

AHED Dispatch

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Welcome to the final issue of the AHED Dispatch for the 2021 legislative year. The Committee has enjoyed providing our readers with an overview of important policy issues relevant to Higher Education. In our final issue, we wanted to provide you with interviews on key issues from the leaders of the three public higher education institutions. Enjoy!

Interview with Acting Chancellor of the California Community Colleges - Daisy Gonzales.



As we are approaching two years of COVID -19 impacting our daily lives, what are some of the positive lessons the California Community Colleges have learned during this pandemic that will benefit students?

We have learned many lessons, but at the top is the adaptability and resiliency of our students and our colleges. Within days of the statewide lockdown announced by Gov. Newsom in March 2020, nearly all of our colleges had transitioned to fully online instruction—something previously thought of as impossible. Our colleges, the Chancellor’s Office, and nonprofit partners mobilized to provide tens of thousands of laptops and wi-fi hotspots to students to help them stay connected. For many regions, when K-12 shut down, community college dual enrollment became a strategy to address learning loss. The adaptability of our colleges was fueled by federal and state emergency relief funds, which helped our colleges keep countless students from losing their homes or falling further into food insecurity and intergenerational poverty. The rapid response showed us that even the largest system of public higher education, with 116 colleges, could mobilize with urgency and treat students, faculty and staff with dignity.

We also learned that our students appreciate this flexibility! Despite the stigma around online/virtual instruction, I have heard from many students over the past 18 months that they appreciate the benefits of taking classes virtually, and that they can achieve success if they are provided the student supports they need. Students who are unable to attend in-person due to work schedules, family obligations, or physical disabilities have told me that the ability to attend classes from home is a game-changer for their education. Other students, especially students of color or from the LGBTQ community, have shared that they feel less prone to micro-aggressions and discrimination in an online environment. Obviously, virtual instruction is not a panacea and we know that in-person learning is the most optimal for the overwhelming majority of our students. This includes many of our career technical education programs (CTE), who remained in-person. Student demand for modality will need to be a



New law bring CalFresh food benefits to more college students

15 parking spaces at Long Beach City College to be reserved for homeless students



CSU graduation rates steadily improve despite pandemic; equity concerns remain

Student Tech Equity Levels Up with CSUCCESS



As UC makes room for Californians, can it afford to lose out-of-state students?

UC Merced to launch medical school in 2023



Geography of College Enrollment

New program allows incarcerated students to get bachelor’s degree alongside peers on the outside

part of the decision-making and innovation higher education will need to adopt if we want California to recover with equity.

In what ways will the California Community Colleges be on the frontlines of the COVID-19 economic recovery?

Let me start by pointing out that our colleges already are on the frontlines of the recovery – the health recovery, that is. Did you know that at least two-thirds of first responders in California received their training at a California Community College?! Those healthcare heroes we have spent the last year and a half cheering on, who have put themselves in harm's way time and time again to battle this deadly disease, are a product of our system. Helping California recover will require all of us to have a deeper commitment to action and investments in structures, not just programs.

Economically, the California Community Colleges can play a pivotal role in combating our “K-shaped” recovery from the pandemic-induced recession – we know that those at the top, with advanced degrees and living in the wealthiest regions of our state, are largely doing just fine. (The state would not have had such a budget surplus this year if they weren't.) Yet low-income communities, communities of color, areas with large concentrations of immigrants, and rural/remote areas without major high-wage job industries are suffering worse than ever.

Community colleges are one of our best tools to ensure economic opportunity for all. Our role will continue to be in the intentional completion of degrees and CTE certificates that will meet industry needs and fuel our economy. At the same time, entire industries have been decimated, and our role includes helping regions and employers innovate. Our system has been working to implement the Vision for Success, where we believe that every student can succeed. A recovery with equity where California Community Colleges are leading the way includes: 1) intentional funding for workforce programs with accountability for colleges and employers, 2) addressing our students' basic needs by re-designing the Cal Grant program, 3) ensuring an equitable campus environment for all students, which includes leading the nation in establishing core competencies for all educators in this state, 4) continued implementation of equitable placement with fidelity, and 5) ongoing innovation in teaching in learning that includes competency-based education and credit for prior learning to better serve adult learners and meet workforce needs in our state.



