

May 29, 2009

Assembly Member Noreen Evans, Chair
Assembly Member Bob Blumenfield
Assembly Member Kevin de Leon
Assembly Member Roger Niello
Assembly Member Jim Nielsen

Senator Denise Moreno Ducheny, Vice Chair
Senator Robert D. Dutton
Senator Mark Leno
Senator Alan S. Lowenthal
Senator Mimi Walters

Re: **Opposition to proposed cuts to the Cal Grant program**

Dear Chairwoman Evans and Vice Chairwoman Ducheny, and Members of the Conference Committee on SB 61,

Governor Schwarzenegger's proposal to eliminate all new Cal Grants, along with deep cuts to public university and college systems, would be disastrous for students and the state of California, both now and in the future. **As representatives and advocates for students throughout the state, we urge you to reject these reckless cuts.** Students and families are counting on Cal Grants to make college possible this fall, and have limited alternatives in these tough economic times. Federal policymakers have recognized the importance of higher education during the current recession and have used stimulus funds to increase need-based grants for students. The proposed cuts would not only negate this federal investment, but also plunge California deeper into recession and jeopardize our economic recovery.

The Cal Grant program has been the cornerstone of California's commitment to college access and affordability for more than 50 years. Since 2001, all qualified graduating high school students have been guaranteed a Cal Grant. Reneging on that promise will wreak havoc with students' college plans for this fall. The Institute for College Access & Success estimates that **more than 200,000 students** would lose all or part of the Cal Grant they were counting on. **At least 118,300 incoming students would lose between \$576 and \$9,708.** These students have very low to moderate incomes, strong grades, and vary greatly in age and type of college, although nearly half are planning to attend community colleges. **An additional 90,000 returning students would lose as much as \$600 each in renewal Cal Grants,** a result of the Governor's proposal to eliminate support for fee increases at UC and CSU.

The loss of Cal Grants will push lower income students off the college track, delay their progress, or leave them deeper in debt as they struggle to make ends meet. Making it harder for Californians to get the training and education they need will add to unemployment, limit economic growth and income tax revenue, and discourage upward mobility and entrepreneurship. The Public Policy Institute of California recently found that California needs more than a million new college-educated workers by 2025 to protect the state economy from decline.

Cutting Cal Grants to hardworking, needy students is not a solution to our state's budget crisis; it will only create more costly problems down the line. We urge you to protect access to quality education, which is key to the future success of the state of California.

Sincerely,

California State Student Association
California Tomorrow
CALPIRG
The Greenlining Institute

The Institute for College Access & Success
Student Senate for California Community Colleges
University of California Student Association