



**HOUSE SUBCOMMITTEE ON HIGHER EDUCATION
AND WORKFORCE INVESTMENT**

Written Testimony

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BAKERSFIELD

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INTRODUCTION

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MARITIME ACADEMY

MONTEREY BAY

NORTHRIDGE

POMONA

SACRAMENTO

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SAN DIEGO

SAN FRANCISCO

SAN JOSÉ

SAN LUIS OBISPO

SAN MARCOS

SONOMA

STANISLAUS

Chair Davis, Ranking Member Smucker, and members of the subcommittee, thank you for inviting me to discuss the effects of COVID-19 on the California State University (CSU), the CSU response to the crisis, and the continuing need for resources and flexibility faced by CSU students and campuses. Thanks also for your continuing support of the programs in the Higher Education Act (HEA), such as Pell Grants, which are vital to our students' success, as well as the COVID-19 relief provisions in the CARES Act and other legislation that have helped us weather the storm thus far.

The [California State University](#) is the largest and most ethnically and economically diverse system of four-year higher education in the country, with 23 campuses, 53,000 faculty and staff, and 482,000 students. Created in 1960, the mission of the CSU is to provide high-quality, affordable education to meet the ever-changing needs of California. With its commitment to quality, opportunity and student success, the CSU is renowned for superb teaching, innovative research and for producing job-ready graduates. Each year, the CSU awards more than 127,000 degrees. One in every 20 Americans holding a college degree is a graduate of the CSU and our alumni are 3.8 million strong.

The CSU is an engine of access and success. As noted above, our student body is remarkably diverse, and we pride ourselves on providing a high-quality education to Californians from all backgrounds, including those from the most underserved communities in the state. More than half of CSU students are students of color, and one in three are the first in their family to attend college. The CSU grants 62 percent of degrees conferred on California's Hispanic students, 47 percent of degrees conferred on the state's African American students, 43 percent of those conferred on American Indian and Native American students in California, and 38 percent of the degrees conferred upon Asian/Asian American students in California. Twenty-one of the CSU's 23 campuses qualify as Hispanic-Serving Institutions (HSI), and 14 qualify as Asian American and Native American Pacific Islander-Serving Institutions (AANAPISI). In 2017-18, nearly 39,000 Hispanic/Latino students and more than 18,000 Asian American/Pacific Islander students earned CSU bachelor's degrees.

Another key feature of the CSU is its affordability. Average annual tuition and fees for CSU undergraduates was \$7,337 in 2019-20. More than half of CSU baccalaureate recipients graduate with zero loan debt; those who do average \$17,978 – well below the California average of \$22,585 and the national average of \$29,200.

Even with our low cost and generous state and institutional aid packages, and despite the fact that many of our students work one or more jobs, financial need remains, and the majority of CSU students rely on federal grants, loans and work-study in order to pursue their studies. Fifty-four percent of CSU students (almost 230,000) receive Pell Grants, and their average award is more than \$4,500.

The CSU consistently provides an outstanding return on federal investments in our students and campuses. In 2018-19, more than 63,000 CSU bachelor's degrees were earned by Pell Grant recipients. Indeed, each year, the CSU prepares more than 127,000 new graduates ready to drive California's – and the nation's – economy in the information technology, life sciences, agriculture, business, hospitality, health care, education, public administration, entertainment and multimedia industries. Starting and mid-career salaries for students who receive their bachelor's degree from a CSU campus are at or above the national average for public universities.

The transformative power of a CSU degree is well-documented. Last fall, CollegeNET released its 2019 Social Mobility Index (SMI) – a listing of the nation's top universities for propelling students and their families into higher economic strata. Nowhere in the country is this happening on a larger scale than at the California State University. CSU campuses dominate the 2019 SMI rankings, with 22 of 23 campuses ranking in the top 17 percent and CSU campuses accounting for nearly two-thirds of the top 20 spots. While the SMI uses several variables for its methodology, it places the most significance on access, outcome and institutional capacity, reserving the highest honors for those schools that accept and graduate the largest number of economically disadvantaged students.

