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April 20, 2020

Senator Holly Mitchell, Chair

Senate Budget Committee  
State Capitol, Room 5019

Assemblymember Phil Ting, Chair

Assembly Budget Committee  
State Capitol, Room 6026

**RE: Online Community College and the California Community College Budget (6870-101-0001)**

Dear Senator Mitchell and Assemblymember Ting:

The Academic Senate for California Community Colleges (ASCCC) is writing to respectfully request the legislature's reconsideration of the allocation of resources to the online community college district created by statute in the 2018 budget act, now known as Calbright, during this current health and economic crisis. Currently, California has 114 accredited community colleges, nearly all of which offer programs through distance education. Colleges are planning to have most if not all offerings online for the summer and are planning contingencies for a majority of offerings to be online in the fall. This massive shift in the modality of instruction is costly in terms of infrastructure, human resources, student support needs, and professional development. Colleges are striving to meet these needs in the face of potential budget shortfalls and uncertainty for the next academic and fiscal years. The funding allocated to the online community college, Calbright, could be better used to protect student access in the accredited colleges.

Budget shortfalls have meant a limitation on access during every previous recession. Most colleges will likely be forced to cut classes and services to meet the budgetary restrictions that will come in the near future. This situation negatively affects the many improvements in access that have been achieved over the last decade. These gains have come with populations that may never have thought of college as an option or have traditionally struggled to have access, particularly dual enrollment programs targeting high school students, incarcerated education programs, and veteran's outreach. Gains in access have also come as a result of guided pathways efforts to ensure that colleges are welcoming to all California residents. Because community college enrollment historically has been correlated with unemployment, we anticipate even more strain on the system to accommodate all who may benefit from educational opportunities. Therefore, in light of the massive upheaval that the current health crisis and looming fiscal crisis have created, we respectfully request that the legislature question the allocation of unused one-time funding and ongoing funding of \$20 million to an entity that currently serves very few students and duplicates programs currently available at the 114 accredited colleges.

The faculty of the California Community Colleges firmly believe that we can better respond to the needs of the state with an intensive one-time investment in the infrastructure needed to provide virtual instruction and services at the colleges, which would protect access during times of social distancing and in response to a variety of crises colleges may encounter in the future. We also believe that modest ongoing investments to fund the Library Services Platform to ensure equitable access to library services for all students and professional development for all employees to serve the needs of students and communities during this and future crises would serve more people and protect the ideal of equitable access to higher education that all Californians share.

Therefore, the Academic Senate for California Community Colleges implores the legislature to deeply consider the needs of all Californians and how best to allocate shrinking resources to protect community colleges' ability to provide access and serve as many students as possible. As always, the ASCCC will do our best to implement whatever decision is made as effectively and efficiently

April 20, 2020

**RE: Online Community College and the California Community College Budget (6870-101-0001)**

Page Two

as we are able. However, we are confident that thorough and reasoned consideration will lead to the conclusion that the state will be better served if resources are invested in the 114 accredited colleges in the system rather than in the online college Calbright. Thank you for your consideration, and do not hesitate to contact us if we may be of service.

Respectfully,



John Stankas, President

Cc: Lande Ajose, Senior Policy Advisor for Higher Education  
Joey Freeman, Chief Deputy Legislative Affairs Secretary for Policy  
Monica Henestroza, Special Assistant to Assemblymember Rendon  
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Olgalilia Ramirez, Consultant, Senate Committee on Education  
Anita Lee, Consultant, Senate Budget and Fiscal Review Committee  
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