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New Report Finds Success Increases with More Financial Aid for Lowest Income California Community College Students *Report recommends federal, state, and college policies to improve student outcomes*

WASHINGTON, DC — February 15, 2017 — The Association of Community College Trustees (ACCT) in partnership with The Institute for College Access & Success (TICAS) and in collaboration with the California Community Colleges' Chancellors Office (CCCCO) today issued a new report that takes a unique look at federal and state financial aid, academic preparation, and college transfer and completion for students across California's 113 community colleges.

[Aiding Success: The Role of Federal and State Financial Aid in Supporting California Community College Students](#) documents the variation in student graduation and transfer rates by students' financial situation. Key findings include:

- **Low-income students face challenges to college completion.** Only 30 percent of students with an expected family contribution (EFC) of zero – meaning they had no ability to pay for college - graduated or transferred to a four-year university within six years.
- **Student success increases with more financial aid.** Nearly half (49 percent) of students with a zero EFC who received more than \$7,500 in financial aid graduated or transferred, compared to 17 percent of those who received between \$1,001 and \$2,500.
- **Federal, state, and institutional aid work together to support low-income students.** Students who received a combination of federal, state, and institutional grants/waivers had the highest rates of success.
- **College placement policies may thwart low-income student success.** Three-quarters of students tracked had taken developmental coursework, including students who met academic standards for state Cal Grants. Research has shown that assessment or placement tests may assign students to developmental coursework unnecessarily, and that such remediation can delay and even thwart student success. Notably, among students who received a Cal Grant aid package, those placed into developmental coursework were 58 percent less likely to have graduated than those who were not.

California's community colleges charge the lowest fees in the nation, at just \$46 per credit, and most students have their fees waived. However, the remaining costs of college, including textbooks, transportation, and living costs, can exceed \$18,000 per year. Especially for families with few or no family resources these non-tuition costs are difficult to cover, and can undermine student success.

“Our research shows that state and federal grant aid is vital to the academic persistence and success of many community college students,” said **J. Noah Brown**, president and CEO of ACCT. “When even students in the lowest-tuition state struggle to cover all the costs of being in college, it’s clear that community college students across the country are facing very real financial barriers.”

The authors of *Aiding Success* analyzed detailed financial aid and student success data from the CCCCCO system that underlie the Student Success Scorecard, an online consumer information tool. The data tracks 184,705 first-time students from the 2009-10 school year through 2014-15.

“This report underscores the critical role that financial aid plays in supporting low-income students’ success,” said **Lauren Asher**, president of TICAS. “Students without money to buy books will have a hard time passing their courses, and those struggling to eat or keep a roof over their head won’t be able to focus on school.”

The report includes federal, state, and college-level policy recommendations to better support community college students’ abilities to persist and complete degrees or certificates, or to transfer to four-year institutions.

Federal Recommendations

- Prioritize funding for low-income students, especially Pell Grants.
- Encourage state investment in institutions and students.
- Simplify the federal aid application process.
- Collect, secure, and analyze student, institutional, and state-level data.

State Recommendations

- Offer robust need-based grant programs.
- Strengthen state requirements around developmental education placement.
- Support community colleges in establishing clear and coherent pathways to college completion.

Institutional Recommendations

- Support students in covering costs beyond tuition and fees.
- Encourage students to apply for federal and state aid.
- Encourage states to take another class.
- Carefully assess students’ levels of preparedness via multiple measures.

“California continues to have some of the highest quality and most affordable public colleges and universities in the nation,” said California Community Colleges Chancellor **Eloy Ortiz Oakley**. Nonetheless, Our colleges must do all we can to support students financially and academically, and we must work with state and federal partners to repackage financial aid in a way that makes it less complex and leads to more students attending college full time and completing credentials.”

“Colleges throughout the country should take these findings and recommendations into consideration,” Brown said. “Financial support of public higher education is more important now than ever before.”

To download the report, go to www.acct.org and www.ticas.org.

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About ACCT

The Association of Community College Trustees (ACCT) is a non-profit educational organization of governing boards, representing more than 6,500 elected and appointed trustees who govern over 1,200 community, technical, and junior colleges in the United States and beyond. For more information, go to www.acct.org. Follow ACCT on Twitter @CCTrustees.

About TICAS

An independent, nonprofit organization, The Institute for College Access & Success (TICAS) works to make higher education more available and affordable for people of all backgrounds. TICAS' Project on Student Debt works to increase public understanding of rising student debt and the implications for our families, economy, and society. For more information, go to www.ticas.org. Follow TICAS on Twitter @TICAS_org.

About CCCCCO

The California Community Colleges Board of Governors and the chancellor share a vision of a better future for Californians by exemplifying exceptional leadership, advocacy and support on behalf of the community colleges. Their guidance provides access to lifelong learning for all citizens and creates a skilled, progressive workforce to advance the state's interests.