While we are proud of our students and their success, we are also committed to continued improvement. In 2015, the CSU launched Graduation Initiative 2025, an unprecedented effort to increase graduation rates, to eliminate vexing equity gaps in degree completion, and to meet California's workforce needs. These efforts have resulted in more students earning degrees at higher rates than ever before in CSU history. Final data from the 2018-19 academic year shows that four- and six-year completion rates for first-time students and two- and four-year completion rates for transfer students are at all-time highs.

Indeed, we have made great strides in this regard, and our work will continue in the face of the novel coronavirus pandemic. However, I am concerned that important momentum might be lost if resources needed for this important effort are reduced or diverted due to the economic impact of this public health crisis.

The subcommittee has requested that I address several specific topics related to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the CSU and our diverse community of students – and to the university's actions to mitigate these impacts.

I am pleased to provide the following testimony in response:

A MASSIVE PIVOT TO VIRTUAL OPERATIONS

In March 2020, as the pending scope and severity of the COVID-19 pandemic became evident with greater clarity, and informed by the advice of epidemiologists and infectious disease experts, as well as the guidance of local, state and federal public health officials, the CSU began to transition its campus operations – including instruction – to virtual modalities.

On March 17, these efforts were accelerated. All face-to-face instruction was paused as our 23 campuses moved all curriculum including instructional labs, small-group work and examinations to virtual delivery. Other aspects of in-person campus life were similarly paused, and campus housing communities were systematically depopulated. However, all 23 campuses continued to make on-campus housing facilities available to those students who needed a safe, secure place in which to shelter-at-home, with particular care being taken to support students most likely to experience disparate outcomes during a public health crisis, including, but not limited to foster youth and international students who had no other safe place to call home, and students who would be homeless or housing insecure without access to campus residential facilities.

To safeguard these residents' health and well-being, physical distancing guidelines were followed. A sufficient level of amenities required to support these remaining residents – such as dining and custodial services – was provided. In some cases, campuses worked in partnership with community-based organizations to offer temporary housing to CSU students who are housing insecure or homeless, both prior to and as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.

It was a massive undertaking, requiring the coordinated work of campus and system leadership, faculty, staff and students. Across our 23 campuses, our institutes for teaching and learning, along with faculty development centers, took swift action to provide webinars, online resources, coaching and support to aid our faculty in quickly adapting their courses and adopting new technology to ensure effective teaching and student engagement.

In total, more than 70,000 ongoing classes were transitioned to virtual delivery and, by March 30, instruction was resumed in this new modality – preserving academic continuity and progress to degree completion for our more-than 480,000 students.

The CSU's range of academic and student support services were similarly transferred to online modalities, including, but not limited to student advising, disability accommodations and access, supplemental learning resources, financial aid, mental health services, medical health services, basic needs initiatives, the CSU's Educational Opportunity Program (EOP), veteran student services, foster youth support, IT help desks and international student support. Staff explored new ways of delivering programs and services to students, ranging from telehealth options provided by student medical services and counseling centers, to sponsoring eSports events, hosting student government meetings via Zoom and instituting virtual career fairs.

As instruction and academic and student support services have been adapted to virtual delivery, the CSU has emphasized the importance of ensuring that all instructional and co-curricular programming and activities continue to use universal design and other features to ensure access for students with disabilities. In addition, our campus chief financial officers have provided additional resources so that those campus personnel who provide services to students with disabilities could adequately support the ramp-up in demand for accessible instruction and services. Institutes of Teaching and Learning, both in the CSU Chancellor's Office and on the campuses, continue to offer professional development webinars and online training to help build capacity for accessible remote/virtual instruction.

