distance education is 42.7%. CBU Online is 71.2%.

As CBU is a Hispanic Serving Institution, 39.3% of CBU Online are Hispanic with a retention rate of 69.2%. Total minority population is 63.3% and first to second year cohort retention for this group is 68.5%. When the conditions for success are present, you can accomplish much for California students.

A more recent example of ways that AICCU Schools can help close the gap is CBU Online's Fast Track to Success program that we developed originally with Mt. San Jacinto College and CBU Online and now has grown to 19 Community College Partnerships with 870 enrolled and just under an additional 900 students who are currently exploring the program. Not only is this program extremely transfer friendly with admission guarantees, but includes

institutional scholarships by CBU Online to ease the financial burden for students to complete their bachelor's degree.

I think there is opportunity for synergy between the governor's proposed fully online 115<sup>th</sup> community college, if the state does indeed go that route. The Fast Track to Success program is an example that there can be potential for a strong pipeline for nontraditional students.

In closing, I want to mention two points. There is no financial aid program targeted at this group of students—the nontraditional students that want to complete their degree. Even a small amount of aid from the state would help them go back and pay dividends for the state in the long run through increased income and spending. Second, I want to acknowledge that some people have hesitancy around online education. While there have been some bad actors in the for-profit arena, (and if we are honest, in the non-profit sector as well), there are many AICCU Schools who like CBU Online have demonstrated that online and hybrid education can be done well. Once again, if the conditions for success are there, together we can do great things for the students of California.

Thank you again for this opportunity to speak.