What is one aspect of the California Community Colleges that you wish was recognized more by the public?

I wish there was a better understanding of who our system serves, and why. In the California Community Colleges, more than 40 percent of our students are age 25 or older. Not only do we serve 70% of all higher education students, but we serve the highest percentage of students who are working full-time, raising children of their own, English-language learners, or the first in their family to go to college. Our system has unique needs that we simply do not see elsewhere in higher education. When I am asked why community colleges nationwide have seen an enrollment decline during COVID-19, I remind them that this decline started before the pandemic – because our real battle is with poverty.

That is why we need to address the social determinants of educational success. To put it simply: it's not enough to keep throwing more money at a broken system. We need to transform the system itself! That means rethinking how we deliver financial aid and basic needs to address the root causes of these issues; it means breaking down artificial barriers and siloes that create more paperwork and bureaucracy but take time away from our ability to serve students; and it means providing every student with an equitable campus environment and an inclusive, anti-racist education.

What higher education issue do you think the Legislature should focus on in 2022 and why?

I'm not sure it would be possible to name just one issue, but the first thing that comes to my mind is financial aid. The Legislature and Governor took a big step forward with the 2021-22 budget, expanding access to the Cal Grant program for more than 100,000 previously ineligible community college students – and we appreciate it deeply. However, the Governor's veto of Assembly Bill 1456 – championed by Higher Education chair Asm. Jose Medina, among many others – was disheartening. Furthermore, it's not enough to just expand access to the Cal Grant program. The program itself is not nearly sufficient to meet our students' true costs.

We have known for some time that the actual cost students face when they attend college is so much more than just tuition. Textbooks, transportation, housing, food, and (for our students especially) additional family costs like child care

– these are the real barriers to our students succeeding. The official term for this is total cost of attendance (COA), but we prefer the term “the total cost of success.” What does it cost for every student to have a full opportunity to thrive in our state? It will take the Legislature and the Governor working with us to find a dedicated revenue source to ensure an adequate financial aid system. Let’s not just expand access to the Cal Grant – let’s make sure the program itself is worthy of our great State and our students.

If you could have dinner with one historical figure (dead or alive) who would it be and why?

This is the hardest question you have asked me, because I have a long list. At the top of the list is the late U.S. Senator John Lester Hubbard Chafee. Why? When I arrived at a four-year college, I knew nothing about financial aid or how to pay for college. I had no family and no one that could advise me. In fact, I had just been homeless after graduating from high school because I emancipated from the foster care system at the age of 17. I was so afraid of the stigma of being a foster youth, that I wanted to hide that part of me. I was ready to drop out because there weren’t enough loans I could take out when the financial aid officer said, “did you apply to the John H. Chafee Grant?” I didn’t know what it was or who John Chafee was, but I was relieved. Since that day, I always wondered who this Chafee man was. I would want to invite him to dinner to say thank you, and to learn about his strategies to bring people from all sides of the aisle together and in service of the most marginalized communities in our country.

An Interview with Chancellor Castro of the California State University

As we are approaching two years of COVID-19 impacting our daily lives, what are some of the positive lessons the California State University has learned during this pandemic that will benefit students?



The past 20 months have been perhaps the most challenging in our nation’s recent history – and certainly in the CSU’s 61-year history – not only due to the pandemic, but also to the many significant concurrent issues: economic uncertainty; acts of injustice, violence and hatred; challenges to our democratic institutions; and a nation deeply and bitterly divided.

However, I am extremely optimistic about our state’s and nation’s future and believe the CSU is positioned to serve as an inflection point, helping to lead a turn toward healing, reconciliation, recovery and prosperity. Lessons learned through the pandemic can guide the path forward.

First, the pandemic has reminded us to be flexible and bold. For example, in March 2020, we transitioned more than 80,000 courses to virtual modalities, becoming the nation’s largest online university in the span of approximately two weeks – and our faculty, staff and students continued to excel. If we can do *that*, there is no limit to how bold and innovative we can be on behalf of our students.

