

The California State University Employee Update
Thursday, January 28, 2010

CSU Leads National Effort to Improve Graduation Rates

The California State University is leading a national initiative to increase the graduation rate of its students by 8 percent in the next six years. The "Graduation Initiative," which was announced at the Board of Trustees meeting this week, also seeks to reduce by half the gap in degree completion between underrepresented students and their peers.

The CSU has long focused its efforts on student success and degree completion. The goal of the Graduation Initiative is to bring the system's graduation rate to 54 percent--the top quartile of national averages of similar institutions--from its current 46 percent. All 23 campuses will be involved in the effort.

"The Obama Administration has set a goal for the United States to be the leader in college degree holders by the year 2020," said CSU Chancellor Charles B. Reed. "The CSU graduates 90,000 students into the workforce each year, and we cannot reach this national goal without the CSU increasing the number of students that we graduate each year."

The Graduation Initiative is part of the National Association of System Heads' (NASH) "Access to Success" effort, aimed at closing the historic gaps in college access and success between students of different racial and economic backgrounds. Twenty-four of the public higher education system-members of NASH have pledged to join the graduation initiative led by the CSU.

Each of the CSU's campuses will work on an individual Graduation Initiative plan with specific measures and goals designed to reach the systemwide goal of 8 percent by 2016. Campuses will employ a variety of measures to help students including early start and summer bridge programs which prepare students for college level work before they enter college; degree audits and early warning advising to ensure students take the correct courses and appropriate number of credits; online roadmaps to graduation; and other support services.

Campuses may also consider mandating earlier declaration of a major, decreasing the number of general education courses, curtailing student withdrawals from classes, increasing the use of online learning and technology and other remedies designed to help students stay on track.

"A big part of the challenge is that our student profile is not what most think of as a traditional college student," said CSU Executive Vice Chancellor and Chief Academic Officer Jeri Echeverria. "The average age of our students is 24, about 70 percent of them work, and a third of our students are the first in their family to attend college. All of these factors play a part in our approach and our ultimate success in supporting students to achieve their degree."

Budget Will Help CSU Begin to Restore Access

Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger's proposed 2010-11 state budget will begin to restore student access with the restoration of \$305 million in one-time cuts from the CSU's current budget and an additional \$60.6 million for enrollment.

The budget for the CSU provides more than \$2.7 billion from the state General Fund and more than \$2 billion from student fee revenue. The additional \$60.6 million for enrollment growth is contingent upon the state receiving a threshold amount in federal aid for other state programs.

The governor's budget, which must have the legislature's approval to be enacted, seeks to close a \$19.9 billion state budget deficit over the next 18 months through a variety of cuts and shifts in spending, many of which will start in the current fiscal year.

Although the legislature's approval of the additional funding will allow the CSU to begin to restore student access, state funding is still below the 2007-08 level.

The governor affirmed his commitment to education and to restoring funding to the CSU by proposing a state constitutional amendment that would guarantee a minimum of 10 percent of state General Fund spending for the CSU by 2014-15. Constitutional amendments require a majority vote of state voters. [More information.](#)

CSU Fundraising Remains Steady

Despite an economy in which donors are giving less, the CSU attained \$366 million in charitable gift commitments in 2008-09. Gift receipts (new gifts and pledge payments) totaled more than \$260 million, nearly matching the previous year's record-breaking total. Donors provided more than \$173 million for student scholarships, academic initiatives and other university needs. Another \$81 million went to new facilities, endowments and irrevocable deferred gift accounts. Only \$6.5 million—or 2 percent of total gift receipts—were unrestricted gifts, which the university can allocate toward its priorities.

Endowments suffered a 17 percent investment loss, comparable to a national university average loss of 19 percent. Donors contributed \$39 million in new gifts toward endowments, with more than half of those contributions dedicated to student scholarships. In addition to charitable support, the CSU also received more than \$1.5 billion in operating grants and contracts, of which \$268.5 million came from one-time federal stimulus funds. [More information.](#)

New Book Chronicles CSU's History

"The People's University," a new book authored by former Sacramento State University President Don Gerth was unveiled at the CSU Board of Trustees meeting this week.

The nearly 700-page book is filled with anecdotes from the system's early founders and its subsequent leaders, faculty, staff and students. It focuses attention on the 1960 California Master Plan, which delineated the roles of the California State University, the University of California and the California Community Colleges.

The book is available on [Amazon](#) and in CSU campus bookstores.