

Education Matters: LACCD Advocacy Brief

Vol. 1 No. 2



A Note from Board President Veres



March 18 marked one year since the COVID-19 outbreak forced us to move into a remote learning and work environments. Californians have been grappling with the pandemic's challenging health and disproportionate impacts on lower-income communities of color, and our LACCD students and communities are no exception. Sadly, however, this unforgiving and relentless virus has claimed the lives of three members of our LACCD family—two students and one staff member. Many of us have also lost other family members and friends. We remember them all at this one-year juncture with love, grace and humility.

Our recovery to a post-pandemic world is just beginning. The Biden Administration and the 117th United States Congress have made significant progress on COVID-19 relief. Locally, increased vaccinations have resulted in a drop in the infection rate and death toll, leading to a transition from the highest-risk Purple Tier category to Red and soon, if this downward trend continues, to the Orange and Yellow Tier categories.

I am so proud of how LACCD faculty, staff and students have risen to challenges this past year with resilience and resolve. This resilient determination and resolve to adapt and succeed has paved a path that will lead LACCD to a stronger future. As we plan and prepare our resume to in-person instruction, we continue to work closely with the Los Angeles County Public Health Department and our employee groups to facilitate a safe, coordinated approach, ensuring that all health protocols are followed for a safe return to campus. And, we must remain conscious of the ongoing threat the virus poses to the progress made, and to slow the spread.

Here at LACCD, this past year of social distancing has brought us closer together. I am convinced that together we can confront and defeat the racial and ethnic inequalities present in our systems, institutions, and communities and move towards a more equitable and just society, where a person's destiny is not determined by the color of their skin, native language, income or zip code. Now is the time to address the deep

systemic vulnerabilities and disparities that the pandemic has exposed. Our path forward is clear: “Rebuilding back stronger and better,” with a firm and relentless commitment to bridging the inequities and economic disparities made more evident by the pandemic.

Additionally, LACCD continues to advocate for increased investments to community colleges at the state and federal levels. Community colleges are perfectly positioned to be economic drivers, and we continue to expand partnerships with philanthropy, non-profits and local governments to provide our students with basic needs supports and expand opportunity. Thank you for your generous contributions and cooperative spirit.

There is a clear connection between education, equity and the economy, and we hope that we can continue to count on your support and advocacy to call out and break down obstacles that limit opportunity, and help our institutions emerge from the pandemic better positioned to serve students and our communities of Los Angeles.

Stay safe and remain strong!

Regards,



Steven F. Veres

Board President, Los Angeles Community Colleges Board of Trustees



With the Biden-Harris Administration taking office and the 117th Congress convening, there is new opportunity to push for LACCD’s top priorities at the federal level, including comprehensive immigration reform and a pathway to citizenship for our DACA students. Although President Biden reinstated DACA through Executive Action on his first day in office, LACCD believes that the program must be guaranteed in perpetuity through legislation. Further, comprehensive immigration reform must provide a clear pathway to citizenship for undocumented families in this country.

On February 18, Senator Robert Menendez (D-N.J.) and Congresswoman Linda Sanchez (D-Calif.) introduced the U.S. Citizenship Act of 2021 in the Senate and House

(H.R. 1177), respectively. The bill, which President Joe Biden sent to Congress on his first day in office to reform the U.S. immigration system, proposes changes to reimagine diverse areas of immigration from employment and family-based immigration to asylum, refugee, and other humanitarian protections, as well as border security. The bill now has 117 co-sponsors and we thank our delegation including Rep. Roybal-Allard, Rep. Chu, Rep. Bass, Rep. Gomez, Rep. Cardenas, Rep. Barragan, Rep. Lieu, Rep. Schiff, Rep. Waters, Rep. Lowenthal, Rep. Napolitano, and Rep. Brownley for their support.

The centerpiece of the bill is the eight-year path to citizenship for undocumented immigrants who arrived in the US prior to January 1, 2021, including a fast track for agricultural workers and for people with Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA), temporary protected status (TPS), or deferred enforced departure (DED). It includes provisions that would address the underlying causes of migration, expand the number of available visas and green cards, invest in technology and infrastructure at ports of entry on the border, remove obstacles to asylum, and shore up protections for immigrant workers. If passed, the long-anticipated bill would mark the most sweeping reform of the U.S. immigration system since 1986.

