



# 2024: 20 YEARS *of* UNPARALLELED IMPACT





# A Letter from the President



Twenty years ago, the Campaign for College Opportunity set out to do the impossible: to turn a system designed for and by institutions into one centered around students. Although our work is far from complete, we have radically altered public higher education in California. More than half a million Associate Degrees for Transfer have been awarded. Remedial course placements have been nearly eliminated and replaced with transfer-level courses. Colleges now receive funding that is directly linked to the success of their students. Community college students have a streamlined transfer pathway with guaranteed admission to four-year university systems. We have actualized our founding mission to ensure that California keeps the promise of college opportunity for all students—regardless of their background.

I look to the Campaign's proud history when I consider our future. Students and families face grave national uncertainty, attacks on racial equity gains, and extreme threats to immigrants. Rather than walk away from “impossible” problems, we at the Campaign are inspired to double down. We will continue to unapologetically call for racial and economic justice. We will advocate for student-centered policy transformation. We will ensure that those solutions are implemented with fidelity.

Eight months into my role as President, and nearly two decades into my time co-leading the Campaign, we have shepherded one of the Campaign's most ambitious policy agendas to date. In 2024, our work contributed to the banning of legacy admissions at private colleges; a historic designation for institutions serving Black students; and improved transfer pathways for students in STEM majors. Our network of partners and allies is now more than 10,000 strong. Previous Campaign staff and fellows have gone on to become mayors, state senators, and philanthropic professionals who are courageously carrying the rallying cry for racial and economic justice to all sectors.

In 2006, we asked students to write to policymakers about the importance of accessible public higher education. We called our scholarship contest Save Me a Spot in College and engaged more than 50,000 students statewide. In a full circle moment, in 2024, we championed student-friendly policy to counter the effects of the chaotic and unsuccessful launch of the Better FAFSA, branding the campaign [My Spot in College](#). Harnessing the power of student voice, what was once a request to California leaders has evolved into a demand.

California has long been a beacon of light in higher education. With support from those who believe in racial and economic justice, who believe in doing the impossible, and—most importantly—who believe in students, we will continue to illuminate the path to college success. To quote Diana Aguilar-Cruz, our inaugural student board member (whose interview you will find in these pages), “Education keeps the American dream alive.”

Please join me in applauding the diligent, fearless work of the students, educators, advocates, and policymakers who made these accomplishments possible. In recognizing 20 years of unparalleled accomplishments, transforming higher education on behalf of Latinx, Black, Asian American, Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander, American Indian/Alaska Native, and low-income students, we take a moment to celebrate and prepare to activate.

**Jessie Ryan**

*President, Campaign for College Opportunity*

# A Letter from the Chair of the Board of Directors



I often tell college students, “Remember who you are.” What does this mean? In a world where students—especially first-generation and Black and Brown students—receive the message that college is a pipe dream, I ask them to listen to their own inner voices. Not the internalized voices of racism, classism, and xenophobia, but the deeply rooted voice that tells them they are worthy and capable.

As educators and supporters, we have been honored with the important task of uplifting student voices and creating an environment in which students can thrive. We must walk the talk. For two decades now, I am proud to say the Campaign for College Opportunity has been not just walking, but blazing a trail in the field of equity-centered, student-first policies.

By standing firmly with students, we have advanced changes even when they were unpopular:

- We have fought to protect higher education funding despite financial ups and downs;
- We have led the charge to make the process of transferring from community college to a four-year university easier and more equitable, a process that has resulted in the conferring of over half a million Associate Degrees for Transfer;
- We have supported the elimination of remedial courses, ensuring students are placed directly into transfer-level coursework with support;
- We have published cutting-edge research that has shone a light on gaps in higher education, from the lack of diverse leadership to the need for strategies that improve equal opportunity amid the loss of race-conscious college admissions, and provided recommendations to overcome pressing challenges.