MITIGATING COVID-19-RELATED IMPACTS TO CURRENT AND FUTURE STUDENTS

Actions to Support Current Students

Addressing the “Digital Divide”

Actions taken to maintain our students’ academic continuity and progress to degree are detailed in the above section. We understand and continue to be mindful that a large-scale shift to virtual learning and academic and student support modalities can exacerbate inequities associated with the so-called “digital divide” – a lack of access to computer equipment and internet connectivity that disproportionately impacts low-income students and students of color.

To mitigate these impacts, all 23 campuses have purchased and distributed laptops and tablets to students who need them. In total, some 5,500 pieces of new equipment – with a value of more than \$4 million – have been distributed. This does not include the thousands of items of equipment already on hand – in libraries, learning centers and labs – that have been loaned to students in need. In addition, campuses systemwide have established and maintain wifi “hotspots” to provide internet connectivity in areas where appropriate physical distancing can be maintained, e.g., parking facilities.

Supporting the CSU’s Most Vulnerable Students

To further reduce potential impacts of the pandemic and of our necessary actions in response, we have provided our students with additional flexibility with regard to their course grading basis for the winter and spring terms, providing, wherever feasible, the option of credit/no credit grading, and making policy adjustments to ensure that withdrawals from courses during these terms will not unfairly “count against” students.

The CSU’s basic needs initiatives have been sustained through the pandemic. All 23 campuses are providing CalFresh (California’s Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program that provides benefits to qualifying individuals to assist them with the purchase of healthy foods) application assistance via phone or digital platforms, taking great care in communicating the multiple programmatic and eligibility changes in the CalFresh program and using a variety of communication platforms to ensure that students understand their benefits.

Despite the increase in requests for food assistance as a result of the pandemic, campuses have shown remarkable creativity and ingenuity in adapting these services according to the demands of this public health crisis. Some campuses have developed “pop-up” no-contact food distribution services for food insecure students. Others have borrowed refrigerators from their campus dining services to expand food offerings to include perishable items. Delivery services have been developed to support students who do not have transportation or who are immuno-suppressed. One campus program provides low-income students who are parents with a backpack full of food, and then replenishes the backpack on a weekly basis. Several campuses have provided gift cards to local grocery stores as an alternative food distribution method.

As referenced above, campuses ensured that students who are housing insecure have been able to remain in on-campus housing. A majority of campuses are working with their local housing authority and the Chancellor’s Office to participate in the Emergency Housing Initiative. Under this effort, student housing is providing additional bed spaces for students who do not have other housing options. This effort will provide safe housing and meal assistance for students who qualify well into the summer, with the possibility of extension, pending available resources.

Across the CSU, students are presenting with a variety of mental health concerns. Campuses report that students are reporting increased stress, anxiety, loneliness, lack of motivation, disappointment, anger and relational challenges. Campuses also indicate an escalation in reports related to domestic violence, family violence and family substance abuse problems. In response, all campuses have changed the variety and type of services they offer to best serve students. Counseling services are being delivered remotely, with individual sessions offered via Zoom, phone or other remote modality. Strategies for providing triage in-take services include the rotation of in-person staffing and the use of third-party telephonic behavioral health services as a virtual modality.

The majority of campuses are providing virtual support groups and/or psychoeducational programming related to anti-discrimination, stress reduction, resources for physical and mental wellness, healthy relationships, strategies for grieving loss while sheltering in place and social connection while engaging in physical distancing.

Student Financial Support

Guidelines from the U.S. Department of Education and provisions of the CARES Act granted campuses permission to continue to award federal work-study funds to students receiving federal financial aid who were no longer able to work on campus due to campus closures or shifts to remote/virtual service provision that preclude student employees from performing duties. In light of this, we strongly urged campuses, whenever feasible, to continue compensation for their student employees – either by assigning alternative duties that can be performed remotely or simply by ensuring pay continuity.

Third-party vendors, including many food service vendors who provide dining services on campuses, have curtailed some or all operations and have been forced to reduce their workforces – comprised, in significant numbers, of students – in response to declines in revenue. Even in these exigent instances, we are asking campuses to find other funding sources, wherever possible, so that students can continue to receive compensation or be assigned to work in other units on campus through the spring term.

