

Hispanic Association of
Colleges & Universities
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May 22, 2008

The Honorable John Laird
Chair, Assembly Budget Committee
California State Capitol
Sacramento, CA 95814

Dear Assembly Member Laird:

On behalf of the Hispanic Association of Colleges and Universities (HACU), I am writing to extend our appreciation for the Legislature's support of higher education and to request that the Legislature provide at least the funding proposed in the May Revision for California's higher education institutions. Through your dedication and leadership, colleges and universities throughout the State of California will be better able to serve disadvantaged students for years to come. We look forward to working with you during this difficult budget year to pass a budget that has a positive impact on the ability of Latino students to obtain a quality, affordable education. Among the issues of importance to HACU:

1) California Community Colleges:

- a. HACU thanks the Governor for deciding to backfill a portion of the \$92M property tax shortfall in the current year. HACU supports AB 2277, which would backfill \$80M of the property tax shortfall. Community Colleges would not be able to absorb cuts of this magnitude without significant impact on access and success.
- b. HACU is grateful the Governor has found an additional \$35.5M for growth so that students can continue to experience true open access at the community colleges – though this amount will still not fully fund the expected growth next year.
- c. HACU remains concerned about the 7% categorical cuts, which affect programs like the Fund for Student Success (MESA, Puente, and Middle College) which offers support and access for historically disadvantaged students. The \$14.4M cut to the Extended Opportunity and Special Services (EOPS) program and a \$3.6M across-the-board reduction in Student Success for Basic Skills Students Program also remain concerns for HACU.

2) California State University:

- a. HACU appreciates the additional \$97.6M in General Fund monies for the California State University system. However, despite these additional monies, the Governor has still not met the Compact he signed with higher education, and remaining real cuts of \$214.5M will impact access and success within the CSU.

3) **University of California:**

- a. HACU is also grateful to the Governor for finding an additional \$98.5M in General Fund monies for the University of California system. However, despite these additional monies, the Governor has still not met the Compact he signed with higher education, and remaining real cuts of \$233.5M will impact access and success within the UC.

4) **Independent Colleges and Universities:**

- a. HACU thanks the Governor and Legislature for maintaining the Cal Grant level for students attending our independent colleges and universities at the same level as last year. We look forward to seeing this provision in the final version of the budget.

5) **California Student Aid Commission:**

- a. HACU remains opposed to the Governor's proposed elimination of the Competitive Cal Grant Program. Each year the Commission awards 22,500 competitive awards to some of the neediest students wishing to pursue a higher education. Given the impending state workforce crisis, it is crucial to educate our young adults. We look forward to working with the Legislature to ensure that these vital funds are restored.

Thank you and your committee for your consideration of these issues and your dedication to the education of California's students. Should you have any questions, please contact Erica Romero, Executive Director of Western States Legislative Affairs, via e-mail at eromero@hacu.net, or by calling 916-442-0392.

Sincerely,



Antonio Flores
President and CEO

cc: Assembly Member Roger Niello, Vice Chair
Assembly Member Juan Arambula
Assembly Member Jim Beall, Jr.
Assembly Member John J. Benoit
Assembly Member Patty Berg
Assembly Member Sam Blakeslee
Assembly Member Julia Brownley
Assembly Member Paul Cook
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