

## 100+ CALIFORNIA LEADERS URGE ADOPTION OF THE CAL GRANT EQUITY FRAMEWORK

### An Open Letter to Governor Gavin Newsom and the California State Legislature to Fix Financial Aid

As California education, student, civil rights and business leaders, we come together with a unified voice to support the most promising higher education equity and pandemic recovery proposal of the year: the Cal Grant Equity Framework which would expand financial aid to over 150,000 talented new students.

The Cal Grant Equity Framework would simplify the current Cal Grant program, remove antiquated barriers that keep eligible low-income students from accessing aid, and provide aid to students that covers more than just tuition, putting them on a truly debt free college pathway.

We know that a college education is an economic imperative critical to California's ability to remain a global leader. Yet college opportunity remains out of reach for too many deserving students that are low-income and most often, Black, Latinx, and Native American. While the COVID-19 pandemic revealed many of the barriers to higher education for these students, none figure as prominently as college affordability.

Across the state, students are putting their college dreams on hold or withdrawing from college completely, to work and support their families after deep financial strains resulting from the pandemic. Without understanding what financial aid could be available to them, instituting a simplified financial aid system, and committing to aid that goes beyond tuition, we simply won't be able to recover or equitably support students in accessing and completing higher education. The result? Our workforce and our California communities will suffer. This loss of students threatens the dream of this generation achieving greater prosperity than the ones before it; a fate none of us wish to see.

Under the Cal Grant Equity Framework, over 150,000 new students would receive financial aid and that includes 95,000 Latinx, 18,000 Asian and Pacific Islander, 11,000 Black, 92,000 women, and 3,000 California Dream Act students. There would be significant increases in the number of students at private non-profit institutions, colleges and universities qualifying for Cal Grant. Those institutions will help meet demand for a college education. California would also see an increase in the number of adult students receiving Cal Grant, supporting these individuals in achieving a college education to reenter the workforce with new skills. These are the real numbers and real lives that the Cal Grant Equity Framework will transform and in turn, reboot the California economy.

The Cal Grant Equity Framework is the best lever we have to tackle college affordability and the reenrollment of our Latinx, Black, Asian and Pacific Islander, and Native American low-income students now! It is the best investment we can make in our state given the high returns a college degree continues to hold; for every one dollar the state invests in higher education, it yields \$4.50 in return.

As champions of equity, students, and the great state of California, we urge the Governor and Legislature to propel us into a recovery with equity that starts with investing in the Cal Grant Equity Framework today.

Sincerely,  
*(Names Listed Alphabetically by Last Name)*

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