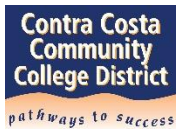




# California Community Colleges



April 6, 2026



Senator John Laird, Chair  
Senate Budget Committee  
1021 O Street, Room 8720  
Sacramento, CA 95814

Assemblymember Jesse Gabriel, Chair  
Assembly Budget Committee  
1021 O Street, Suite 8230  
Sacramento, CA 95814



Senator Sasha Renée Pérez, Chair  
Senate Budget Subcommittee No. 1  
1021 O Street, Room 6720  
Sacramento, CA 95814

Assemblymember David Alvarez, Chair  
Assembly Budget Subcommittee No. 3  
1021 O Street, Suite 5320  
Sacramento, CA 95814



## RE: Invest in Community Colleges to Power California's Economic Future



City College - Mesa College - Miramar College  
College of Continuing Education



Dear Legislative Budget Chairs:

On behalf of the organizations listed in this letter, we write to express our appreciation for your leadership and to respectfully request your continued support for the California Community Colleges. Guided by [Vision 2030](#), California's 116 community colleges are the front door to reskilling and upskilling in uncertain economic times, expanding pathways to baccalaureate degrees and family-sustaining careers. Strategic budget investments will reduce reliance on safety-net programs,



SAN JOSÉ EVERGREEN  
Community College District



SANTA MONICA  
COLLEGE



grow California’s taxable workforce, and fuel long-term economic growth. Together, the priorities outlined in this letter advance a unified strategy to **serve today’s students from classroom to career** and **build tomorrow’s workforce from learning to earning**.



**From Classroom to Career: Serve the Students of Today**

At a time of fiscal volatility, sustained funding for community colleges are essential to student success and economic mobility. We respectfully request your support for the following investments that support student persistence, reduce access barriers, and expand access to good-paying jobs.



***Fully Fund Enrollment Growth to Meet Rising Student Demand:*** We remain grateful for the Administration’s enacted and proposed investments to support enrollment growth. After enrollment reached a 30-year low during the pandemic, California’s community colleges have driven a strong recovery, increasing enrollment by 15% since 2022 as more than 2.2 million Californians seek out the path to education and economic mobility. To meet ongoing demand, we request additional state funding to support 3% enrollment growth across 2025-26 and 2026-27, along with two key policy changes: calculating credit FTES using the higher of the three-year average or current-year enrollment and eliminating the 10% cap on funded FTES growth. These measures will give districts the stability and flexibility needed to expand course offerings, scale outreach to underserved students, and strengthen workforce pathways across the state.



***Expand Credit for Prior Learning to Accelerate Degree Completion:*** Credit for prior learning (CPL) eliminates longstanding structural barriers to baccalaureate attainment by recognizing diverse learning pathways, reducing time-to-degree by 9 to 14 months and saving students nearly \$2,300 per credit awarded. While CPL has already benefited tens of thousands of students, its reach remains uneven due to limited staffing, training, and operational resources. We request support for the Governor’s proposed investment to scale and institutionalize CPL through a strategic outcomes-based funding model. These resources will expand access to at least 100,000 additional students over the next three years, remove barriers to completion, and prepare students for timely workforce entry.

***Support Investments in Technology Solutions to Let Student Data Flow:*** We strongly support the Governor’s budget proposal to advance the Common Cloud Data Platform, a modernized data infrastructure that will integrate real-time student information across all 73 community college districts. By enabling systemwide tracking of enrollment, credits, and student progress, the platform will reduce excess units, shorten time-to-degree, and strengthen transfer pathways for all students. A unified data system will also streamline district reporting, reduce duplicative administrative workload, and allow campuses to redirect limited resources toward timely student interventions. Replacing fragmented, outdated technology with a shared, automated platform will improve accountability, reduce human errors, and maximize the public’s return on investment.

***Protect and Enhance Core Student Support Services:*** The Student Support Block Grant is a critical investment in student success and workforce readiness, giving colleges stability to maintain essential wrap-around services. The Governor’s budget proposes an additional \$100 million one-time for the Student Support Block Grant to fund services such as basic needs assistance, financial aid advising,

employment services, and legal supports that help students persist, complete, and enter the workforce. We also remain supportive of the Board of Governors [Shared Advocacy Request](#) budget proposals, which would provide targeted resources for Black and African American students, student veterans, undocumented students, and other historically underrepresented groups through programs such as A<sup>2</sup>MEND, Umoja, Veterans Resource Centers, Dreamer Resource Liaisons, and Immigration Legal Services, removing access barriers and scaling equity-centered services. Lastly, we would also elevate a cost-of-living adjustment for the Student Equity and Achievement Program as a high priority, as flat funding since 2022–23 has eroded the program’s purchasing power and constrained colleges’ ability to sustain and expand core student success interventions in the face of rising operational costs and growing student need.

***Invest in Facilities to Prepare Students for High-Demand Careers:*** We support the Governor’s proposal to address deferred maintenance as a critical investment in instructional quality, workforce alignment, and fiscal stewardship across California’s community colleges. With 73 districts, 116 colleges, and more than 6,000 buildings, the system’s deferred maintenance needs exceed \$2.2 billion. Modernizing classrooms, laboratories, and core infrastructure ensures students can train with state-of-the-art equipment in high-demand fields like healthcare, clean energy, technology, and advanced manufacturing, while providing safe, climate-resilient campuses. Timely investments also avoid higher long-term repair costs and protect local voter-approved bond investments.

