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Despite Promise to Spare Higher Education, Governor Proposes Cal Grant Cuts

“For the third year in a row, Governor Schwarzenegger has proposed cutting a key component of the Cal Grant program. This is a cut that students and our state cannot afford. Just two days ago the governor said in his ‘State of the State’ speech, ‘We can no longer afford to cut higher education.’ Yet he now proposes to cut a critical source of higher education funding for high achieving, low-income students already struggling to keep college within reach.

“The Governor would suspend all new competitive Cal Grants, which go to students who apply after the March 2 deadline, and/or graduated from high school more than a year before applying for a grant. There are already a limited number of these grants available, and demand for them jumped 42 percent in 2009-10, when 245,400 qualified applicants vied for just 22,500 competitive Cal Grants.

“The Governor’s budget wrongly asserts that competitive Cal Grants are ‘duplicative’ of other Cal Grants. In fact, these grants serve a unique population of students whose academic success is critical to the state. Those hurt by the cut are much more likely to attend community colleges than other Cal Grant recipients, and the proposed cut would likely reduce the number of community college students receiving new Cal Grants by half. These are the only Cal Grants available for students more than a year out of high school, and without age restrictions. Previous analyses have shown that competitive Cal Grant recipients have lower incomes and higher grades than other Cal Grant recipients. We urge students and the state legislature to resist this short-sighted cut.

“We appreciate that this proposal spared higher education many of the deeper cuts proposed and enacted in previous years, and hope that the Governor and legislature consider every option, including raising revenue, to ensure college is affordable for all Californians.”

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