

1. Governor Schwarzenegger signs AB 668 into law that allows for more financial aid awareness for community college students.

AB 668 (Portantino) was signed into law by Governor Schwarzenegger. The law is intended to increase the number of community college students receiving state and federal financial aid.

The law requests that community colleges make two significant changes to their financial aid delivery; 1) at the time of enrollment, all community college students will sign a waiver indicating that they are aware of financial aid programs and they can go to the financial aid office for help and 2) the financial aid office will notify all students receiving the BOG Fee Waiver that they may be eligible for the Pell Grant and that they should file the FAFSA.

“California Community College Student Federal and State Financial Aid Opportunity Act.” By The Campaign for College Opportunity, October 2007.

2. College Board to Organize Accountability Among Colleges

The College Board has recently released its CollegeKeys Compact resolution. They have declared their intention to move away from their traditional role as a testing organization to become a leading advocacy organization for excellence and equity in education. They are inviting their member organizations to join them in their effort to increase college access and completion for low-income students. The College Board and those who join the Compact believe that:

1. All students are capable for being prepared for college and that educators, families, communities and policymakers have the responsibility to ensure that all students, including those from low-income backgrounds, graduate from high school ready for college success.
2. All qualified students from low-income backgrounds should receive particular consideration in recruitment, admissions, and financial aid, and that colleges and universities should make every effort to meet the financial needs of this population in ways that make enrollment and full participation in the college experience possible:
and
3. College and universities have a responsibility to provide essential academic support, financial aid, and targeted social and emotional support to ensure that all enrolled students will have every chance to success in their chosen academic programs.

Institutions joining the compact will agree to:

- a. Complete a detailed inventory of their institution’s strengths and needs with regard to student readiness, achievement, and success;
- b. Assigning a team of senior leaders to explore these issues;
- c. Establishing measurable institutional goals for expanding the institution’s progress;
and
- d. Committing to monitoring and publicly reporting their progress

Schools and districts are being asked to provide challenging curriculum and making the college-preparatory curriculum the default curriculum, increase college-awareness programs and to forge

partnerships with college. Likewise colleges are expected to perform more early outreach to low-income students and eliminate financial barriers including waiving fees and making need-based financial aid a priority.

“The CollegeKeys Compact.” By College Board, October 2007.

3. Why Community College Students Drop Out

This study looked into why so many community college students drop out. During the first month of community, many students are lost in the process. More than one-third of students had not taken any placement tests after their first month. More than one-half did not meet with an advisor to develop an academic plan. Furthermore, about one-third did not attend orientation. The results greatly contrast with all the research that states that advising and orientation are integral to helping students stay in college. The report calls for more early outreach and intervention to help these students navigate their way through the community colleges.

“Some Community-College Students Fall Through the Cracks in Their First Month.” By E. Ashburn, The Chronicle of Higher Education, November 16, 2007.

4. Undocumented Students barred from North Carolina colleges.

Community Colleges in North Carolina had been denying admission to all undocumented students. Students were unable to enroll even if willing to pay out-of-state tuition. A mandate from the NC Community College System recently struck down this policy and demanded that they let undocumented students enroll and pay out-of-state tuition. Many politicians are looking into the issue and trying to bar undocumented students from enrolling in the community colleges.

“Political Explosion on Undocumented Students.” By E. Redden, Inside Higher Ed, 12/5/07.