I believe we can move mountains in higher education. Sometimes we move them one pebble at a time. Other times, we gather with our allies to push aside boulders. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. famously said, “We shall overcome, because the arc of the moral universe is long, but it bends toward justice.” It does not bend on its own. It takes the force of many people working on many fronts. As we face a time of profound challenges, we are undeterred. We are energized. We believe in justice, and we believe in our students.

**Edward C. Bush, Ph.D.**

*Chair of the Board of Directors*  
Campaign for College Opportunity



# 2024 in Review:



## YEARS *of* COLLEGE OPPORTUNITY

### In 2024, we...

- Released **5 publications** and **4 spotlights** under our **Equity, Inclusion, Action initiative (EIA)** that promote policies and strategies to advance racial/ethnic equity and safeguard against the effects of the U.S. Supreme Court (SCOTUS) decision curtailing race-conscious admissions.
- Released **Still Left Out**, a follow-up analysis to our original 2018 watershed publication **Left Out**, documenting the lack of full inclusion and diversity in higher education leadership and faculty reflective of California's population.
- Hosted **Vision and Action for Equity: Leadership on the Line**, an intimate conversation with California public higher education leaders on the importance of system-wide efforts to close racial equity gaps, improve coordination and transfer between institutions, and strengthen the state's economy and workforce.
- Championed a **policy agenda** driven by our **Equity, Inclusion, Action** initiative, calling California to lead the nation in proactively enacting policy that directly combats the effects of the 2023 SCOTUS decision curtailing race-conscious admissions.







- Successfully **advocated for historic policy** AB 2057 (Berman), AB 1780 (Ting), and SB 1348 (Bradford), simplifying transfer, banning legacy and donor preferential admissions at private colleges, and establishing a Black-Serving Institution designation, respectively.
- **Celebrated the leadership of Michele Siqueiros**, our former President of 20 years, and ushered in a new era of student-centered growth and paths to racial equity **with our new President, Jessie Ryan**.
- Announced and celebrated our **20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Legacy Honorees**, long-standing partners who have been integral to the Campaign's success and champions for student success and racial equity.
- Welcomed **three fierce Latina leaders** to our leadership team to help guide us into a new era of **racial and economic justice** in higher education.
- Recognized **19 Higher Ed Heroes** in a campaign to celebrate legislative and policy champions who have shown exceptional leadership in advancing student- and equity-centered higher education policies.
- Celebrated **21 California Community Colleges** at our annual Excellence in Placement awards, which honor colleges' leadership in implementation of the landmark equitable transfer-level course placement legislation AB 705 (Irwin) in our third annual Excellence in Placement ceremony, co-hosted by President Jessie Ryan and Student Board Member Diana Aguilar-Cruz.
- Hosted **Vision & Action for Equity: Rooting Justice in Higher Education** to celebrate 20 years of bold advocacy by the Campaign and empower allies and partners for the work ahead.

## STUDENT BOARD MEMBER PROFILE:

# Diana Aguilar-Cruz



When Jessie Ryan assumed the role of President, one of her first priorities was to appoint **the Campaign's first-ever Student Board Member**. As an organization that advocates for student-centered reforms, it only makes sense to center student voices. Diana Aguilar-Cruz, who joined our board in 2024, is currently a Master of Public Health student at California State University, Fullerton, focusing on Health Promotion and Disease Prevention, and aims to attend medical school to become a neurosurgeon. She brings a firsthand understanding of the barriers that stand between first-generation, low-income students and their college dreams. She also embodies the Campaign's values of equity-mindedness, perseverance, and action.