In addition, House and Senate Democrats—led by Sen. Padilla and Rep. Lieu—announced new stand-alone legislation, the “[Citizenship for Essential Workers Act](#),” that would provide a path to citizenship for undocumented immigrants serving as essential workers during the pandemic. This is the first bill that Senator Padilla has introduced since taking office.

The bill would allow workers in a broad list of industries—including agriculture, child care, health care, food processing and hospitality—to immediately apply for a green card. After five years, those individuals would then be eligible to apply for U.S. citizenship.

LACCD has met with Reps. Sanchez, Barragan, and Chu to discuss this critical legislation. In addition, last month, Rep. Cardenas spoke to LACCD’s DACA/Immigration Taskforce about the congressional landscape and immigration reform. We continue to keep this issue front and center for our members of congress.

American Dream and Promise Act

On March 18th, the US House of Representatives passed H.R. 6, the American Dream and Promise Act, which would place 2.3 million "Dreamers," unauthorized immigrants who arrived in the US as minors, on a path to citizenship. At least 300,000 immigrants who have Temporary Protected Status or Deferred Enforced Departure, forms of humanitarian relief, would also be put on a track toward permanent residency if they meet eligibility requirements. All House Democrats voted to approve the legislation, and nine Republicans voted with them, in a 228-197 vote.

The American Rescue Plan (ARP)

The U.S. House of Representatives on March 10, 2021, passed the Senate-amended H.R. 1319, the American Rescue Plan (ARP). The ARP provides \$1.9 trillion in

additional relief to respond to the novel coronavirus (COVID-19). This follows the enactment of nearly \$4 trillion in COVID relief in 2020. President Joe Biden called for Congress to enact the ARP to provide relief for individuals and businesses struggling due to COVID-19, as well as to achieve other priorities of the Biden Administration and Congress. ARP includes provisions on aid to higher education institutions, state and local governments, hard-hit industries and communities, additional stimulus payments to individuals, expanded unemployment, additional funding for vaccines and other key priorities. A summary of the bill is here: <https://www.hklaw.com/en/insights/publications/2021/03/american-rescue-plan-act-of-2021-summary>

The new bill includes nearly \$40 billion for higher education, using the same Higher Education Emergency Relief Fund (HEERF) model established in previous relief packages. The ARP HEERF III funds require that 50% of an institution's funds be spent on student grants, with the exception of for-profit institutions, which must spend 100% of their funds on student grants. Allowable uses include:

Student Portion

Institutions may award student grants for:

- Any component of their cost of attendance
- Emergency costs that arise due to coronavirus, such as: tuition; food; housing; health care (including mental); child care

Institutional Portion

Institutions may use the grants to defray expenses associated with coronavirus, including:

- Lost revenue
- Reimbursement for expenses already incurred
- Technology costs associated with a transition to distance education
- Faculty and staff trainings
- Payroll
- Make additional financial aid grants to students

Institutions must use a portion of their allocation for:

- Implementing evidence-based practices to monitor and suppressing coronavirus in accordance with public health guidelines
 - Conducting direct outreach to financial aid applicants about the opportunity to receive a financial aid adjustment due to the recent unemployment of a family member or independent student, or other circumstances
-



State Policy Updates

Ethnic Studies

In 1968, a coalition known as the Third World Liberation Front (TWLF) was formed between the Black Student Union and other student groups at San Francisco State University [and later at UC Berkeley]. Students led a five month strike on campus, demanding a radical shift in admissions practices that mostly excluded nonwhite students and in the curriculum regarded as irrelevant to the lives of students of color. This effort led to the creation of ethnic studies programs at both San Francisco State and the University of California, Berkeley.

Yet, 52 years later, the lack of diverse curriculum is still an issue in our state's educational system. California's population is now more diverse than ever. The California Department of Education has noted on its website, "Over the course of history, both in our state and nationally, specific ethnic groups have had unjust treatment even from respected institutions of authority. The curriculum taught in our schools has not done enough to highlight and preserve the contributions of people of color and has actually minimized the importance of their role."

