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California Postsecondary Education Commission

Higher Education Improvement Priorities

Higher Education Accountability

- California spends an estimated \$14 billion annually on higher education, far more than any other state, and a larger portion of general fund spending than in any other state as well. Yet California is one of the few remaining states without statewide accountability performance indicators for higher education.
- The accountability movement has refocused K-12 education on performance-based outcomes.
- The people of California demand that taxpayer funds be used efficiently and effectively toward the goal of offering high quality education that is both affordable and accessible to all Californians.
- California's higher education goals will not be met unless they are clearly defined and measured against agreed upon indicators of performance.
- CPEC supports legislative efforts to establish an accountability framework and is pursuing its own system of accountability based on its data-gathering capabilities.

California's Evolving Workforce Needs

- There is a real need to link the demand for a skilled workforce with the production of degrees and certificates in California higher education.
- Between 30 and 40 percent of California's workforce requires at least some college-level education. Workforce preparation must receive greater priority in the allocation of scarce state resources.
- Workforce needs and higher education's ability to meet those needs must be synchronized. The Commission recommends leadership at the State level focus efforts on closing gaps in the educational needs of California's workers.
- CPEC has embarked on an extensive study of the nexus between higher education and California's workforce needs in order to provide a research foundation for policy initiatives to improve alignment of education and workforce preparation.

Student Eligibility and Preparation

- A significant divide in eligibility rates still exists between White and Asian students and Latino and African American students. Although eligibility rates have steadily improved for Latinos and African Americans, they do not reflect their proportionate share of the population.
- The most plausible explanation for this divide is the substantial differences in the quality of K-12 education from district to district based on socioeconomic factors.
- Not all students have an equal opportunity to prepare for the public university system as first-time freshman.
- Outreach programs work to mitigate disparities, but it is not clear that the over \$1 billion spent on these programs has been effective in changing the dynamics of academic preparation.
- CPEC is currently studying the effectiveness of outreach programs with the goal of identifying those programs that have been successful in increasing participation for underrepresented groups.

Affordability and Educational Success

- The state has a substantial interest in removing barriers to higher education in California. These barriers include:
 - Limited access to needed classes and impacted programs;
 - Affordability including the impact of “sticker shock”, increased borrowing, and the decline of grant assistance to offset ever-increasing costs;
 - Cultural barriers that may prevent qualified minorities from enrolling in certain institutions; and
 - Substantial and unpredictable student fee increases.
- CPEC supports legislative and administrative efforts that help to alleviate these hurdles.