### **Was college on your radar when you were growing up? How did your family talk about higher education?**

My story is different from a lot of first-generation students; I grew up in Mexico City, and my parents, as well as some of my family members, went to college in Mexico. My mother was a teacher, and my dad was an engineer. There was always a conversation about education. From a very young age, my parents instilled in me the power of higher education and made me believe that education was the key to achieving all my dreams. "You can become anything you want," my mom used to tell me. But when I moved here at age 14, in pursuit of the American Dream, it was just me who kept saying that I could become anything I wanted. In America, the conversation shifted. I was here as an undocumented immigrant, and I didn't have a support system. The questions were "Where are you planning to work after high school?" or "Do you know that applying to college can put you at risk for being deported?"

Seeing experiences of community members who had the same background as me—that's where I found my passion. I saw injustices in the educational system and in gender roles. People didn't expect women of color to become doctors. That inspired me to say, "I'm going to push back and continue my higher education journey and give back to my community." I want people to have an equal opportunity.

### **How did you get involved with the Campaign for College Opportunity? Why is racial and economic justice in higher education important to you?**

I was appointed to serve on the Board of Trustees for the California State University (CSU) system, and the Campaign's former Sr. Manager of Student Affairs, Vincent Rasso, did outreach to student leaders across the higher education boards. Vincent would provide me with information, like about AB 928 (Student Transfer Achievement Reform Act of 2021), so I could make more informed decisions when the board voted. The rest was history.

I feel at home and fully supported on the Campaign Board. I'm very passionate about the work the Campaign does. It aligns with everything I talk about with Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs. We can't be focusing on graduation rates if students' basic needs aren't being met.

Working with the Campaign is a way to impact policy, and also the implementation of that policy. We make sure that what we fought for is being properly interpreted and that the right information is getting to communities in need.



**You've talked about spreading a message that anything is possible if you're passionate and believe in yourself. How do you bring this idea to your activism (which is about removing barriers that make educational goals difficult to achieve for minoritized students)?**

My activism is centered around spreading positivity and hope, especially in a world that can sometimes feel overwhelming and painful. My philosophy is: This is where we are now, and these are the tools we have. Strive to be the best version of yourself that you can become. When it comes to pursuing higher education or advanced degrees, there are many barriers that make it harder for students to achieve their dreams. However, for every barrier, there are also resources and people with kind hearts ready to help. If the world shuts a door, don't shut it on yourself. Never stop believing in your potential. You are more than capable of achieving your dreams. Education is not just about learning; it's about creating opportunities for upward social mobility and breaking down the barriers that prevent minoritized students from reaching their goals.

**You studied biology and you hope to attend medical school. Where does your interest in health and medicine intersect with your higher education advocacy?**

In public health, we talk about social determinants of health, and in higher ed we have social determinants of learning. That's where my "why" comes in: merging public health, public policy, and medicine. People can't live healthy and fulfilling lives if they don't have access to education. Education changed my life and the lives of my family members. My little cousins in the U.S. know that they have the option to pursue higher education. Now they'll have opportunities they wouldn't have if they didn't see role models around them. Education keeps the American Dream alive.

**What advice would you give to a young person who wants to attend college but is uncertain about the application process, the cost, and the value of their degree?**

Your education is something no one can take away from you. Don't be afraid to ask for help—there are plenty of resources and people who are eager to assist in your higher education journey (I am one of them). It all comes down once again to believing in yourself and being ready to pursue your dreams. After all, "Opportunity is when luck meets preparation."

Your journey isn't just for you, but for your family and the communities you represent. College teaches you more than just academic knowledge; it helps you understand social justice, communicate effectively, lead with empathy, and think critically. Education prepares you to contribute to society in a meaningful way but, most importantly, it gives you freedom and opens the door to new opportunities and adventures.

*Don't give up! We need you!*





# STUDENT LEADERSHIP INSTITUTE

Helps Students  
Advocate *for*  
Change



Shann Davis

When Shann Davis was in high school, his grades “weren’t the best,” and he was more focused on football than academics. His father encouraged him to go to college, but Shann didn’t have specific goals. A counselor from Mira Costa College in Oceanside reached out to the Black Student Union at Shann’s high school, informing them about a dual enrollment

program that would allow students to earn college credits while they were still in high school. Participating in the program was Shann’s first taste of college life.

