

Californians Lacking Basic Academic Skills

California Community Colleges System Office

April 2006

A Growing Educational and Social Crisis

- California faces a growing crisis of under-educated citizens that imperils the state's economic and social future.
- Over 1.7 million Californians between the ages of 18 and 35 lack a high school diploma (U.S. Census estimate).
- Almost 30% of California high-school students drop out. The drop out rate for African-Americans and Latinos is 40%.
- An estimated 48,000 of this year's high school senior class have not passed the California High School Exit Exam (CAHSEE).
- Already, over half of the low-income households in California are headed by an adult lacking a high school diploma, the highest rate in the country.
- An estimated 75% of new jobs in today's economy require some level of postsecondary education. California's future workforce is under-educated and under-prepared and the crisis is deepening.
- California's Community Colleges serve as a "second chance" for many, primarily through non-fee, non-credit programs in basic skills, high school equivalency or high school diploma, English-as-a-second language, and short-term occupational training. These "second chance" programs are a demonstrated **portal to opportunity**, either through immediate employment or by placing students on a successful path to certificates or associate degrees through credit programs, or to bachelor's degrees through transfer to four-year institutions. For many students, the noncredit programs are **the crucial first step on the path to success**.
- Noncredit programs are especially important for students of color. 62% of noncredit community college students are students of color. Two out of five are Latino. In one urban college's example, almost 60% of African-American, Latino and Asian students take noncredit courses on their path to receiving an associate's degree at San Francisco City College.
- California's Community Colleges are prepared to step up these programs to meet the burgeoning state need, but cannot do so at the current level of state support (an impossibly low \$2,200 per full-time-equivalent student.) The California Community Colleges have a proposal to correct this and help the state meet this overarching educational problem.

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“Second Chance Courses” Funding Reform Helps Meet Critical State Need

- The California Community Colleges fully support SB 361 (Scott). This bill is a comprehensive reform to the formulas that allocate general-purpose apportionments to the 72 districts, based on extensive work by a group of chief financial officers from 12 of the districts, and further work by the System Office and Consultation with college representatives around the state.
- The bill includes a reform that will help the state meet the growing crisis of young people lacking basic academic skills, by funding selected noncredit courses of compelling state need at the state-supported rate for credit courses. These “second chance courses” of critical state need have been selected by a task force of chief instructional officers and academic senate members from the colleges, and address areas such as basic skills, high school equivalency, short-term occupational training, and English-as-a-second Language (ESL).
- The colleges currently receive only \$2,200 per student (full-time-equivalent) for these courses, which is clearly inadequate to the task of educating these students. To succeed, these students need at least the same level and quality of services as students in credit courses, which are funded at roughly \$4,000 per student.
- SB 361 and the Board of Governors budget proposal will permit the colleges to expand programs to meet the burgeoning need across the state for these “second chance” courses in basic skills, high school equivalency, ESL and occupational training leading to employment.
- As the first stage of a multi-year plan to increase funding to the state-supported credit rate, the California Community Colleges propose the allocation of \$30 million in the 2006-07 Budget, **using savings in the existing community colleges base**. This would increase funding of “second chance” courses by about \$400 per student, roughly one-fourth of what is ultimately needed, but a critical first boost.
- The Community Colleges proposal gives the Legislature and Governor the opportunity to begin to address this critical area of statewide educational need without drawing upon new General Fund monies. The benefits to the state in terms of workforce preparation, a productive economy and reduced crime and poverty are compelling. The “turn-around” in the lives of tens of thousands of young people each year is beyond measure. The consequences of inaction are unacceptable.