**From Learning to Earning: Build the Workforce of Tomorrow**

As California confronts rapid technological change and evolving workforce demands, community colleges play a critical role in preparing a skilled, adaptable workforce for the future. The following investments will expand workforce capacity, align learning with labor market needs, and position community colleges to lead in economic recovery, innovation, and long-term growth.

***Scale Dual Enrollment Opportunities Statewide:*** We support the Governor’s proposal to expand dual enrollment as a critical strategy for extending academic pathways, closing equity gaps, and allowing all high school students to map their future early, accelerating progress toward a baccalaureate degree. To fully realize these benefits, policies associated with this investment must provide equitable access for all students regardless of geography or school resources, allocate funding to support the full range of academic and student services, and maintain strong coordination between community colleges and school districts. These approaches will reduce regional inequities, expand participation for underserved students, and strengthen pathways to higher education.

***Invest in AI Literacy to Prepare Students for an AI-Driven Economy:*** We request state investments to expand AI literacy across California’s community colleges, empowering faculty to redesign instruction, personalize learning at scale, and equip students with applied, ethical AI competencies. Sustained professional learning will ensure colleges can keep pace with rapidly evolving technology, embed AI fluency across disciplines, and innovate teaching while maintaining equity, transparency, and human-centered learning. With more than 103,000 AI-related job postings in California and workers with AI skills earning a 56% wage premium, these investments are critical to closing equity gaps, expanding access to high-demand careers, and preparing students to thrive in an AI-driven economy.

***Support Campus Microgrids for Clean Energy and Student Training:*** We request state funding to support microgrid development, enabling campuses to serve as reliable community hubs during

emergencies while advancing sustainability and energy independence. Campus-based microgrids reduce reliance on the main grid, lower operational costs, cut greenhouse gas emissions, and provide hands-on learning opportunities in clean energy and environmental science, equipping students with workforce-ready technical skills. With grant funding, colleges can enhance resilience for students, staff, and surrounding communities by reducing energy vulnerability, maintaining continuity of operations during disruptions, and demonstrating scalable clean energy solutions. This investment will position community colleges as leaders in California's clean energy transition.

***Restore Strong Workforce Funding to Strengthen Career Education:*** We request the state to restore the Strong Workforce Program, which connects students to industry-aligned pathways, paid internships, and work-based learning, accelerating progress from education to high-wage careers. Recent reductions have constrained staffing, limited student services, and disincentivized program innovation, undermining equitable workforce development across regions. Restoring funding will stabilize faculty and employer partnerships, preserve core infrastructure, and ensure predictable, statewide investment in career education. Strong Workforce-supported students earn higher wages, secure jobs in their fields of study, and advance economic mobility. Renewed investment will allow community colleges to meet regional labor needs, promote successful outcomes, and continue preparing students for in-demand careers.

***Expand Rebuild LA to Strengthen Regional Workforce and Economic Recovery:*** We request state funding to support the Rebuild LA initiative across all 19 Los Angeles community colleges, addressing the severe construction and skilled trades workforce shortage caused by the Palisades and Eaton Fires. Additional resources will expand programs, facilities, and training capacity, remove barriers for underserved populations, and connect learners to living-wage reconstruction jobs. By scaling equitable workforce training, this funding will accelerate regional rebuilding, revitalize local economies, and build a resilient, in-demand labor force. Targeted investments will ensure that community colleges can fill the workforce gap, provide inclusive opportunities, and strengthen long-term economic and workforce stability across fire-impacted communities in Los Angeles.

Taken together, these priorities will allow community colleges to advance student access, supports, and success with equity. Thank you for your consideration of the California Community Colleges 2026-27 budget priorities. If you have any questions about this request or these proposals, please contact Chris Ferguson, California Community Colleges Executive Vice Chancellor for Finance and Strategic Initiatives, at [Chris.Ferguson@cccoco.edu](mailto:Chris.Ferguson@cccoco.edu).

Sincerely,

California Community College Coalition Partners

cc:

Members, Senate Budget and Fiscal Review Subcommittee No. 1 on Education

Members, Assembly Budget Subcommittee No. 3 on Education Finance

Livia Shmavonian, Office of Governor Newsom

Nicole Muñoz-Murillo, Office of Governor Gavin Newsom

Jessica Holmes, Department of Finance

Anita Lee, Department of Finance

Ethan Schroeder, Department of Finance  
Phillip Osborn, Department of Finance  
Dominick Guidera, Department of Finance  
Lisa Qing, Legislative Analyst's Office  
Monica Henestroza, Office of the Assembly Speaker  
Andrew Medina, Office of the Senate President pro Tempore  
Diego Lopez, Senate Budget and Fiscal Review Committee  
Christian Griffith, Assembly Budget Committee  
Sarah Haynes, Assembly Republican Consultant  
Megan De Souza, Senate Republican Consultant