

Governor Newsom's Council for Post-Secondary Education Announces California Higher Education Recovery with Equity Taskforce

SACRAMENTO, Calif., August 6, 2020 /PRNewswire/ – Recognizing the vital role that higher education will play in our state's economic recovery from COVID-19 and in socioeconomic mobility for communities hit hardest by the pandemic, Governor Gavin Newsom's Council for Post-Secondary Education today announced the creation of the new **California Higher Education Recovery with Equity Taskforce**. The Taskforce—made up of state and national experts in higher education equity and innovation—is chaired by Governor Newsom's Senior Policy Advisor for Higher Education, Lande Ajose.

Starting in August, the group will work collaboratively to produce a roadmap for the state's education leaders, government, and philanthropic institutions to ensure that California's public post-secondary institutions recover from the impacts of COVID-19 more integrated, equitable, and resilient than before—and more aligned with the economic needs of the state. Their analysis will consider an array of issues such as teaching and learning, student enrollment and transitions, student experience, infrastructure, operations, and finance. The recommendations, to be delivered by the end of 2020, will outline specific actions that can be taken in the mid- and long-term.

“These are trying times for California's students and institutions of higher education. Recasting those challenges as opportunities requires bold vision, deep partnership, and practical ideas,” said Lande Ajose. “When we combine those elements, we can reimagine and rework how our world-class system of public higher education can better serve the diverse and hard-working students of the state. I know the equity-minded leaders on this taskforce can help us emerge from this moment stronger and more resilient than before.”

In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, colleges and universities have had to shift rapidly to remote learning as they grapple with the financial challenges of a recession. The institutions' reduced operations and the pressures of the broader financial crisis have disproportionately impacted low-income, housing and food insecure, and undocumented students.

“In rising to meet the unprecedented challenges of this year, Dr. Ajose and Governor Newsom's staff have exhibited decisiveness and dedication to equity as well as an unwavering commitment to collaboration and diverse expertise,” said Timothy P. White, Chancellor of the California State University and a member of the Governor's Council for Post-Secondary Education.

Eloy Ortiz Oakley, Chancellor of the California Community Colleges and a member of the Governor's Council for Post-Secondary Education said: “With the launch of this taskforce, we will ensure that higher education and workforce concerns are intentionally included in an equitable economic recovery. Our goal is to improve California's public higher education system so that it truly operates as a system and closes the persistent equity gaps exacerbated by the current crisis.”

Governor Gavin Newsom established the Governor’s Council for Post-Secondary Education in August 2019 to serve as an independent consultative resource to the Governor around the economic and social impact of higher education in the state. The Council’s work—to envision an integrated statewide system for post-secondary education that serves California’s diverse students for life—is essential for addressing the immediate and lasting challenges presented by the COVID-19 pandemic. The Governor’s Council on Post-Secondary Education has now established the Recovery with Equity Taskforce to make recommendations, which will be presented to the Council and the Governor.

The work of the California Higher Education Recovery with Equity Taskforce will be facilitated by Education First, a consulting firm with expertise in education policy, strategy, and research that will provide analysis and project management.

Members of the Taskforce include:

- Lande Ajose, Office of the Governor
- Loren Blanchard, California State University
- Nathan Brostrom, University of California
- Bridget Burns, The University Innovation Alliance
- Ben Cannon, Oregon State Higher Education Coordinating Commission
- Michelle Asha Cooper, Institute for Higher Education Policy
- Keith Curry, Compton College
- Bryan Daley, City College of San Francisco
- Mildred Garcia, American Association of State Colleges and Universities
- Daisy Gonzales, California Community Colleges Chancellor’s Office
- Shaun Harper, USC Rossier School of Education
- Monica Lozano, College Futures Foundation
- Timothy Renick, Georgia State University
- Judy Sakaki, Sonoma State University
- Deborah Santiago, Excelencia in Education
- Michele Siqueiros, Campaign for College Opportunity
- Gabrielle Starr, Pomona College
- Hayley Weddle, formerly of the UC Board of Regents
- Michael Wiafe, formerly of the Cal State Student Association

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