California Community Colleges (CCC) serves 2.3 million students, 74 percent of which are racial minorities. Of this, 46 percent of students are Latino, six percent of students are African-American, 11 percent of students are Asian, and less than one percent of students are Native American, as reported on the [CCC Chancellor's Office data site](#). Currently, fewer than half of the 115 community colleges offer an ethnic studies course. Many of these students attended California high schools and do not have the benefit of learning their own history, cultures, and the important contributions present in our society today.

Last year, the Governor signed [AB 1460 \(Weber\)](#), which requires all CSU students to take an ethnic studies course in order to receive a baccalaureate degree. [AB 1040 \(Muratsuchi\)](#), sponsored by the LACCD, expands access to ethnic studies courses at each community college district in the state, and requires the completion of at least one course in ethnic studies of at least three units as a requirement for a student to obtain an associate degree. This bill will help introduce new cultural perspectives to educate

students through the development of critical thinking skills, broadening students perspectives to help advance a more inclusive society that values diversity.

The hearing for AB 1040-Muratsuchi is on Thursday, April 8 in the morning. For those who wish to submit support letters for the bill, submit them electronically to the following link:

<https://calegislation.lc.ca.gov/Advocates/>

State Budget Updates

The Legislature passed and the Governor signed a \$7.6 billion “[Early Action](#)” package to address the COVID pandemic in California. That package included three pieces of community college action that will help LACCD engage students and provide much needed aid to the students that we serve. The three critical pieces of the package include:

- \$100 million in emergency financial aid for community college students
- \$20 million in enrollment and retention strategies
- \$3.1 million in CalFresh funding

LACCD successfully advocated for flexibility in the requirements for the \$100 million in emergency aid. It was critical to the districts that this funding be available to first-time students, as these were the students that were most impacted by the COVID pandemic. Under the provisions of the aid funding, LACCD will be able to partner with local providers to offer critical food and housing support to our students. The districts will likely receive over \$10 million in funding for this purpose.

The district will also likely receive approximately \$1.8 million for outreach and enrollment strategies. This will help to re-engage students that may have dropped out or stopped-out. Additionally, LACCD will likely receive approximately \$300,000 of the \$3.1 million in CalFresh funding, which will enable the District to connect students with nutrition benefit programs.

The Administration hopes to get the funding to districts by April so that we can begin to use the funds to serve our students.



We are excited to announce that LACCD and the City of Los Angeles executed the MOU for the LACCD-City Connect Program, which will create a direct hiring pipeline for LACCD students at the City of Los Angeles. In coordination with the Office of Mayor Eric Garcetti, LACCD is currently working with the Los Angeles City Personnel Department to provide training for job posting for LACCD students through the [College Central Network](#). The Personnel Department also plans to begin hosting webinars to teach LACCD students about how to apply and procure a job with the City of Los Angeles this month.

This District is also fostering collaboration between the Personnel Department and LACCD Workforce and Worksource Development Centers to engage in student outreach and potentially develop training programs for LACCD students to target vacant and hard-to-fill positions within the City of Los Angeles.



In order to prepare for a presentation of the [Metro Fareless System Initiative](#) at the Metro Board of Directors Meeting on February 25th, LACCD mobilized students to advocate during public comment for an LACCD-based transit pilot program by Fall 2021. A total of seven student speakers expressed their support for the program at the Metro Board of Directors meeting, with countless others submitting letters of support via email as well. We want to thank the following amazing student advocates: Elias Geronimo, Karla Nuñez, Jose Rivera, Lesly Plata, Leo Gonzalez, Erica Fletcher, and Jackie Alcalá.

Thanks to these students for taking their time to participate in public comment for advancing a Metro Fareless Initiative Pilot Program at LACCD. In addition, we would like to extend our gratitude to LASC ASO Advisor/CalWORKs Counselor Juan Camacho and LACCD Chancellor Francisco Rodriguez for partaking in the meeting as well, which further amplified the need for the program at LACCD.

Their comments made a significant impact at the Metro Board Meeting. Los Angeles Mayor Eric Garcetti verbally acknowledged the comments from LACCD's speakers and has requested that the Fareless System Initiative staff evaluate the integration of all LACCD students into the proposed program, who will also explore the implementation of the program.



It is with great pleasure that we announce the expansion of our [Hope Housing for Students Program](#), which will accommodate 14 formerly homeless female-identifying students from East Los Angeles College (ELAC), Los Angeles City College, and Los Angeles Trade Technical College.