Students who have lost employment have been encouraged to contact their campus's vice president for student affairs or designee to explore options for possible job reassignment, emergency grant aid or assistance via crisis funds. Each of the 23 campuses offers emergency grants (preexisting and in addition to the CARES Act/CSU Cares relief funding described below) to students who are facing challenges meeting their basic needs. Since the start of the pandemic, there has been an increase in the number of applications submitted by students seeking this emergency support. As a result of the increase in student need, a number of campuses have increased the maximum amount that a student could receive in emergency funds.

CARES Act/CSU Cares Initiative

Of course, the most significant financial relief we have been able to provide our students has been in the form of direct emergency financial grants made available through the CARES Act – and we remain extremely grateful to Congress and the Administration for the scope of the relief and for its quick distribution.

Collectively, CSU campuses received \$262.5 million in direct student relief funding. Education Department guidance limited these CARES Act emergency grants to students who are eligible for Title IV aid. To ensure that all of our students – including DACA and international students – received relief, we complemented federal funds with CSU resources to form the CSU Cares Initiative to provide emergency grant funding for all CSU students with COVID-19-induced financial need.

With broad consultation, we developed guidance for CSU Cares and for the fair and purposeful distribution of these funds, informed by: 1) our deep-seated commitment to inclusive excellence and equity in education; 2) student success, with the goal of keeping as many students as we can on the path to degree completion; and 3) administrative simplicity, with streamlined processes so that the money can be delivered into the hands of our students quickly.

To facilitate distribution of the funds, we partnered with financial institutions for the direct distribution of the grant monies to students, including those who may not have access to the US banking system.

With regard to the balance of CARES Act funding not distributed to students in the form of direct emergency financial relief, CSU campuses are prioritizing faculty development and investment in resources to continue to enhance virtual teaching and learning, informed by outcomes and persistence data, as well as shared best practices developed in the spring and summer terms. A portion of the funds will also be used to offset lost revenue in housing and parking operations and to retain CSU employees who work in these areas.

Actions to Support Prospective and Incoming Students

To mitigate impacts to prospective and incoming CSU students, the university has made extensive modifications to its admission requirements and procedures. In addition, the CSU has collaborated closely with California's PK-20 education partners to provide the clearest and most consistent guidance possible across the state's public and private education segments.

While a comprehensive guidance document regarding the CSU's admission policies and practices can be found [here](#), modifications to reduce COVID-19-related hardship to prospective students and their families include:

- Flexibility to accept grades of "Credit" or "Pass" to satisfy state "a-g" college preparatory course requirements completed during winter, spring or summer 2020 terms;
- Suspension of the use of ACT/SAT examinations in determining admission eligibility at all campuses for the 2021-22 academic year. This will impact three admissions cycles: fall 2021, winter 2022 and spring 2022;
- A reduced minimum number of credits required for transfer admission;
- Relaxation of intent-to-enroll deadlines for fall 2020 to give students and their families more time to assess their personal circumstances and make informed decisions; and
- Extension of deadlines for submission of official academic records.

Campuses are also providing virtual tours, online presentations regarding academic programs and support services, and other digital resources to help students and their families make informed choices about their academic futures. "Summer Bridge" programs have been shifted to online modalities and provide first-generation students and those from low-income or historically underserved communities academic and logistical resources to facilitate and support their transition to college. In addition, campuses have enlisted teams of academic coaches – comprised of current students and support staff – to regularly check-in with new students during their summer transition to CSU campuses.

PLANNING FOR FALL 2020

On May 12, I announced that the CSU would adopt a planning approach for primarily virtual learning in fall 2020, with limited exceptions for in-person activities that cannot be delivered virtually, are indispensable to the university's core mission and can be conducted within rigorous standards of safety and welfare.

