

April 22, 2020

## **RE: Student Recommendations for Protecting College Opportunity Amid the COVID-19 Pandemic**

Dear University of California, California State University, and California Community College Leadership:

The California Students Higher Education Advocacy Round Table (HEART) is a coalition of student-led organizations, associations and partners from across California dedicated to cultivating and empowering the next generation of student leaders by providing an ongoing venue for community college and university students to have statewide conversations and collaborate on key priorities in public higher education.

The California Students HEART coalition recognizes the extraordinary circumstances that our campus and system leaders face, as you work swiftly to keep students, faculty and staff safe. We appreciate the bold leadership many campus and system leaders have shown by providing resources such as emergency basic needs grants, extending credit/no credit deadlines and offering paid leave to student workers, but access to these resources are inconsistent across campuses. Our student leaders and advocates have convened to discuss student concerns, campus response and system responses by the CCC, UC and CSU (or lack thereof) to student needs amid the COVID-19 outbreak. As you weigh in on emerging policy changes during this difficult time, our coalition of student leaders has outlined the following recommendations for your urgent consideration:

### Learning

- Extend the 'credit/no credit' deadline for all students currently enrolled in classes and provide leniency in academic performance assessment. Students such as veteran students, international students and student athletes require letter grades, so credit/no credit must be optional.
- Provide support for students with disabilities transitioning to distance learning.
- Provide emergency technology grants or loans to low income students who lack equipment and broadband access for distance learning at home.

### Basic Needs

- Maintain all essential on-campus services open such as on-campus housing, cafeterias and food pantries for students who are unable to return home.
- Waive all fees for students who must break on-campus leases early and support/provide aid to all students who are breaking off-campus student leases.
- Work with local City officials to ensure students who are unable to pay rent will be provided a minimum 6-month payback period to pay missed rent.
- Invest in emergency grant aid and coordinate with social service providers to address basic needs such as food, transportation, housing, and health care.
- Ensure students are aware of and continue to access benefits available through Cal Fresh and Cal Works.

### Admissions/Graduation

- Include students from the Class of 2020 in decision making processes around the cancellation or rescheduling of major events such as commencement.
- Consider relaxing transfer requirements and graduation requirements for transferring students and graduating college seniors.
- Extend the Statement of Intent to Register deadline for all California State University (CSU) and University of California (UC) campuses to June 1st, so students have more time and support to make informed decisions amidst this global pandemic.

#### Student Workers

- Provide paid student leave to all student workers until students can safely return to work.
- Assist and guide students applying for unemployment.

#### Undocumented Students

- Provide undocumented students with detailed updates regarding their eligibility for state aid, campus aid and provide regularly updated lists of resources.

#### Other

- Ensure students can still receive on-campus health benefits off campus.
- Issue a moratorium on all campus parking tickets to allow students to utilize campus parking to access WiFi.
- Transition essential student services like personal counseling and academic advising online.
- Refund fees to students when appropriate and available.

The California Students HEART Coalition will be hosting monthly meetings on the second Friday of the month from now until June to continually assess student needs and our advocacy strategy during the COVID-19 pandemic. Our next meeting will be held on Friday, May 8<sup>th</sup> at 3:00 pm via Zoom. We'll also be hosting a digital briefing to discuss the recommendations outlined in this letter on with media on Wednesday, April 22<sup>nd</sup> with students from the University of California, California State University and California Community College systems. Our coalition invites you to join and learn from these conversations with student leaders with the goal of taking action.

We ask that you continue to communicate frequently with students and families to keep them informed of the rapidly evolving changes to instruction and services, while maintaining a space for collecting feedback on their experiences and ongoing challenges. As we all prepare to endure this pandemic, student leaders will be looking to you to provide support, clarity and guidance as we navigate this difficult time. We are counting on your leadership.

In Solidarity,

California Students Higher Education Advocacy Round Table (HEART) Coalition

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