After graduating high school and taking a semester off, Shann returned to Mira Costa, where he found community and leadership opportunities.

“Seeing people [in leadership roles] that looked like me—men of color—was important,” he says.

Shann began to consider his own leadership potential. He helped plan a conference hosted by Mira Costa’s Black Student Union and organized a vendor and resource fair for a Black Alliance block party.

And when he discovered the Campaign for College Opportunity on Instagram, he learned about the [Student Leadership Institute \(SLI\)](#) and decided to apply.

Launched in 2012 as the Community College Completion

Corps, and then re-envisioned as the Student Ambassadors Program in 2017, the Student Leadership Institute has grown into a transformative experience for dozens of California’s remarkable student-leaders. SLI is a paid opportunity that supports an annual cohort of diverse and driven students from across the California Community Colleges, California State University, and University of California (UC) as they build skills in leadership and advocacy, engage with the higher education policy process, create a professional network, and advocate for issues that impact them.

As an organization that champions student-centered policies, the Campaign continues to develop the SLI program to ensure that student voices are well represented in decision-making about their own education. Our student leaders get a chance to participate in advocacy events and speak at meetings of college governing boards.

Shann says SLI has taught him “how to advocate better for first generation and marginalized students. I’ve learned what they are facing at community colleges. I also used the Campaign’s reports to create resolutions and highlight where problems are on campus.”

Now, as Shann prepares to receive a dual Associate Degree for Transfer in Sociology and Theater Arts, and transfer to CSU Dominguez Hills, ideas for future leadership and service to his community abound. He is considering a career in counseling, in the justice system, or in the arts—or something that combines his multiple passions. He hopes to earn a Ph.D. eventually.





Vincent Rasso

Spearheaded by former Sr. Manager of Student Affairs, Vincent Rasso, SLI continues to inspire the next generation of student-leaders and advocates for education equity. An alumnus of the SLI program himself, Vincent is a first-generation graduate from the University of California, Riverside (UCR), where he participated in the 2019-2020

SLI cohort while serving as Director of Undergraduate Government Relations. SLI is now overseen by Public Affairs Managers Ashley Tejada and Estephani Camarillo.

“As a student-leader on my campus advocating for many different issues, SLI truly gave me a strategic and comprehensive perspective on how to maximize my impact in policy spaces,” Vincent says.

“The rewarding leadership skills I gained propelled and prepared me to be elected Vice President of External Affairs at UCR and Chair of our systemwide UC Student Association, both during the pandemic, which allowed me to lead student-centered statewide policy responses and financial aid advocacy with the expertise I gained from SLI,” Vincent says.

Coming full circle, Vincent joined the Campaign to lead student engagement, supporting students like himself through SLI, where he grew the program to incorporate professional development and direct mentorship support. Vincent now serves as Government Relations Director for UC Student Association, continuing to work with student leaders to advance equity-driven policy.



Luz Toribio

Luz Toribio is another member of the 2023-2024 SLI cohort. Like Shann, she knew that college was supposed to be good for her future, but she didn't know why, exactly—let alone how to apply and pay for tuition. The oldest of eight children, she became the first in her family to go to college when she enrolled at Madera Community College. Now she is on the cusp of graduating from

Fresno State University and pursuing a master's degree in Higher Education Administration and Leadership.

At Fresno State, she found community and a passion for empowering students from marginalized backgrounds, especially Latinx, undocumented, and other diverse communities across the Central Valley. She credits SLI with giving her the tools she needed to start a club for



undocumented students and allies. “That was something I wanted to do but didn't have the courage or mindset to do right away,” Luz says. “It's important to come together and speak truth and be yourself. I want to build a community but also advocate for our rights.”