At present, [Shower of Hope](#) is successfully housing formerly homeless male-identifying ELAC students through the Hope Housing for Students Program that was launched this past fall. LACCD and Shower of Hope have initiated the outreach and interview process to fill the spaces available at the new location, and are continuing to engage students for the initial program.



The LACCD Board of Trustees has approved a number of substantial resolutions related to equity and inclusion over the past few months.

Resolution In Recognition of Black History Month and its significance to LACCD
Board President Veres and Trustee Henderson presented a “Resolution In Recognition of Black History Month and its significance to LACCD” to join with the nation in recognizing and celebrating February as Black History Month and to encourage its colleges and student organizations to promote historical and cultural awareness by featuring various programs, exhibits, and other relevant activities and by participating in events sponsored by local communities. More here:

<http://go.boarddocs.com/ca/laccd/Board.nsf/goto?open&id=BXQVTY82584C>

Denouncing Anti-Asian and Pacific Islander Violence

Board President Veres and Trustees Fong and Buelna presented a resolution “Denouncing Anti-Asian and Pacific Islander Violence” to denounce hate crimes, hateful rhetoric, xenophobia, anti-Asian American and Pacific Islander sentiment, and hateful acts and violence against any ethnic group, reaffirming that LACCD is a community that values diversity, equity and inclusion. More here:

<http://go.boarddocs.com/ca/laccd/Board.nsf/goto?open&id=BYHTZU79D466>

In Support of Equal Pay in California Community Colleges and at Los Angeles Community College District

Board President Veres and Trustees Hoffman and Henderson presented a resolution “In Support of Equal Pay in California Community Colleges and at Los Angeles Community College District” to urge the elimination of any wage gap based on gender and to advance the implementation the California Fair Pay Act. More here:

<http://go.boarddocs.com/ca/laccd/Board.nsf/goto?open&id=BYHU327A062C>

From the Chancellor's Desk



Looking Ahead, What to Expect

As you can clearly see from this e-letter, the District has not been deterred by the current public health and justice crises – in fact, they have fueled our determination to redress long-standing health and educational disparities further exacerbated by them. Health officials are very optimistic about the situation and the path for recovery. County [Health orders](#) and [protocols for Institutes of Higher Education](#) are being modified to allow for a greater return to in-person instruction and in-person services. For now, we expect the remainder of the Spring 2021 Semester to operate in the current environment, even though the County has moved from the Purple to Red Tier recently.

The great news is that County health officials anticipate Los Angeles County will move into the Orange Tier sometime during the week of April 5. If case numbers and other metrics continue to move downward as vaccination rates increase, health officials are also estimating that the County could be in the Yellow Tier sometime before June. As a result, we may see some additional movement to more in-person environments in a variety of areas throughout the County as early as this summer. **Based on the projections by the County, the District's planning assumption for the Fall 2021 Semester is that we will operate in the Yellow Tier, meaning that we can repopulate our campuses up to 50% of capacity.** While there is still quite a bit of planning and consultation involved to return safely and efficiently, this is very good news.

LACCD Proud

The last 12 months have been a long haul and I miss seeing you all in-person. None of this has been easy, but we are in a time of hopeful transition. Working together has been the hallmark of how this District operates, and the Board of Trustees and I have never been more proud during the past year, as we have worked to overcome the coronavirus pandemic, maintain our core mission of serving students and our communities, and address some pervasive racial equity and social justice issues. Our personal and organizational strength, resolve and resourcefulness has shined beautifully. ¡***Si Se Puede!*** – ***Yes We Can!*** And we did.

With my deep admiration and respect,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Francisco C. Rodriguez', written in a cursive style.

Francisco C. Rodriguez, Ph.D.
Chancellor
Los Angeles Community College District

About the Los Angeles Community College District

We are the Colleges of Los Angeles! LACCD is the nation's largest community college district, educating about 250,000 students annually at its nine colleges that serve the residents of more than 36 cities and communities from 900 square miles of Los Angeles County. Since 1969, the District has been providing an important learning pathway for students seeking transfer to four-year colleges or universities while also offering two-year degrees and certificated training programs to Southern California's diverse workforce in many specialized trades and professions.

Members of the Board

Steven F. Veres, President | Gabriel Buelna, Ph.D., Vice President | David Vela, Second Vice President
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