I want to clarify a matter that was incorrectly reported in some media coverage of my announcement. No campuses have been closed; no classes have been cancelled. The California State University remains open – as it has throughout the pandemic. We are steadfast in our commitment to inclusive excellence, and we stand ready to meet California's higher education needs in the 2020-21 academic year.

This decision to plan for primarily virtual learning in the fall allows us to continue to advance the CSU's academic mission and maintain our students' progress to degree while ensuring the health and well-being of our students, faculty and staff, as well as that of members of the communities our campuses serve.

And the decision is consistent with the evolving data regarding the likely progression of the pandemic, with medical and public health experts forecasting a second wave of COVID-19 in the summer, followed by a significant surge – coupled with influenza – in the fall and an additional wave in the first quarter of 2021.

We believe it is far more prudent to plan now for mostly virtual instruction in the fall, rather than to be unprepared if the pandemic proceeds as forecast. And it is critical that we give our faculty and staff a full summer to make preparations, to take part in training and professional development, and to share and implement the best practices in virtual learning that we identified this spring. With the benefit of ongoing, data-driven planning; deep consultation with university stakeholders; and additional training and professional development over the summer, we will deliver a rich educational experience this fall, with comprehensive and robust academic and student support.

We also recognize that should the pandemic continue as projected, it might not be possible for some students, faculty and staff to safely travel to campus. We must have the option of remote learning available throughout the curriculum. In short, this virtual planning approach preserves as many options for as many students as possible.

What that educational experience will look like this fall, with specificity, will vary across the CSU. There is significant flexibility built into our approach, and there will be corresponding variability across our 23 campuses, depending on context, specific circumstances and local public health data.

The Chancellor's Office is currently reviewing individual campus plans to evaluate their repopulation policies and to determine appropriate exceptions for in-person learning experiences that meet rigorous safety standards (which may include the provision of personal protective equipment, sanitizing and disinfecting spaces, limiting the number of on-site students, and maintaining physical distance between participants).

A non-exclusive, illustrative list of examples of appropriate in-person learning experiences includes:

- Essential physical and life science laboratory classes;
- Hands-on experiences and senior capstone projects for engineering and architecture students;
- Clinical nursing and allied health courses with training mannequins;
- Access to specialized studios for performing and visual arts students; and
- Access to hands-on interactive simulators and boat and ship handling exercises necessary for licensure and careers in the maritime industry.

In summary, we are finalizing plans for a rich, primarily virtual academic experience for our 480,000 students in the fall – one that will continue to transform lives, elevate communities and drive California’s future prosperity. And as we do, we will remain in close consultation with epidemiologists and infectious disease experts; local, national and federal public health officials; and with our partners in Sacramento and Washington D.C., with the goal of returning to face-to-face learning as soon as we are safely able to do so.

A NEED FOR FEDERAL INVESTMENT

The impacts of this historic public health crisis and our quick and necessary actions in response, have brought about a stark new fiscal reality for the CSU. Our campuses continue to confront soaring costs and mounting revenue losses, putting the long-term well-being and success of our students and the viability of our campuses at significant risk.

We surveyed campuses on the negative economic impact that the pandemic had on the 2020 spring term. We collected information on new costs and revenue losses and arranged the information into three categories: CSU state-supported enterprises, non-profit auxiliary organizations and CSU operations. As a result of COVID-19, our campuses and auxiliary organizations estimate \$337 million dollars of unanticipated new costs and revenue losses for the 2020 spring term alone.

CSU state-supported enterprise programs have experienced \$173 million dollars of very significant, negative impacts. Revenue losses are the primary challenge in this category. For example, most students have vacated on-campus housing, and few students and employees are utilizing on-campus parking. CSU enterprise programs like student housing and parking are self-supported by user-fee revenue. We anticipate that these conditions will persist into the summer and fall because of our decision to begin each of these terms mostly in virtual mode. As a result, we anticipate additional and precipitous revenue drops in this category.

