



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
February 19, 2019

CONTACTS: [Shannon Serrato](#), (510) 318-7915
[Angelique Palomar](#), (510) 318-7907

Experts Kick Off Series of Financial Aid Reform Discussions in Sacramento

Representing students, policymakers, colleges, and more, group will discuss how the state can better meet students' total college costs after reasonable student and family contributions

Oakland, CA – Experts across California agree that college costs hold students back from completing college or completing it in a timely way, keep students from focusing on their studies, and contribute to burdensome levels of debt. With California Governor Gavin Newsom and the State Legislature both keenly interested in reforming California's financial aid system to reduce these barriers, The Institute for College Access & Success (TICAS) has convened a working group to inform the complex and dynamic policy debates integral to financial aid reform and ensure the state moves towards a higher education system that is both more affordable and more equitable.

Topics will include questions about how Cal Grant eligibility and award calculations should be changed; how an equitable affordability pledge should be constructed; what the expectations for the state, schools, and students should be; and how California can best leverage existing financial aid investments, including improving outreach, communication, capacity, and processes.

The 17 working group members represent a range of perspectives and experiences within higher education and financial aid and will meet for six closed door sessions between now and October. Recently retired Director of Student Financial Support for the University of California Christopher Carter, who brings decades of experience with California financial aid policy and operations, will be facilitating the meetings.

"The level of interest in financial aid policy has finally matched the issue's importance to the state," said **Debbie Cochrane**, TICAS executive vice president. "California's future relies on developing a more affordable and equitable system of higher education, and we stand ready to support policymakers as they seek to achieve that goal through reforms to financial aid."

In addition to TICAS staff, working group membership includes:

- ❖ Lande Ajose, Senior Higher Education Advisor, Office of Governor Gavin Newsom
- ❖ Mary Booker, Assistant Vice Provost for Student Financial Services, University of San Francisco
- ❖ Shawn Brick, Interim Director of Student Financial Support, University of California Office of the President
- ❖ Brianna Bruns, Director of Policy and Advocacy, California EDGE Coalition
- ❖ Jake Brymner, State & Federal Policy Director, The Campaign for College Opportunity

- ❖ Ruben Canedo, Research & Mobilization Coordinator, University of California, Berkeley; Office of the Vice Chancellor: Equity and Inclusion
- ❖ Eric Harris, Legislative Advocate, California State Conference of the NAACP
- ❖ Mónica Henestroza, Special Assistant to the CA Assembly Speaker, California State Assembly
- ❖ Dean Kulju, Director of Student and Financial Aid Services and Programs, California State University Chancellor's Office
- ❖ Jen Mishory, Senior Fellow, The Century Foundation
- ❖ Rhonda Mohr, Vice Chancellor for Student Services and Special Programs, California Community Colleges Chancellor's Office
- ❖ Christopher Nellum, Senior Director of Higher Education Research and Policy, The Education Trust-West
- ❖ David O'Brien, Director of Government Affairs, California Student Aid Commission
- ❖ Latrel Powell, Vice President of Legislative Affairs, Cal State Student Association
- ❖ Olgalilia Ramirez, Principal Consultant at Senate Education Committee, California State Senate
- ❖ Caroline Siegel-Singh, President, University of California Student Association
- ❖ Iiyshaa Youngblood, President, Student Senate for California Community Colleges

###

An independent, nonprofit organization, The Institute for College Access & Success (TICAS) works to make higher education more available and affordable for people of all backgrounds. Our Project on Student Debt works to increase public understanding of student debt and the implications for our families, economy, and society. For more information see www.ticas.org or follow us on [Twitter](#) and [Facebook](#).