

June 18, 2020

California Community Colleges
Office of the Deputy Chancellor
1102 Q Street
Sacramento, CA 95811

Dear Deputy Chancellor Gonzales,

We write to implore you and the California Community Colleges to provide future California Community College students fair and equitable standards for admission as a result of disruptions caused by the COVID-19 response efforts and school campus closures.

All school districts in California have been affected by Governor Newsom's shelter in place order. In response, schools have moved to a distance learning format. This has required teachers to learn new pedagogies and instructional approaches, explore new assessment and grading methods, while simultaneously caring for their own families. In addition, students who are furthest from opportunity are now even more disadvantaged due to inequitable home conditions and access to distance learning. These conditions have led many school districts to question the consistency, predictability and accuracy of assigning grades and the ability for grading to accurately reflect proficiency of standards and content knowledge.

For this reason, Davis Joint Unified School District (DJUSD) and many other districts in the state have implemented a Pass/No-Pass grading system for the Spring Semester of 2020. While we strongly believe that this is the most equitable grading system for our students, we are concerned about the fact that some school districts are still assigning letter grades for Spring Semester 2020 and that the California Community College plans to count these letter grades in the calculation of students' GPA for admission to Community College.

Although grades assigned during Spring Semester of 2020 reflect students' achievement to some extent, the grades also reflect students' access to technology, their parents' status as essential workers, and economic hardships experienced as a result of the COVID-19 response. Those students who are able to achieve high grades during this time and choose to have those grades count toward Community College admission per California Community College policy are likely to be those students with greater advantage.

Because of the wide disparities in grading policies implemented across the state of California and nationwide, we urge the California Community College to continue implementing policies and practices that level the playing field and hold students harmless from letter grades and related grading practices during the pandemic.

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Holding future California Community College applicants harmless requires the California Community Colleges to recognize that existing inequities are exacerbated by the current pandemic and to respond appropriately. We believe that the many challenges related to student assessment as a result of school closures should further encourage the California Community College system to continue to move towards a more holistic review of student achievement by considering all elements within an application. Excluding all Spring 2020 grades from GPA calculation ensures that applicants are not advantaged nor disadvantaged (relative to other students) by their personal circumstances or their school district's grading policy in response to COVID-19.

Sincerely,

Cindy Pickett
President

Joe DiNunzio
Vice-President

Tom Adams
Trustee

Alan Fernandes
Trustee

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Trustee