



A Leadership Transition Cultivated in Partnership and Rooted in Equity

A MESSAGE FROM THE CAMPAIGN FOR COLLEGE OPPORTUNITY BOARD OF DIRECTORS

by Dr. Edward Bush, Dr. Estela Bensimon, and Thomas A. Saenz

The Campaign for College Opportunity celebrates its 20th anniversary this year, and this March, we commemorate Women's History Month. As the current and recent former Board Chairs of the Campaign, we could not be prouder of the unmatched success of the organization in the last 20 years in meeting its mission of ensuring college opportunity for all Californians. That success did not come overnight, nor by luck, but rather with the deliberate building of partnerships, strategic communications, cutting-edge research, and passion for racial equity led by two extraordinary, bold, and brilliant women: Michele Siqueiros and Jessie Ryan.

Through a model of shared leadership over the years, Michele and Jessie have been two of the most transformative agents of racial equity in higher education in the state and nation. Policy, education, community, business, and student leaders know them as unapologetic advocates and thought leaders, working to dismantle policies and practices that have disadvantaged and harmed Latinx, Black, Asian American and Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander, American Indian/Alaska Native, low-income, and first-generation students pursuing a college degree.

The Campaign for College Opportunity is in its strongest position ever thanks to the hard work and dedication of Michele and Jessie. So, it is with poignant and extraordinary gratitude that we share that Michele Siqueiros will be stepping down as President of the Campaign for College Opportunity on June 30, 2024.

In her 20 years at the Campaign (and as president since 2008), Michele and her renowned skill as a consequential and transformational leader has attracted the best and brightest to the Campaign team and board, raised millions of dollars to grow and sustain the organization, and made it possible for thousands of students to go to college and to graduate through the aid of policy and budget reforms she successfully championed and the truth-telling for which she is well known. Michele's leadership transcends the Campaign, and we know that she will remain a committed and incomparable ally of the organization and its visionary goals. Her legacy is unmatched and indelible.

Our board did not have to look far, however, to identify Michele's successor. We are excited to proudly announce that effective July 1, Jessie Ryan will assume the role of President of the Campaign for College Opportunity where she will usher in the next twenty years of tenacious policy, research, and advocacy to advance racial equity in college opportunity for all Californians.

For close to 19 years, Michele and Jessie have worked in close partnership to build what we all now recognize as the surpassingly effective Campaign for College Opportunity. Our co-founders, Steve Weiner and David Wolf, were proud and often in awe of how these two committed, fierce women embodied the Campaign's mission and values of racial equity in higher education and delivered on the vision they set out to realize at the Campaign's founding - that a movement of citizens from the social justice, business, and higher education communities could come together and act to preserve access to college and the American Dream for the next generation of students.

While this moment in the Campaign's history may be bittersweet as we bid a heartfelt but reluctant farewell to Michele, we are in undeniably courageous, capable, and experienced hands with Jessie taking the helm.

On July 1, 2024, Jessie will make her way back to California from Washington, DC, where she has been advising on a national response to the U.S. Supreme Court's decision to end the consideration of race in university admissions, and rejoin the Campaign team in the Sacramento offices. Michele will serve as a strategic advisor to Jessie through the transition.

Succession planning is a core function of any board and has been top of mind for us and for our colleagues as Michele approached her twenty years of service. Because Michele employed a shared-leadership model, our search for her successor had an obvious choice. A first-generation, low-income, former community college student who has taken on the historically racist and exclusionary policies of higher education institutions will lead us into our next twenty years, building on the tremendous legacy that Michele forged and leaves behind.

Please join us in celebrating and congratulating Michele and Jessie!

Sincerely,



DR. EDWARD BUSH
Current Chair of the Board
Campaign for College
Opportunity



DR. ESTELA BENSIMON
Former Campaign Board Chair
and current Member



THOMAS A. SAENZ
Former Campaign Board Chair
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