



# CALIFORNIA COMMUNITY COLLEGES

## CHANCELLOR'S OFFICE

### PRESS RELEASE

August 30, 2016

Paige Marlatt Dorr  
Office: 916.327.5356  
Cell: 916.601.8005  
Office E-mail: [pdorr@cccco.edu](mailto:pdorr@cccco.edu)

### Higher Education Leaders Mobilize to Expand Tuition-Free Community College in California

*OAKLAND, Calif.* – Hundreds of community college representatives from around the state are in Oakland today to share effective models for strengthening and expanding the California College Promise, a bold effort to offer two years of tuition-free community college to hard-working students.

The day-long event — which features remarks from Lt. Gov. Gavin Newsom, incoming California Community Colleges Chancellor Eloy Ortiz Oakley and national College Promise Campaign Executive Director Martha Kanter — highlights College Promise programs already in place and offers ideas to college leaders looking to start their own programs. College Promise programs are community-based partnerships that address the problem of college affordability by offering higher education funding for students.

“California is on-track to produce 1.1 million fewer college graduates than our economy demands in 2030. There is an imminent need for a workforce with an appropriate level of advanced education. California’s Community Colleges are a critical point of access to higher education, and one of our most effective tools for upward mobility,” Newsom said. “Moreover, robust cradle-to-career initiatives like the Promise Programs in Oakland and Long Beach reveal the power of communities rallying to lift up their young people. We must double down on these efforts and launch a statewide California Promise, allowing all of our state’s regions to rise together.”

Over the last 15 years, there has been a steady rise in the number of College Promise programs across the United States. The trend gained momentum in 2015, when President Barack Obama announced the America’s College Promise proposal during his State of the Union address. That same year, the College Promise Campaign, a national non-partisan, non-profit organization, was established to develop a network of support for College Promise efforts.

“The jobs of today and tomorrow require college educated workers, and community colleges are in the best position to help remedy the skills gap that exists in California’s economy and attack income inequality,” said Oakley, who takes over as statewide chancellor in December. “These innovative partnerships lower the cost of college and help students, many of whom are the first in their families to attend college, earn a certificate or degree and find good paying jobs.”

As president of Long Beach City College, Oakley helped form the nationally recognized Long Beach College Promise (College Promise) in a partnership with the Long Beach Unified School District (LBUSD) and California State University, Long Beach (CSULB). Through the College Promise, students are guaranteed a tuition-free year at LBCC and preferred admission status to CSULB after completing the minimum transfer requirements.

-More-

California is a leader in the development and implementation of these programs with 23 programs in place as of August 2016. The state is primed to develop more College Promise programs because community colleges can leverage the program's financial and partnership supports with the existing California Board of Governors Fee Waiver Program, which pays enrollment fees for low-income students. Promise programs bring together partners from K–12 schools, universities, college foundations and the private sector to increase college access to California's students.

Key goals of the conference for faculty, staff, administrators and trustees in attendance include:

- Gaining an understanding of the national and state-wide College Promise movement.
- Learning how to design, implement, and improve program elements such as financing, student support services, community partnerships, measurement and community outreach.
- Connecting with and build a community of College Promise colleagues across the state.

"The California Community Colleges is the largest higher education system in the nation, and to see the interest and excitement about creating College Promise programs is wonderful," said California College Promise Chair Helen Benjamin, chancellor of the Contra Costa Community College District. "For more than 30 years, California, with its Board of Governors Fee Waiver program, has offered free tuition for qualified students unable to afford it. By raising funds and providing financial help for other college costs associated, we are removing a major barrier for potential students to obtain the education they need to qualify for good paying jobs or transfer to a four-year university."

The Regional Educational Laboratory West at WestEd gathered background and program details on all 23 California College Promise programs and compiled the information in a booklet for the event participants. It can be found at <https://relwest.wested.org/resources/221>

Teaming up to sponsor the event are the California Community College Chancellor's Office, the Community College League of California, the College Promise Campaign, the California College Promise Campaign Leadership Team and the Regional Educational Laboratory West at WestEd. For more information, visit: [calcollegepromise.org](http://calcollegepromise.org)

*The California Community Colleges is the largest system of higher education in the nation composed of 72 districts and 113 colleges serving 2.1 million students per year. Community colleges supply workforce training, basic skills education in English and math, and prepare students for transfer to four-year institutions. The Chancellor's Office provides leadership, advocacy and support under the direction of the Board of Governors of the California Community Colleges. For more information about the community colleges, please visit <http://californiacommunitycolleges.cccco.edu/>, <https://www.facebook.com/CACommColleges>, or <https://twitter.com/CalCommColleges>.*

###