

SUPPORT THE SPECIAL AND UNIQUE MISSION OF US PUBLIC COMMUNITY COLLEGES

WHEREAS, community colleges are open access institutions serving as the entry-point for millions of students across the nation , and currently serve 48% of undergraduate students—over seven million nationally;ⁱ and

WHEREAS, community colleges comprise 60% of public degree-granting institutions in the nation,ⁱⁱ but they received only 27% of total federal, state, and local revenues for public degree-granting institutions in 2007-2008;ⁱⁱⁱ and

WHEREAS, public community colleges nationwide serve a disproportionate number of students from underrepresented and underprivileged backgrounds—53% of Hispanic, 45% of Black, 45% of Asian/Pacific Islander, and 52% of Native American undergraduates in 2007—and projections of U.S. population growth indicate that an increasing number of college students will come from these populations in the coming years;^{iv} and

WHEREAS, because of systemic race and class inequalities in K-12 education and gross income disparities, community college students often have greater academic and financial needs than their counterparts at public four-year institutions; and

WHEREAS, public higher education as a whole is seriously underfunded, but at public community colleges – where nearly half of all college undergraduates are enrolled and where the percentages of poor students and students of color are highest – the underfunding is especially acute: in 2008, the most recent year for which figures are available, annual expenditures per full-time equivalent student at public community colleges were \$11,732, while at four-year public colleges expenditures were \$14,905;^v and

WHEREAS, community colleges' unique mission includes liberal arts education leading to Associate's degrees; developmental and remedial coursework for poorly prepared students, English-language learners and older students returning to college; technical training certification programs; and foundation courses for students seeking a lower-cost education and who intend to transfer into baccalaureate degree programs; and

WHEREAS, community colleges are locally based, and historically, have also been called on to respond to local and regional economic development needs in addition to their multiple other roles; thus they have played a critical role in workforce development and retraining programs, a role that has grown in importance in the recent recession; and

WHEREAS, while public investment in public higher education institutions has been declining for at least a decade, the recession accelerated cut-backs in virtually every state, and the impact on community colleges has been severe: for example, public funding to community colleges nationwide declined 3.4% in 2009 alone;^{vi} and

WHEREAS, at the same time, the economic crisis has generated greater demand for public community colleges, swelling enrollment nationwide by 17% over 2007/2008 and 11% in 2009;^{vii} and

WHEREAS, more states are eliminating remedial and developmental courses from their public colleges and universities and requiring students with these needs to attend community colleges, thereby increasing enrollment pressure on the community colleges without providing additional funding;^{viii} and

WHEREAS, despite the increased demand for community college education, the cut-backs in funding have forced public community colleges nationwide to increase tuition, increase

class size, limit course offerings, create waiting lists, and in some cases close their doors to new students, as occurred in California in 2010, when 140,000 students were turned away;^{ix} and

WHEREAS, there is growing evidence that these factors have contributed to a drop in community college enrollment: community college enrollments have dropped 5.1% nationally from 2009 and 2010, even as the percentage of Pell Grant recipients among community college students has risen 17%,^x raising concern that continued underfunding is undermining community colleges' ability to maintain access during this period of sustained unemployment;^{xi} and

WHEREAS, while the Obama administration's American Graduation Initiative (AGI) calls for a 50% increase in community college graduates—nearly five million more graduates—which would require a massive and sustained funding increase, there has been little funding to date and the funding that has been available has been narrowly focused on workforce development.^{xii}

RESOLVED, that AFT acknowledge the special and unique character and multiple missions of United States public community colleges and their role in providing access to higher education, especially for working-class families, women, students of color, and immigrants; and

RESOLVED, that AFT condemn the growing restrictions on admissions to US public community colleges and the withdrawal of public support from these institutions; and

RESOLVED, that AFT support the open-access mission of US public community colleges through support for policies that recognize the special financial needs of community college students, such as free tuition, support for student living expenses, childcare, textbooks, and necessary equipment, and needs-based financial aid; and

RESOLVED, that AFT seek financial support for educational programs for US public community colleges that recognize the special educational needs of community college students, such as developmental education programs, intensive academic counseling, class size that permits intensive faculty-student interaction, and the opportunity to study with full-time faculty and equitably-treated part-time faculty; and be it further

RESOLVED, that AFT call for public reinvestment in US public community colleges through the pursuit of local, state and federal legislation, and for investment on the broadest, not the narrowest understanding of the public community college mission.

Notes

ⁱ U.S. Census Bureau, *Table 278. Higher Education—Institutions and Enrollment 1980 to 2009*, April 29, 2012, <http://www.census.gov/compendia/statab/2012/tables/12s0278.pdf>.

ⁱⁱ *Ibid.*

ⁱⁱⁱ Mullin, *Doing More with Less*. 4.

^{iv} Christopher M. Mullin, *Doing More with Less: The Inequitable Funding of Community Colleges*, American Association of Community Colleges, September 8, 2010. , <http://www.aacc.nche.edu/Publications/Briefs/Pages/rb09082010.aspx>

^v *Ibid.*, 7.

^{vi} Donna M. Desrochers and Jane V. Wellman, *Trends in College Spending: 1999-2009*, Delta Cost Project, September 7, 2011, http://www.deltacostproject.org/resources/pdf/Trends2011_Final_090711.pdf, 13-14.

^{vii} Virginia Myers, "Leaning on Community Colleges," American Federation of Teachers, *On Campus*, January/February 2012, http://www.aft.org/pdfs/oncampus/oc_janfeb12.pdf, 8-9.

^{viii} Joanne Jacobs, "States Push Remedial Education to Community Colleges," *US News and World Report*, January 13, 2012. <http://www.usnews.com/education/best-colleges/articles/2012/01/13/states-push-remedial-education-to-community-colleges>

^{ix} Gary Rhoades, *Closing the Door, Increasing the Gap: Who's not going to (community) college?* Center for the Future of Higher Education, April 2012.

http://futureofhighered.org/uploads/ClosingTheDoorFINAL_ALL32812.pdf

^x Christopher Mullin and Kent Phillippe, *Fall 2011: Estimated Headcount Enrollment and Pell Grant Trends*, American Association of Community Colleges. December 2011

^{xi} Rhoades, *Closing the Door*, 5.

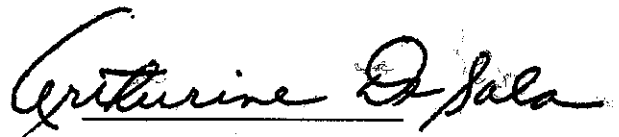
^{xii} The White House, "Fact Sheet on the American Graduation Initiative," July 14, 2009,

http://www.whitehouse.gov/the_press_office/Excerpts-of-the-Presidents-remarks-in-Warren-Michigan-and-fact-sheet-on-the-American-Graduation-Initiative/.

Submitted by: Professional Staff Congress, Local 2334



President



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