



## Investing in Success: An Equity Imperative

California Community Colleges (CCC) serve approximately 2.1 million students, representing nearly 20% of the nation’s community college population. The 114 colleges serve a diverse student body with multiple missions including university transfer, career technical education, and basic skills. These open access institutions promise an affordable path for students to reach their college and career goals. However, too many students fail to cross the finish line with a **majority (52%) of degree-seeking students unable to complete** a certificate, degree or transfer to a university after six years of entering these two-year institutions. Completion rates are even more alarming for students of color with **six out of ten African Americans and Latinx failing to complete and most low-income students not reaching their college goals<sup>1</sup>**.

The current community college state funding formula, which relies on a census upon the third week of enrollment, encourages community colleges to enroll more students, but fails to ensure that these same institutions prioritize student success, improve outcomes, or close equity gaps faced by Latinx; African American; Asian American, Native Hawaiian, and Pacific Islander; and low-income students. Without better strategic investment in critical student supports, large racial/ethnic gaps will continue, poor completion rates will persist, and California’s future well-being will remain in peril as the aspirations of millions of community college students go unfulfilled.

Fortunately, a new era of leadership recognizes the need to push back against the status quo and act urgently to improve student success – particularly for our most vulnerable populations. In the California Community College’s *Vision for Success*, the Community College Chancellor’s Office acknowledges that there is more to be done to ensure community college students can achieve their educational goals and it sets forth ambitious goals that serve as a framework for funding formula revision. The Governor’s January budget funding formula proposal seeks to incorporate the tenets of *Vision for Success* in community college district budgeting and planning, as well as in how the Chancellor’s Office can support districts’ efforts to set and realize their own specific goals to improve student outcomes. **Aligning resources for the California Community Colleges with the *Vision for Success* – at the system, district, and college level – is a necessary step towards ensuring that the vision comes to fruition.**

## Supporting Equity in a Student Success Funding Formula

Recognizing the unique opportunity before us to inform a community college funding formula that prioritizes both college access and student success, **the Campaign for College Opportunity hosted a strategic set of regional conversations to ensure social justice and civil rights partners had a seat at the table to inform the proposal.** These meetings took place at the end of March 2018 in Oakland, Sacramento and Los Angeles and brought together a broad range of key civil rights and education leaders from the following organizations: the Education Trust-West; the Mexican American Legal Defense & Educational Fund (MALDEF); Advancement Project; Asian Americans Advancing Justice; California Community College Extended Opportunity Programs & Services Association; California Competes;

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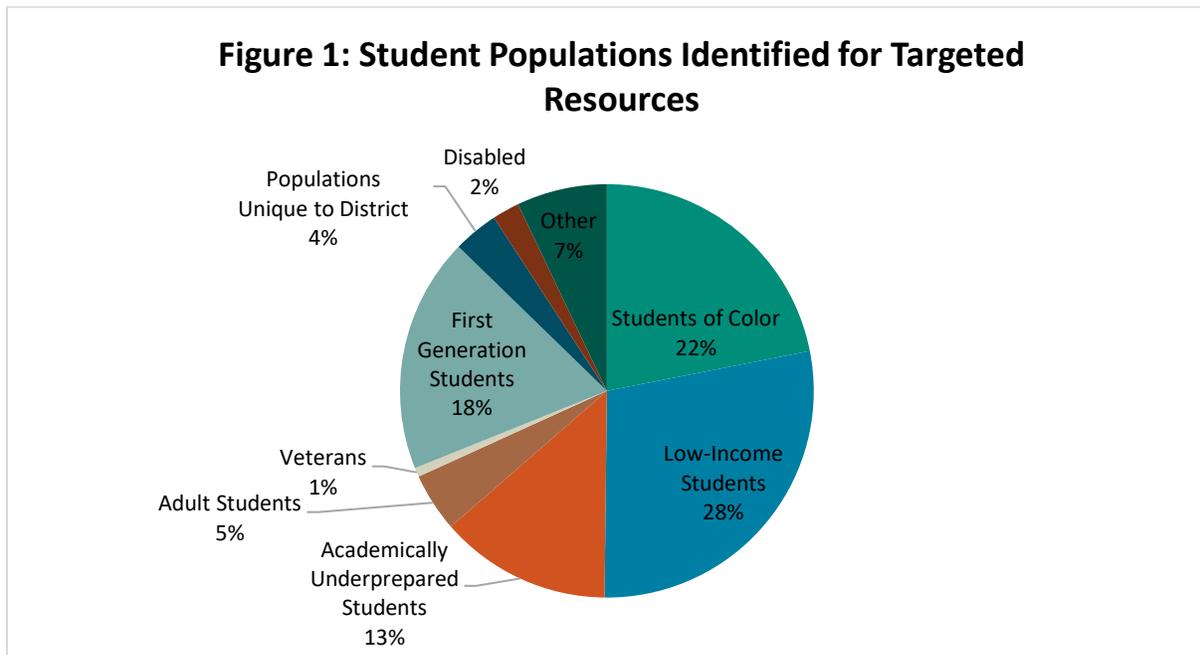
<sup>1</sup> [California Community College Chancellor’s Office DataMart](#)

