California
Community
Colleges

TO: President Haynes
Vice President Costa
All members of the Board of Governors
Chancellor Oakley

FROM: Dr. John Hetts
Visiting Executive, Research and Data

RE: Preliminary Fall 2021 Headcount and Enrollment

The global pandemic disrupted all facets of life, and college participation was no exception.[1] College students across the nation faced substantial uncertainties about their health and safety, their financial stability, their learning environments, and their family and social connections – all critical inputs for success in college.[2] National and state surveys of college students during the pandemic revealed increased levels of food and housing insecurity, anxiety and mental health issues, difficulty concentrating, and increased worries about academic performance.[3] Increased economic, social, and academic stress was particularly pronounced among community college students and has led large numbers of students to temporarily or permanently alter their college-going intentions/plans.[4] National research suggests community colleges have lost 15 percent of student enrollments since 2019[5], consistent with the previously shared declines observed across our system in the 2020-2021 academic year, raising deep concerns about whether and how students may return to their intended degree paths. These concerns are particularly acute for low-income students, whose families and communities have been disproportionately impacted by the pandemic.[6]

This memo provides you further details about the impacts of the pandemic on California Community College students, using Fall 2021 preliminary data collected through March 3, 2021.

Declines in Enrollment Continued in Fall 2021

The Delta variant wave arrived and peaked during the Fall 2021 semester enrollment period, continuing the disruption of student and college plans for the fall and further exacerbating the previously documented enrollment declines in the 2020-2021 academic year. While data from two colleges, Victor Valley College and Copper Mountain College, remain to be reported, sufficient data is available for meaningful observations to be made about the general patterns of student enrollment in Fall 2021. You can expect a full update and a more detailed presentation at the May Board of Governors Meeting.

The analysis below accounts for 99% of unduplicated[7] student headcount in our system and helps us understand the shape of the ongoing impact on student enrollment. **For reporting colleges, Fall 2021 headcount is down approximately 7% from Fall 2020 and down 20% overall compared to Fall 2019**. This decline was not uniform across student populations however, with more substantial declines among underrepresented students of color, male

students, students with disabilities, and older students (See Table 1). As the impacts of the pandemic have continued, the disproportional impacts observed in Fall 2020 compared to Fall 2019 have evened out slightly in the pandemic's second year, with the pattern of decline from Fall 2020 to Fall 2021 tending slightly toward student categories with steeper declines from Fall 2019 to Fall 2020 showing smaller relative declines from Fall 2020 to Fall 2021.

Table 1: Preliminary system headcount change from F2019 to F2021 (for reporting colleges)

	Fall 2019	Fall 2020	Fall 2021	% Decline F19 to F20	% Decline F20 to F21	Total % Decline F19 to F21
Systemwide Headcount	1,553,191	1,330,717	1,236,957	-14%	-7%	-20%
Female	845,683	759,153	686,094	-10%	-10%	-19%
Male	685,184	553,342	529,869	-19%	-4%	-23%
Asian/Pacific Islander	215,373	186,093	167,395	-14%	-10%	-22%
Black/African-American	84,051	70,243	65,235	-16%	-7%	-22%
Native American/Alaskan Native	5,613	4,509	4,066	-20%	-10%	-28%
Hispanic	739,871	636,143	593,791	-14%	-7%	-20%
White Non-Hispanic	361,928	321,119	296,585	-11%	-8%	-18%
Less than 18	124,251	122,385	122,523	-2%	0%	-1%
18 to 19	341,268	302,526	277,384	-11%	-8%	-19%
20 to 24	443,526	381,067	338,410	-14%	-11%	-24%
25 to 29	199,605	175,075	152,959	-12%	-13%	-23%
30 to 34	117,136	106,216	101,357	-9%	-5%	-13%
35 to 39	81,051	68,919	68,633	-15%	0%	-15%
40 to 49	103,263	82,070	83,010	-21%	1%	-20%
50 +	142,674	92,260	92,518	-35%	0%	-35%
DSPS	73,308	52,792	51,170	-28%	-3%	-30%
Non DSPS	1,479,883	1,277,925	1,185,787	-14%	-7%	-20%

Contextualizing the importance of enrollment, persistence and student success

The impact of the pandemic on community college enrollments nationwide continues to be profound and far-reaching in large part because of the deep and ongoing impact the crisis has had on the very students our colleges serve, leading many more students of all ages to choose or be forced to forgo education, including large numbers of K-12 students. The data above highlights key takeaways that should be further analyzed and utilized in future design and deployment of Chancellor's Office resources, outreach, and professional development:

1. Students who face the strongest and most persistent systematic barriers to educational success were also the students who faced, and continue to face, the deepest *additional* pandemic-induced impacts on their enrollment.

