June 23, 2022

Regulations Coordinator
California Community Colleges
Chancellor's Office
1102 Q Street, Suite 4550
Sacramento, CA 95811-6549
regcomments@cccco.edu

VIA ELECTRONIC EMAIL

RE: Proposed Revisions to Title 5 regulations related to Nonresident Tuition Exemption Implementation

Dear Regulations Coordinator,

As a trusted source of research, design, and advocacy for student-centered policies that promote affordability, accountability, and equity in higher education, The Institute for College Access & Success (TICAS) writes to express our overall support for the California Community Colleges Chancellor's Office's (CCCCO) proposed regulatory actions regarding the AB 540 affidavit. Additionally, we would like to uplift some outstanding questions we hope the CCCCO considers as these regulations advance. **We appreciate the effort by the CCCCO to streamline the process for submitting the AB 540 affidavit under Section 54045.4 of the California Code of Regulations, which authorizes community college districts to, on behalf of students, accept verification of the AB 540 affidavit from the California Student Aid Commission (CSAC) to be submitted as part of students' California Dream Act Application (CADAA).** This will in turn help low-income, undocumented community college students receive the financial aid that they need to attend college and complete their postsecondary goals. Furthermore, these regulations support the Vision for Success and Roadmap for the Future by simplifying and streamlining access to financial aid through intersegmental collaboration and thus increasing the likelihood of timely student completion.

Specifically, we support the following regulations and amendments proposed by the CCCCO:

- Section 54045.5 (a): shifting the completion of the affidavit via the CADAA to CSAC. This section's original language specified that a student must complete and submit a questionnaire and may be required to provide additional verification documentation. Requiring students who are completing a CADAA to submit a separate questionnaire at each campus they attend causes unnecessary duplication of effort and should be simplified for students.
- Section 54045.5 (b): removing an additional step from the questionnaire and streamlining all information into one process. This section's original language specified that the questionnaire would affirm that a student has filed, or will file, an application to legalize their immigration status. Streamlining this information into the CADAA affidavit is an easier way to affirm the necessary information.
- Section 54045.5 (f): While this is not a new section of regulations, we are thankful that you are maintaining confidentiality for all documents and information that a student submits to compete

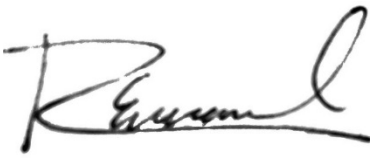
this process, which is critical for this population of students who can be targeted due to their immigration status.

Furthermore, we have the following questions pertaining to the regulations, which we hope the CCCCO can clarify moving forward:

- Section 54045.5 (c): this section states that "an institution may request supplemental information from a student only if it has verifiable conflicting information that pertains to the student's prior history of enrollment at an education institution." While we trust that the CCCCO is acting in good faith we would ask that you clarify what would constitute "verifiable conflicting information," what would this verification process consists of, and what is the timeline to complete this verification process. Our intent in requesting this additional clarification is to prevent this verification process becoming an additional barrier, or delay, on students qualifying for resident tuition rates or receiving financial aid. Research has shown that FAFSA verification tends to disproportionately select BIPOC students, negatively impact students who need financial aid, can be overly burdensome or confusing, and reinforces a counterproductive narrative of "the deserving poor." For example, previous TICAS research has found that while few students' Pell-eligible status changed after verification, applicants selected for verification were less likely to receive grants. Both aid administrators and students have suggested that the complexity of the process – rather than widespread attempts by students to manipulate their eligibility to commit fraud – were the primary reason why students selected for verification were less likely to receive grants. Therefore, we respectfully ask that the CCCCO ensure students are not burdened by unnecessary – and potentially duplicative – additional steps and to make this process as student friendly as possible.

The passage and creation of the AB 540 classification opened the doors of higher education for thousands of undocumented students by allowing them to qualify for in-state tuition. Once combined with the creation of the California Dream Act, these policies allowed California to be one of the first states to allow undocumented students to access institutional and in-state financial aid programs, including the Cal Grant. We thank the CCCCO for not only making sure that our undocumented students feel supported and welcome within the California Community College system, but also that you are looking for ways to streamline and simplify processes that will get financial aid more efficiently to some of our most vulnerable students. We look forward to continuing to work with the CCCCO to further advance meaningful improvements to our state financial aid systems.

Sincerely,



Manny Rodriguez
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The Institute for College Access & Success (TICAS)