Greater Sacramento Urban League; the Greater Los Angeles Area Chamber of Commerce; Southeast Asia Resource Action Center; UnidosUS; and USC Center for Urban Education. To note, our convenings also included community college student voices with representation from the California Community College Board of Governor’s; statewide and regional leadership from the Student Senate of the California Community Colleges (SSCCC); and Students Making a Change (SMAC). A total of 31 prominent social justice and civil rights organizations were represented across these three convenings.

### Emerging Themes from Regional Conversations

#### *Ensuring the Needs of Vulnerable Populations*

Research tells us that well-designed funding models can account for inputs such as student demographics and academic preparation, providing a premium weight or extra funding for institutions to be successful with at-risk, low-income, adult students or students of color. Participants were asked to identify student populations that they felt an equity-minded funding formula should prioritize and overwhelmingly identified students of color and low-income students as top priorities for informing any funding formula (Figure 1). **Participants felt there was a need to be explicit about addressing race and ethnicity if we seek intentional policy means to advance equity.** Within the California context, many participants identified prioritizing undocumented students, homeless/foster youth, first-generation students, and students that had attended the highest poverty schools, as defined by the K-12 Local Control Funding Formula (LCFF).



#### *Key Progression Metrics & Milestones*

Incorporating student success measures into how colleges are funded can change institutional behavior in ways that benefit all students, especially the most vulnerable populations who may require higher levels of academic, financial, or other support. The adoption of the CCC’s *Vision for Success* last year presents the first real opportunity to align district master plans and budgets with system goals. There was broad agreement on the need to include general outcome measures for students obtaining degrees/certificates or

satisfying transfer requirements to incentivize greater completion rates, as well as discussion on which student-level academic milestones would be most helpful in funding to reach the goals set forth in *Vision for Success*. Emergent themes in this discussion included consideration of the following: that a formula should consider growth at a college level so that colleges are recognized for improvements made toward goals; credit accumulation toward a student's *intended* educational goal; intentionality in closing racial and ethnic gaps and recognizing districts that are advancing on these key metrics; and one-year completion of gateway/transfer-level courses.

### *Ensuring Equitable Implementation*

Recognizing that the opportunity created by the Governor's proposal represents a drastic departure from the status quo and implementing such a sea change requires careful, strategic, focused efforts, participants were asked how a formula could ensure implementation that is fair, equity-driven, and allows institutions sufficient time to adjust. A predominant theme across meetings and partners was the opportunity to learn from the experience of the K-12 LCFF to inform implementation. To that end, common themes included concerns over a long implementation period; participants felt one to three years was appropriate and seven years was too long. Additionally, providing technical assistance and capacity building to colleges falling short of self-identified goals in their educational master plans; recognition of the extensive work towards LCFF implementation by providing the conditions to encourage K-12 and community college collaboration; and formalizing the engagement of student and external stakeholders in the planning and budget process were seen as critical.

Lastly, participants felt strongly that accountability and greater local stakeholder engagement was paramount to a successful change to the formula, including an understanding of how individual colleges will be held accountable to goals; what the system of providing support and technical assistance to colleges will look like; ensuring transparency around college budgeting and planning; and a commitment to using data to inform decision-making, making it transparent, and disaggregating all reported data.

### **Recommendations**

- 1. Include metrics that explicitly call out race and equity as a means for closing racial/ethnic gaps.**
- 2. Ensure that a funding formula provides for key momentum and progression milestones including** but not limited to, completion of transfer-level courses within one-year, credit accumulation aligned with a student's education plan, and completion of the Associate Degree for Transfer (ADT) pathway.
- 3. Allow colleges to bench mark against themselves**, establishing a baseline using a college's current year data to prior year data, with college's earning points by improving on their own performance.
- 4. Establish a statewide implementation advisory group**, including representation from students, equity stakeholders, and K-12 leaders, to ensure accountability by monitoring implementation, offering recommendations for adjustments to the formula, and identifying the means through which the CCC Chancellor's Office provides technical assistance to colleges when they are not meeting goals identified in their district's educational master plan.