SLI has also resonated with donors. Dan Schnur recently supported the program via the Baye Foundation. “We are huge fans of the work that the Campaign for College Opportunity does to help deserving young people, but perhaps no project is more important than their Student Leadership Institute,” Dan says. “These young people will be tomorrow's leaders, and an essential part of preparing them for college is helping them develop the skills needed not just to earn a degree but help shape our communities and our country over the course of their lives.”

The donation also made possible an arts outing for the graduating SLI cohort; it is a celebration of their work, as well as an opportunity to expand their cultural horizons. “These students are learning to succeed in the classroom, but we also want them to have the opportunity to learn about the arts and culture that shape a society,” Dan says. “These amazing young people deserve the chance to be exposed to the most creative artistic voices and thoughts so that they can integrate these perspectives into their own visions for the future.”

If you are interested in making a donation to support SLI, please contact Raquel Gonzalez at [raquel@collegecampaign.org](mailto:raquel@collegecampaign.org). If you are a student who is interested in participating in next year's cohort, please [visit our website](#).



## STAFF PROFILE

# Sara Arce

Senior Vice  
President of  
Programs  
and Strategy



Sara Arce joined the Campaign nearly a decade ago, overseeing our Policy Team before being named Senior Vice President of Programs and Strategy in 2024—a role she describes in short as “getting our teams where they need to go.” Her parents, who immigrated from Mexico, dreamed that their daughters would go to college and instilled Sara’s own passion for higher education. In this staff profile, Sara reflects on her time with the Campaign and her hopes for our shared future.

**When did you join the Campaign, and how has the organization evolved in that time?**

I joined the Campaign in 2015 as Policy Director when we were a much smaller organization and a policy team

of three. It has been amazing to see the growth in the Campaign’s work and impact. We have gone from being known for our Save me a Spot in College campaign and as architects of the Associate Degree for Transfer to establishing ourselves as the preeminent higher education advocacy organization bringing together a diverse coalition of partners to push for policy transformation that centers our students needs and their voices. I am proud to be part of that evolution.

**Looking ahead to next year, what are you hopeful or excited about? What about in the next five years?**

One thing I am hopeful about is that despite the current climate we find ourselves in, I am confident there has never been a more critical time for an organization like the Campaign and our work to preserve the promise of college opportunity for all and advance racially equitable success. Our team’s strength is that we each are so personally connected to the Campaign’s mission, and that drives our work. I am excited to see how our team leans into this critical moment in time—new Campaign leadership who are committed to bold, student-centered solutions; a new presidential administration that will likely define higher education for decades to come; and 20 years of impact and learning to inform how we innovate in this next iteration of our work and have even greater impact for students.





**How does your role, which is new at the organization, contribute to the Campaign's work and advance better outcomes for students?**

The Campaign has had extraordinary impact over the last 20 years, and we want to continue to grow that impact for students. In my new role, I will work across our Policy, Public Affairs, Research, and Communications teams to maximize the Campaign's impact on behalf of students. That means overseeing our initiatives from conception to implementation, ensuring coordination alignment and collaboration organization-wide, and supporting continuous improvement and results.

**What is something you learned in college that you apply to your work with the Campaign?**

I learned that anything worth doing requires hard work and moving out of your comfort zone. I was the first in my family to move away from home to attend college, and I spent most of that year feeling like I did not quite belong and wondering if I could cut it. I ultimately found my way, and the experience opened my world in so many new ways that shape who I am today. It is a lesson that has been particularly useful at the Campaign as we champion bold, student-centered policy.

**What are a few things people (students, donors, voters, and more) can do to help make college success more equitable?**

I think for all of us—whether we are in the space of interacting with students directly, advocating for students, or advocating for funding to support students' higher education success—we need to continually assess whether what we are doing is working and creating the outcomes we seek. That includes listening to those affected by the problem or policy and continuing to come back to the data to inform decision-making. From a policy perspective, so often we continue policies that are not actually leading to more equitable outcomes because it is how it has always been done, or change feels too hard. But those are critical conversations we need to have if we are serious about ensuring racially equitable college opportunity and a thriving, multiracial democracy.





