Orange County Legislative Task Force

Our Mission: Trustees, Chancellors and Community Leaders Advocating for Community College Students

2008-09 Federal Issues Critical to Student Success

- Accountability
- Support Job Training
- Student Financial Aid
- Improve Access
- Economic Stimulus
Federal Issues Critical to Student Success

Accountability
As advocates for academic freedom, we urge federal lawmakers to allow each college to construct student learning outcomes that fit its unique coursework and student population. The Task Force opposes federal regulations and rules that restrict or inhibit the current system-driven accreditation process. We oppose any effort that adds more paperwork and reports to the accreditation process, as new reporting requirements take faculty and staff away from important campus-level priorities during a time when budgets are tight and staff are limited.

Support Job Training
Community colleges need to expand and extend vocational and technical education programs to a growing workforce that needs additional skills training to sustain high levels of productivity. Federal programs essential to help fund these efforts include Community Based Training Grants, Carl D. Perkins Vocational & Technical Education Act Programs and Workforce Investment Act funds.

Student Financial Aid
Community colleges rely on student financial aid through Pell Grants to ensure all students have equal access to an affordable post-secondary education. Despite the reduction in tuition fees in California, other college-related expenses, such as textbooks, fuel and housing, continue to put a community college education out of reach for many students.

Improve Access
Funding is critical in order to increase access to education for low-income and historically under-served populations. Over recent years, the population of low-income students has grown in number and in need, stretching the resources of community colleges thin. Of the 252 Hispanic Serving Institutions in the U.S., 76 are in California.

Education as Economic Stimulus
Community colleges in Orange County provide the continuous education and training essential to maintain our county's global economic leadership and standard of living. California's community colleges are one of the best sources of economic stimulus – often referred to as the "work horses" of higher education. They already are seeing enrollment increases as people seek to retrain for new jobs in today's unprecedented economy. Congress should increase the federal investment in higher education and workforce development across the board to ensure community colleges are able to meet the challenge ahead.

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IT PAYS TO SUPPORT COMMUNITY COLLEGES!

According to a 2005 Study by CCbenefits, Inc.:

- Approximately 272,000 students attend our colleges each year, more than 6% of Orange County’s three million residents.
- Taxpayers receive a 15% return on annual investment from Orange County’s 11 community college campuses.
- Orange County owes roughly $7.3 billion of its current labor and non-labor income to its community colleges – roughly 6.5% of a typical year’s regional economic growth.
- California benefits from Orange County’s community colleges through improved health as well as reduced welfare, unemployment and crime, saving the public almost $65 million per year.
- Orange County community college graduates enjoy a 17% annual return on investment of their time and money – earning $365,000 more during a working lifetime than those with only high school diplomas.