June 6, 2024

The Honorable Gavin Newsom
Governor, State of California
1021 O Street, Suite 9000
Sacramento, California 95814

RE: 2024-25 Budget: Cal Grant Reform Support for a Phased-In Approach

Dear Governor Newsom

As a trusted source of research, design, and advocacy for student-centered policies that promote college affordability and accountability, The Institute for College Access & Success (TICAS) applauds and thanks you and your legislative colleagues for codifying and agreeing to advance the Cal Grant Reform Act back in 2022, with a pending funding trigger this year. As such we are hopeful that you will continue that commitment as you negotiate with legislative leadership on the 2024-25 State Budget by taking an equitable first step in implementing the important reform you embraced. We stand ready to work with you and legislative leadership to see Cal Grant reform adopted in the final budget so that over time we grow the amount of aid available to low-income students and increase access to grants for an estimated 137,000 newly eligible students.

Financial aid is critical for many students as they consider how they will afford their postsecondary education. The Legislature’s commitment to Cal Grant reform recognizes the value of a streamlined process for students and families and moves us closer to covering the total cost of education rather than just tuition/fees by indexing the award for community college students to grow overtime. The Legislative budget plan takes a first step in fully implementing this important reform that accomplishes an expansion to both depth and breadth of financial aid.

The state’s fiscal condition makes pulling the “trigger” difficult per the prior budget agreement on Cal Grant reform. However, we believe taking a first step in moving this vital policy change forward is important and support an equitable approach that puts us on a path to full implementation of Cal Grant Reform. The legislative phase-in will commence in the 2025-26 academic year with applications submitted to the California Student Aid Commission (CSAC) beginning this fall. It is important to note that under this proposal only a one-time investment is necessary for the first three years of implementation. Ultimately, TICAS supports an equitable phased-in approach that protects and increases access to financial aid for adult learners, student parents, first-generation, and low-income students who have been shut out of our outdated Cal Grant program.
We ask that you join us in supporting an equitable phased-in approach that protects and increases access to financial aid for our most vulnerable communities. We appreciate all that you are doing to make financial aid accessible for more students and we look forward to working with you to see this enacted in the final 2024-25 state budget.

Sincerely,

Emmanuel Rodriguez
Director of Policy and Advocacy, California
The Institute for College Access and Success (TICAS)

CC: Joe Stephenshaw, Director, Department of Finance
    Nichole Munoz-Murillo, Governor’s Office
    Ben Chida, Deputy Secretary, Governor’s Office
    Chris Ferguson, Department of Finance