# Working Together

Coalition-building is central to the Campaign's work. Our diverse and populous state requires that we cultivate intentional partnerships—advocating, sharing information, and listening. Here's how we approached this work in 2024.

## Regional Higher Education Hubs

On day three of the World Series in October, a group of ten representatives from partner organizations gathered around a conference table at the Campaign's headquarters, overlooking Downtown Los Angeles. Sally Vo, Vice President of Counseling and College Success at the [Alliance of College-Ready Public Schools](#), wore a blazer over a Dodgers T-shirt. She announced, "It's Dodgers, but work-appropriate."

The combination of regional pride and professional resolve set the tone for this convening of higher education advocates. Based in Los Angeles, the Central Valley, and the Inland Empire, our Regional Higher Education Hubs (Hubs) are committed groups of established local advocates representing civil rights, business, student, and community-based organizations. The Hubs aim to hold the CSUs, UCs, and local community colleges accountable for the successful creation and implementation of key statewide policies. We held seven Hub convenings this past year: three in Los Angeles, three in the Inland Empire, and one in the Central Valley.

The Hubs convene organizations and stakeholders who engage with our work in multiple ways. Beyond policy discussions, Hubs create opportunities for engagement with our research reports, access to curated data from the Policy Team, and valuable feedback, particularly around the effectiveness of our policy. As a result of feedback from Hub members this year, we are reimagining our work to potentially connect all regional Hubs to foster a more

robust, statewide conversation.

"I hope to bridge K-12 and higher education policy," said Jeanette Gomez of Partnership for Los Angeles Schools.

Kimberly Fabian, Program Manager of [Kid City Hope Place](#), shared that she wanted "to learn how our students can share their voices and their stories."

Later in the meeting, the group discussed a controversial recommendation by the UC Board of Admissions and Relationships to Schools, to remove data science and statistics classes from the list of courses that meet Area C requirements—the mathematics component of the standardized A-G requirements for admission.

One of the issues with the recommendation is that it was intended to be implemented as early as 2025, despite the fact that many K-12 educators were unaware of the change. "This is a classic example of what happens when people look only at a policy angle," said Feliza Ortiz-Licon, the Campaign's Executive Vice President, who oversees our policy work. "This is why we need practitioners at the table."

Although the shape of our Hubs will continue to evolve in response to regional needs, the presence and power of practitioners will remain the heart of this work.

## Coalitions and Partnerships

In 2024, we were especially proud to work with the [Californians for College Affordability Coalition](#) and AB 705 Coalition, as well as co-lead the California Higher Education Equity Coalition (with [Ed Trust—West](#)) and the [Undocumented Higher Education Coalition](#) (with [SoCal CAN](#)).



# Partner Profile

THE  
KRESGE  
FOUNDATION



Caroline Altman Smith

## The Kresge Foundation

is one of the Campaign's most consistent partners. The foundation, which is celebrating its centennial as we celebrate our 20th anniversary, made its first grant to the Campaign in 2012 and has repeatedly renewed its investment. Sebastian S. Kresge, the man behind a chain of stores that would eventually become Kmart,

started the foundation with the broad mission to "promote human progress." In its current incarnation, the Troy, Michigan-based foundation focuses on "expanding equity and opportunity in American cities today," a purpose that dovetails smoothly with the Campaign's work. Caroline Altman Smith, who serves as the longtime Deputy Director of Kresge's Education Program, shared her insights on equity in higher education, and why our partnership works.

