

AB 1721 (Medina)

The California College Promise: Expanding the Cal Grant Program

(Updated – March 2, 2016)

Background

Prior to 1984, enrollment at a California community college was tuition free. In response to the recession in the early 1980s, the California Legislature introduced an enrollment fee for community colleges. In order to ensure affordability and accessibility for all Californians seeking higher education, lawmakers enacted the Board of Governors (BOG) Fee Waiver in 1985. Over the past three decades, the BOG Fee Waiver has helped more than 5.1 million students by exempting them from fees at a California community college.

Problem

Through experience, California has learned that tuition is only a small part of a student's total cost of attendance. A conversation about affordability must include financial aid for students to cover cost of living, books, food, and other critical expenses.

Both community colleges and the state have a role in delivering the California College Promise. The state can, and should, do its part by reforming Cal Grants to better serve community college students.

Once the total cost of attendance and all available financial aid is taken into account, it is often more expensive for a financially needy student to attend a community college than a UC or CSU campus.

Community college students are more likely to be socio-economically disadvantaged, undocumented, retraining adults, or the first in their family to attend college.

Despite comprising about two-thirds of the undergraduate higher education population in California, community college students receive

only six percent of the resources distributed by Cal Grants.

Solution

AB 1721 expands on already-existing frameworks and awards to expand financial support for students that will go towards the costs beyond tuition that generally compromise the bulk of college costs. Specifically, AB 1721:

Increases the number of competitive Cal Grants – currently there are roughly 300,000 qualified applicants for only 25,750 awards. It is significantly easier to gain admission to UC Berkeley or UCLA than to receive a competitive Cal Grant. AB 1721 would raise the number of competitive Cal-Grants to 30,000.

Increases the Cal Grant B Access award. Currently set at \$1,656, this grant would be more than \$6,000 today if it had kept pace with inflation. AB 1721 would raise the Cal Grant B Access award to \$3,000.

Ensures Cal Grants serve non-traditionally aged students. More than 30% of community college students are over the age of 28 and many take longer to graduate than their peers at four-year institutions due to financial need. AB 1721 would raise the age of eligibility to 31.

Support

California Community College League (Co-Sponsor)
California Community College Chancellor's Office (Co-Sponsor)

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