The pandemic also calls us to be even more technology focused. That means refining and expanding the great wealth of virtual instruction and support strategies that have proven so effective during the pandemic and using them to enrich the student learning and discovery experience moving forward. And it means helping our students bridge the digital divide. Through our CSUCCESS initiative launched this fall, for example, we’ve already distributed – free of charge – new, reliable mobile computing equipment to almost 25,000 students at participating campuses, and we will continue to expand the program until technology becomes a vital tool – and not a barrier – for *every* CSU student.

Finally, the pandemic implores us to be even more compassionate, inclusive and equitable. That includes doing everything we can to help our most vulnerable students meet the basic needs that are fundamental to their success, academically and personally, whether they face food or housing insecurity, mental or emotional health issues, financial need, or – as I noted earlier – the digital divide.

Congratulations on your appointment as the eighth chancellor to lead the CSU.

As the first person of color and first Californian to serve in this role, what unique perspectives and qualities will you bring in the coming years as Chancellor?

Thank you. Like all of us, I am shaped by my background. My great grandfather came to the United States from Mexico almost a century ago to help build California's railroad. Our family eventually settled in a small, agricultural town in the Central Valley. I was raised by my grandparents, who were farmworkers, and my single mother, who was a beautician. Each of them had the drive and intelligence to succeed in college, but never the opportunity. So they worked hard to make sure that I did.

I attended UC Berkeley as part of a program that provided educational opportunities to students from modest financial means. It was at Berkeley – as I began to see my own life transformed through my college experience – that I discovered my passion for educational leadership. And throughout my career, I've seen higher education transform the lives of so many talented and diverse students. Students who grew up in circumstances similar to my own.

This is why I am so humbled and inspired to now serve as the CSU's chancellor, with the opportunity to continue to positively impact lives at a scale only the CSU can provide as the nation's largest and most diverse four-year university. I consider it my life's highest professional honor and my greatest professional responsibility.

What is one unique aspect of the CSU that you are most proud of?

That's a difficult question; there are so many. But if I have to settle on one, it would be inclusive excellence, which is the bedrock of our educational mission. It is truly a badge of honor to serve students from such a diversity of backgrounds, providing them with an education of the highest quality – transforming lives, families and communities as we prepare California's future leaders. And it is why the CSU is recognized as one of the nation's leading drivers of social mobility.

What higher education issue do you think the Legislature should focus on in 2022, and why?

Another hard question. We certainly must continue to address students' basic needs and the total cost of attending college, as well as physical infrastructure challenges so that our campuses have the classrooms, labs and other facilities necessary to prepare students to meet the state's evolving workforce needs.

However, I think advancing equity is the calling of our time. Every student – from every background and economic circumstance – deserves an equitable opportunity to earn the lifelong and life-transforming benefits of a high-quality college degree. The past 20 months – with our most vulnerable communities suffering disparate negative impacts associated with the pandemic – have powerfully underscored the urgency to correct inequities.

As many of you know, Graduation Initiative 2025 is the CSU's flagship student success effort to help more students graduate on a timely basis, and we've made great progress. Graduation rates are at all-time highs for students from all backgrounds. But equity gaps – gaps in graduation rates between low-income students, students of color and first-generation students and their peers – remain. That's why one of my first acts as Chancellor was to form an advisory committee of expert stakeholders to develop recommendations for strategic solutions to completely and permanently eliminate equity gaps.

Based on those recommendations, I have developed a systemwide equity action plan and have asked CSU campus presidents to do the same, identifying actions we can take immediately to dramatically accelerate our progress toward closing equity gaps for good. Thanks in large part to the support of you and your colleagues, we have made remarkable progress in student success – there's never been a better time to be a Cal State student. And I hope our redoubled efforts to become a national model for educational equity will

In Case You Missed It

The Assembly Higher Education Committee hosted an oversight hearing on November 3 entitled: *The Impact of COVID-19 on Postsecondary Education in Year Two*. Documents from the hearing can be found [here](#) and you can watch the hearing [here](#).

The Budget Sub 2 Committee held an informational hearing on November 8 entitled: *California Student Housing: Solutions for Improving Capacity and Affordability*. Documents from the hearing can be found [here](#) and you can watch the hearing [here](#).

Higher Education Crash Course

The Assembly Higher Education Committee is offering a half-hour crash course on higher education issues to any staffer over the interim. Please email AHED.Committee@assembly.ca.gov.

