



PRESS RELEASE
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California Community Colleges Seeks Reforms Resulting in Expanded Access to the Cal Grant Program for Its Students

Chula Vista, Calif. -- The California Community Colleges Board of Governors agreed on Monday to seek major changes in the Cal Grant awards program to reduce inequities that limit the number of community college students eligible for grants.

The proposed reforms, included in the [California Community Colleges 2019-20 Budget and Legislative Request](#), would alter rules to California's largest source of state-funded student financial aid. The request approved by the Board of Governors, meeting at Southwestern College in San Diego County, now goes to the Department of Finance and the next governor for consideration for the 2019-20 budget.

The existing Cal Grant standards favor traditional-aged students who meet academic and need thresholds, excluding a significant percentage of community college students who are non-traditional or returning students. More than 4 in 10 California community college students are 25 years old or older, and more than 2 in 10 are 35 or older.

Just 9 percent of the 2.1 million California community college students received a Cal Grant in 2017-18, compared to nearly 40 percent of undergraduate students at the University of California and approximately 36 percent of students at the California State University system.

"Expanding financial aid for California community college students is critical if we are to achieve the goals outlined in our [Vision for Success](#)," said Board of Governors President Tom Epstein, referring to a set of systemwide goals to improve student success. "Studies show additional financial aid improves the likelihood of students staying in school and achieving their educational goals."

The 2019-20 Budget and Legislative Request includes Cal Grant eligibility reforms that would:

- Link awards to the total cost of attendance, rather than tuition.
- Entitle students to Cal Grant awards based on their financial need, rather than how old they are, how recently they graduated from high school, or what their grade point average was.
- Extend the Cal Grant program to all certificate and degree programs offered at community colleges, regardless of whether the programs are oriented toward those transferring to four-year colleges or universities.

During the 2017-18 legislative session, the Legislative Analyst's Office, the Washington, D.C.-based Century Foundation and the nonprofit Institute for College Access and Success all recommended infusing additional resources into the Cal Grant program directed specifically toward community college students.

Instituting the changes would require an additional \$1.5 billion for support of the Cal Grant program.

The 2019-20 Budget and Legislative Request comes on the heels of a new [Student Centered Funding Formula](#) that also is designed to help achieve the goals of the Vision for Success. The budget request approved by the Board of Governors asked for a 5 percent increase in funding, or \$345 million, for the Student Centered Funding Formula.

Other requests include an additional \$15 million for a pilot program to improve faculty diversity, an additional \$25 million for college-wide professional development and an additional \$50 million to further support faculty.

The California Community Colleges is the largest system of higher education in the nation, composed of 73 districts and 115 colleges serving 2.1 million students per year. California community colleges provide career education and workforce training; guaranteed transfer to four-year universities; degree and certificate pathways; and basic skills education in English and math. As the state's engine for social and economic mobility, the California Community Colleges supports the [Vision for Success](#), a strategic plan designed to improve student success outcomes, increase transfer rates and eliminate achievement gaps. For more information, please visit the [California Community Colleges website](#) or follow us on [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#).

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