Auxiliary organizations, which are separate 501(c)(3) non-profit organizations, have also suffered dramatic revenue losses, totaling \$114 million dollars. Auxiliary organizations have been especially affected by the loss of “foot traffic” at retail locations and in-person gatherings on campuses, resulting in steep revenue losses, reduced hours and layoffs. Like CSU enterprise programs, auxiliary organization operations will continue to suffer in this way as conditions persist into the fall.

Campuses report \$50 million dollars of adverse negative impact on CSU operations with much of that in the form of unanticipated costs such as additional cleaning and overtime costs. There has also been a shift to virtual/distance instruction and work-at-home arrangements, which has associated increased technology needs for hardware, software and licenses. While the \$50 million dollars represents less than one percent of the annual operating budget, there is significant risk to operations in the near future.

California is facing a new state budget crisis. State tax revenue has suffered. With a projected budget deficit of \$54.3 billion dollars brought on by the economic impacts of the pandemic, late last month Governor Newsom signed into law a budget that will reduce state support of the university by \$299 million – a 4.2 percent contraction of our operating budget – unless additional federal relief funding is received by October 15.

In addition, given the state of the economy, we anticipate increased needs for our students and that the demand for student support services will remain high. New investments in technology to support a more robust range of tutoring, counseling and telehealth services will be needed.

Additional federal action will be necessary to allow us to continue our critical work in support of our state's and nation's future. The federal government has the sole ability to provide the type of assistance to students, their families and institutions of higher education that will not only allow colleges and universities like ours to meet the needs of our students and staff, but to continue as engines of local and regional economies. Supporting higher education at this moment is an essential component of growing the economy. It will preserve and stimulate employment for hundreds of thousands of Americans in the public and private sectors now and into the future, spurring tax revenue while reducing unemployment and the reliance on social services. It is a worthy and necessary investment in the public good – in the long-term soundness, vigor and growth of the economy and toward a healthier, more stable and more equitable society.

As noted previously, the CSU is deeply appreciative of the CARES Act, which was a critically important step toward ensuring that students, especially the most vulnerable, have their basic needs addressed. Similarly, federal funds provided to support colleges and universities will help keep institutions operating, even as we attempt to plug massive holes in our budgets. But the amount of money for students and higher education institutions contained in the CARES Act does not come close to filling the gap.

Accordingly, as you consider next steps to provide relief and spur recovery from the pandemic, we join our higher education colleagues across the nation in asking your support for an additional \$46.6 billion to help address near-term campus financial needs – including increased need-based aid for students due to declining family incomes – and revenue losses stemming from enrollment declines and closures of campus facilities that provide auxiliary services. This amount represents a conservative estimate of urgent unmet needs calculated by the higher education associations.

The allocation and distribution formula created in the CARES Act has the benefit of allowing for swift disbursement of assistance, putting resources in the hands of students and institutions as quickly as possible. We firmly believe that direct distribution to institutions is the best way to ensure that federal funds actually reach the students and schools they were intended to help.

While we share many of Congress's concerns regarding the implementation of the CARES Act, it is equally clear that using the existing federal system for providing aid to institutions is the fastest way to get support to where it is needed. By pairing this rapid disbursement of funds with statutory language that gives campuses broad flexibility and authority to use funds in ways that best match the unique needs of students and their institutions, Congress can bypass the kinds of bureaucratic limitations that hampered the effectiveness of some CARES aid. Further, we request that the Congress clarify that COVID-19 aid is available to all students with need related to the pandemic, and not solely to students who are eligible for Title IV aid. I believe the language regarding flexibility and eligibility included in the HEROES Act effectively addresses these issues, and recommend their inclusion in any future supplemental legislation.

Unfortunately, federal support for higher education has historically been used by states to supplement other areas of state budgets, leaving higher education vulnerable to massive cuts in state support and students vulnerable to tuition increases. In order to guarantee that states do not simply reduce their funding to institutions of higher education in proportion to new federal assistance, we ask that Congress include a maintenance of effort (MOE) provision as a condition of receiving funding. We recognize that state budgets are under pressure, and that many will need to make cuts, but no state should be allowed to cut higher education disproportionately to other cuts in its overall budget. Furthermore, it's critical to use an expansive definition of "higher education" that includes direct support to institutions and state student financial aid programs.