Higher Education Research

Interim is a time for researching new bills and concepts. AHED staff are available to help with research. In addition to the AHED website and staff, the AHED wishes to highlight research institutions we think will help as you investigate higher education bills:

- [PPIC Higher Education Center](#)
- [Legislative Analyst Office - Education Publications](#)
- [The Institute for College Access and Success](#)
- [Jobs for the Future](#)
- [UC Davis Wheelhouse](#)
- [California Education Lab](#)
- [Center for Studies in Higher Education](#)
- [Higher Education Research Institute](#)
- [US Government Accountability Office](#)

inspire even greater support.

If you could read only one book for the rest of your life, what would it be and why?

I have so many favorites. But if I were to pick just one, I would choose “On Leadership” by Dr. John Gardner. Dr. Gardner was a wonderful mentor of mine who I met when I was completing my doctoral work at Stanford. His perspectives on leadership are both expansive and enlightening. As the Secretary of Health, Education and Welfare during the Johnson Administration, Dr. Gardner is one of the few people in our nation’s history with such distinguished leadership in the public, private and non-profit sectors. I read this book several times each year because of the helpful insights it provides about leading complex organizations.



An Interview with President Michael Drake of the University of California

As we are approaching two years of COVID-19 impacting our daily lives, what are some of the positive lessons the University of California has learned during this pandemic that will benefit students?

First and foremost, we learned the power of creating adaptable learning environments. We were able to do this thanks to the remarkable resilience of our faculty and our students. In a way, we were all forced into undergoing a large scale, real-time social experiment. We also learned how dedicated our entire community is to keeping each other safe. Students in particular have made great sacrifices and gone to great lengths to keep the community healthy. They really showed their strength. There are lessons here for all of us about what this generation is capable of in terms of weathering difficulties and finding ways to keep moving toward their goals.

What will ultimately serve UC is our greater understanding of how to effectively use digital tools to augment in-person instruction and expand overall access to courses. These innovations have many benefits. They have the potential to provide greater flexibility for students and faculty alike – in terms of how and where students learn, how faculty structure their curriculum, and more. We may also be able to accelerate time-to-degree by enabling more students to access classes they need to graduate. This serves current students but also makes more room for future UC students. There are pedagogical enhancements as well: we’re looking to expand technological tools and teaching methods that emphasize active learning rather than exclusively lecture-based formats. Finally, these technologies make it easier for students to access advising resources through, for example, online office hours.



The experiences of the past year also emphasized something we already knew: the ability to learn and engage in person on UC campuses is irreplaceable. There are countless benefits to students of being part of a community, of interacting with people from different cultures and backgrounds, and of learning how to participate in a vibrant, healthy exchange of ideas.

Prior to becoming the President of the University of California, you were the President of The Ohio State University. What are some lessons or best practices you learned in Ohio that you are hoping to replicate at UC?

I’ve been focused on inclusive excellence throughout my career, and especially during my time at The Ohio State University and now at UC. I was proud that, in Columbus, we saw record numbers of applications and all-time highs in the diversity of incoming classes five years in a row. That’s true at the University of California, too – at a time when many universities are facing declining enrollment, we are seeing historic increases in applications. For the fall of 2021, for example, we received nearly 250,000 applications for freshman and transfer admission – this was the largest and most diverse applicant pool in our history. Our admitted class broke our own records – an all-time high 43 percent of our California freshmen are from underrepresented groups, and we admitted our largest-ever class of California Community

College transfer students. I'm also grateful that we were able to get a Tuition Stability Plan in place this year to expand financial aid and predictability for our future students and their families.

Clarity about my own values helped drive these impacts at The Ohio State University, and I hope to replicate that clarity here. We need to stay focused on growing and strengthening diversity, equity, and inclusion in a steady, sustained way. We often focus on student diversity because we have the most levers there, but we also need to be intentional about faculty and staff diversity. We need to take ourselves out of the comfort zone to move forward. If we stay comfortable all the time, we'll continue to reflect the present and past circumstances of our communities. Inclusive excellence means stretching and getting out of our comfort zone to find new ways to be excellent at all times, whether it's a tough budgetary year or a better one for California.