2. Restoring the full mission of the California Community Colleges will require addressing the impacts of the pandemic *and* both the disproportionate impacts it has had and the pre-existing inequities in student enrollment, persistence, and success in our system.

3. The framework of the *Vision for Success* continues to provide important tools to assist colleges in shifting their structures to better meet the needs of our students, improve our classroom and campus climates, and improve student outcomes to once again make attending community college in California a truly life-changing experience.

Every stakeholder in our system has a role to play in restoring our institutions, renewing our students' connections to higher education, and building new connections to Californians previously underserved by our system. Chancellor Oakley and national leaders have raised the alarm on the long-term effects of this pandemic, which calls for institutions of higher education to evolve and become more intentional about developing solutions to meet student basic needs, invest in online educational modalities with student supports, and proactive strategies to compete and/or partner with non-traditional educational providers such as large technology and health care entities, who are moving into direct training, education, and upskilling of potential and current employees.

Our *Vision for Success* framework, strategies, and metrics *(including Guided Pathways, Equitable Placement and Support, the Student Centered Funding Formula, and our Diversity, Equity and Inclusion and the Call to Action work)* seek to systematically prepare our colleges to reorganize themselves and better prepare for the future of education. These priorities refocus our efforts and attention on improving student success in our classrooms, the climate on our campuses, and our students' persistence all the way through the successful completion of the meaningful educational outcomes they seek and deserve.

Next Steps in Understanding Student Enrollment in the California Community Colleges

In order to support these goals and continue to ground our path forward in the work of the *Vision for Success*, the Chancellor's Office will:

1) Provide additional, more detailed analysis and opportunity for discussion of the pandemic's impacts on enrollment at the May Board of Governors meeting.

2) Continue to convene system CEOs to share effective regional strategies and engage in regional collaboration.

3) Focus system webinars in 2022 to elevate strategies that support students from enrollment to completion.

4) Collaborate with external research partners with deep expertise in understanding our system's students and their outcomes to:

   a. survey our institutions about patterns of enrollment in Spring 2022;

   b. systematically document and comprehensively examine the impacts of institutional differences in strategies to address student enrollment, persistence, and completion including: provision of supplemental financial aid and emergency grants, basic needs support and technology access, changes to enrollment and grading practices, alternative approaches to the balance of remote and in-person investments in professional development for online instruction, among many other activities; and

   c. survey former students, current students, and students who applied but did not enroll to both better understand the barriers that students are facing and to provide that information directly to colleges to support more effective triage and support of students' acute needs in support of their enrollment, persistence, and completion.

5) Designing subsequent systemwide professional development and support around the evidence developed from our systemwide conversations with stakeholders and research partners.

The work ahead will require us to remain student-centered and, as the *Vision for Success* calls us to do, *always* design with the student in mind. Across our system, the changes we have all worked to enact over the last few years in anticipation of the coming demographic declines supported the critical actions our system and its colleges took during the pandemic. These actions and lessons continue to provide our system a foundation upon which we can recover, rebuild, train, and retrain millions of Californians. Stakeholders throughout our system continue to pour themselves into very difficult work, achieving Herculean changes repeatedly, in an effort to help maintain our students' access and connection to, and success in higher education. As the system continues to be resilient and evolve, the Board of Governors commitment and affirmation of the *Vision for Success* goals and commitments will continue to be critical to the future of California Community Colleges.

cc: Eloy Oakley, Chancellor
        Dr. Daisy Gonzales, Deputy Chancellor
        Marty Alvarado, Executive Vice Chancellor, ESLEI
        Dr. Lizette Navarette, Executive Vice Chancellor, ISS
        CCCCO Executive Team

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[1] Cooper et al., 2020; Aucejo et al., 2020
[2] Reed et al., 2021; CCCSE, 2021; Aucejo et al., 2020; Belfield & Brock, 2020
[3] Reed et al., 2021; CCCSE, 2021; Goldrick-Rab et al., 2020; Soria et al., 2020; Son et al., 2020
[4] CCCSE, 2021; Reed et al., 2021
[5] National Student Clearinghouse, 2021
[6] Reed et al.. 2021; CCCSE, 2021; Goldrick-Rab et al., 2020
[7] As a result, this unduplicated headcount across the system will vary somewhat from data publicly available on DataMart which provides such counts in a duplicated form, counting students at every college in which they are enrolled. Unduplication provides a more precise accounting of the number of students our system is serving.