Additional Support for Minority-Serving Institutions

Numerous existing federal programs recognize the need for and value of investing targeted resources in Historically Black Colleges and Universities, Tribal Colleges and Universities, and Minority-Serving Institutions (including, among others, Hispanic-Serving and Asian American and Native American Pacific Islander-Serving Institutions). These programs seek to expand and enhance the academic quality, institutional management, fiscal stability and self-sufficiency of institutions that serve large numbers of disadvantaged and minority students. These programs are key to closing educational equity gaps. We appreciate that the CARES Act provided supplemental resources and regulatory flexibilities for such institutions and that the HEROES Act proposes additional resources for them, as well. The CSU strongly supports including additional funding for these programs in future COVID-19 relief legislation.

The Pell Grant and Other Student Aid Programs

Finally, as you work to support student success through both the supplemental and regular (FY 2021) appropriations processes, we urge you to consider significantly increased investments in the Pell Grant, as well as other student aid programs that are critical to low-income students and students of color.

The Pell Grant is the foundation of federal student aid, providing opportunity to millions of students who might otherwise be unable to attend college. Most Pell recipients come from families with incomes at or below \$40,000. The CSU strongly supports a significant increase in the maximum Pell Grant and the provision of automatic inflationary increases to the grant each year.

Even with recent increases, the purchasing power of a Pell Grant stands well below historic levels. In the 1980s, the maximum Pell Grant covered more than half of the average cost of a public four-year college. Today, it is closer to 30 percent. Pell Grants are critical for CSU students, even with CSU's relatively modest tuition and fees, and despite the fact that many students work and receive significant need-based aid from the state.

Boosting the Pell Grant will improve opportunities for low-income, working and older students (e.g., those with children) to enroll and sustain themselves financially – and succeed academically. An enhanced Pell program will help relieve growing financial pressure on students to work more hours or take additional jobs. Enabling students to focus on their education will allow them to take more courses. It will result in increased attendance, improved performance, reduced dropout rates, an accelerated path to graduation and reduced borrowing. CSU also asks that any surplus Pell funds remain in the program for use in future years when the program may run deficits, or for improvements to the Pell Grant program.

Similarly, we encourage increased investments in campus-based aid programs. The Supplemental Educational Opportunity Grant (SEOG) program provides up to an additional \$4,000 in grant assistance to Pell Grant recipients with unmet need. Institutions must match federal SEOG funds by providing one dollar for every three allocated by the program. SEOG helps nearly 35,000 CSU students with the greatest need to purchase items like books and supplies.

Federal work-study awards provide further support for high-need students, along with new skills to help students become more employable. In general, institutions must match federal work-study funds by providing one dollar for every three allocated by the program. More than 7,800 CSU students benefit from work-study awards.

Conclusion

The CSU has long appreciated this committee's efforts – and those of your colleagues in both houses of Congress – to support our students and our mission. And we ask for additional support and investment during this public health crisis of historic proportions. We do so on behalf of the nation's largest and most racially, ethnically and economically diverse student body in four-year public higher education, so that we can continue to be a powerful driver of socioeconomic ascent. And we do so because keeping more students – students from all walks of life – enrolled and maintaining progress toward a high-quality degree is not only beneficial to their lives, families and communities, it is also a vital public good for our country.

America – through the economic recovery and beyond – will increasingly require a nimble, entrepreneurial workforce. We need culturally competent problem solvers, comfortable and capable in the sciences and in technology and virtual environments – climate literate and inspired to lead the world to a sustainable future. We need them to ensure a sound and vigorous American economy in the changing world of work. And we need them for a healthy, vibrant and more equitable society.

The California State University welcomes the opportunity to be a resource to you as you continue to explore ways to ensure access and success in higher education.