What is something the general public doesn't know about UC that you wish they did?

The general public should take tremendous pride – and ownership – in all that makes the University of California the wonder that it is. Whether it's the 70 UC faculty and staff – two so far this year – who have been awarded 71 Nobel prizes in our history; or the fact that UC consistently ranks among the best public universities in the nation and world; whether it's our hospitals that provide excellent patient care and lead the way in medical research that helps our communities get healthier and weather crises like the pandemic; the marvelous work of our research scientists that leads to new breakthroughs and companies and more jobs across the country; or the talent and resilience of our students – 40 percent of whom are the first in their families to go to college. There is so much to be proud of. But it's in part thanks to the support of the general public that all of this is possible.

What higher education issue do you think the Legislature should focus on in 2022 and why?

As I mentioned, there is a historic demand for a UC education, and we share a desire to increase access to UC with the Legislature. We have set out to organically grow UC by 20,000 more students by 2030 to help expand access and meet this demand. Sustainable growth will only happen with the requisite resources to grow, to diversify our faculty, and to provide the support services students need to succeed. We want to continue to work with our partners in the Legislature to make this happen sustainably and in a way that serves our students, faculty, and staff. Ultimately, growing access to UC serves the state in ways that go beyond the immediate, obvious ones – by setting California up for a more diverse workforce across professions, by growing social mobility, and by delivering research solutions to help our state respond to our biggest challenges, including climate change.

What do you consider the greatest sports moment in history?

I have several favorites. One is related to a great play, a catch made by Willie Mays during Game 1 of the 1954 World Series. I had the opportunity to visit with him a few years ago and I was looking at an autobiography he had written. I got to a picture of "The Catch," and I asked him how he felt after making that play. His answer wasn't about a victorious moment of personal heroism, but rather about strategy, what was best for his team, how he could help propel the Giants to victory. After the game was over, he was focused on coming out again the next day prepared to win another one. That is something I love about sports. Lessons of character and leadership learned on the field stand us all in good stead in life.



The Higher Education Committee thanks you for reading our final issue of the newsletter for 2021. If you have any suggestions for topics you would like to see in next year's newsletter, please do not hesitate to contact us at AHED.Committee@assembly.ca.gov.

Higher Education CrossWord Puzzle

We thought since the legislative year is over, we would provide you a bit of fun albeit educational. On the next page you will find a crossword puzzle with questions pertaining to higher education. Be one of the first three staffers to submit a correctly completed crossword to the AHED.Committee@assembly.ca.gov and you will win a Starbucks Gift Card.

Across

1. Of the ten UC campuses, which is the newest? (One word)
7. How many National Laboratories are associated with the University of California? (One word)
10. Which California Community College program was created in 2016 to promote career technical education for the purpose of creating a skilled workforce for regional workforce needs? (Two words)
12. The mascot for UC Santa Barbara. (One word)
14. What university system was created in 1855 and was known as the College of California? (Three words)
15. Who was the University of California's first president? (Two words)
16. The first UC campus was located in this city. (Two words)
17. The California State University began as the Minns Evening Normal School which trained this type of city employee. (One word)
18. As of 2020, UC faculty and researchers have received 69 _____ prizes, which have been awarded to individuals for their contributions to society. (One word)
19. Where are the California State University headquarters located? (Two words)

Down

1. What college campus is the newest to be added to the California Community College System. (Three words)
2. Which California State University campus is the only academy of its kind in the western United States? (One word)
3. In 2018-19, the California Community College issued 6,403 of this type of medical certification and/or degree? (One word)
4. Which famous filmmaker is an alumnus of Modesto Junior College? (Two words)
5. Half of the undergraduates at the California State University receive this type of federal grant? (Two words)
6. What community college is considered the first California Community College? (Three words)
8. The California State University, currently has three polytechnic universities, one is located in San Luis Obispo and one is located in Humboldt County, but where is the other located? (One word)
9. Which U.S. President is the UCLA Medical Center named after? (Two words)
11. Who was first women to be named President of the University of California? (Two words)
13. This famous California State University alumni graduated from CSU Northridge in 2001 and started in the hit television series, The Walking Dead. (Two words)