## **What are some of the most important changes the Kresge Foundation has made to stay relevant one hundred years after its founding?**

I was delighted to find out that Kresge gave one of the original multi-million-dollar grants to United Negro College Fund back in the 1940s. A commitment to Black students and HBCUs [Historically Black Colleges and Universities] is part of our DNA. But originally, the foundation focused on capital challenge grants, helping nonprofits to build and renovate buildings, which is why a lot of buildings have the word "Kresge" on them, or have "Kresge" in the name, like Kresge College at UC Santa Cruz. When Rip Rapson became Kresge's President and CEO in 2006, he helped engineer a transition to using a wider array of grantmaking tools to contribute to positive social change. Now we fund policy work, research, and programs; buildings are useful but can be something of a blunt instrument, so we appreciate the chance to have more creativity and flexibility in how we work with and support grantee partners.

**In his recent speech at Kresge's Our Urban Future symposium, PolicyLink CEO Michael McAfee said, "Equity can never be dead because this is soul work.... It's not going anywhere." How can funders and practitioners respond to the current (and always changing) environment without losing sight of our goals?**

We try to hire people who consider improving equity and opportunity to be their life's work, and we look for leaders

at the organizations we support who believe the same, even as we all may take different tactics.

At our recent staff retreat right before the election, Michael McAfee emphasized that no matter the election's outcome and beyond, we have to stay in the work and stand up for what's right. In the education portfolio, that means a multigenerational commitment to making college affordable and accessible, and removing barriers that prevent low-income students and Black and Brown students from earning degrees. This work will never be finished, but everybody is doing their part to move the ball down the field. There are lots of practical considerations to making higher education more accessible, but ultimately, we want students to achieve their educational dreams and be the authors of their own stories.

## **The Kresge Foundation has been a long-time funder of the Campaign for College Opportunity and supported us through some challenging times. How do you see our work aligning?**

The Campaign is an excellent example of a general operating support grantee, because you're closely aligned with our mission, values, and geographic priorities. Michele [Siqueiros, the Campaign's former President] always graciously expressed her appreciation to Kresge for standing by the Campaign through some rough waters. It's been heartening to see where you are now. I feel lucky that our board has had the philanthropic patience to stick with this issue area for a long time. We don't change our strategy every six months.

The Campaign is the best state-specific higher ed policy shop in the country. Your leadership has been stable and visionary. Also, the watchdog function that the Campaign serves, as well as the research reports, big legislative wins, and all that you do to center students, are so important.

## **How did your own college education shape your worldview and your approach to the work you do now?**

I was a bit late to the party, but my worldview changed when I was a graduate student assistant at the Lumina Foundation. That's the experience that opened my eyes to all the unfairness and inefficiencies in our higher ed systems. People go to so much effort to get into and enroll in college for only half of them to finish—and for students of color and low-income students to be disproportionately impacted is wasteful and wrong. We need people both inside and outside the higher ed system pushing for change.



# Meeting the Moment

When Jessie Ryan became President, she took her cue from the Campaign's legacy of student-centered reforms. Equity for students would remain our North Star, she said, and it can only be achieved in partnership with students. From appointing our first Student Board Member and training our next cadre of student advocates, to publishing student-authored Expert Spotlights, we are amplifying student voices—because students are experts in their own experiences. Many current policies—and regressive policies that this administration has threatened to enact—do not have students' best interests in mind, especially the interests of racially and economically marginalized students. Rather than capitulate in fear, the Campaign is taking courageous steps forward to protect and defend students, while paving the way for bold student-centered policy and practice transformation.

"We are tirelessly working to educate policymakers so that California can meet this moment by leading the nation—as a beacon of light—in student-centered, racially just policy and practice transformation," Jessie says.

In practical terms, this means championing a strategic plan and vision that focuses on racial and economic justice, while anchoring anti-discrimination efforts in higher education and emphasizing strategies that synch our research, policy, and public affairs agendas to usher forth the next 20 years of unparalleled impact. We are answering a clarion call to lead the racial and economic justice imperative, while driving the narrative on the continued value of a college degree. We remain light on our feet, with our ears close to the ground, prepared to lead an ever-changing higher education environment, centering students in everything we do.

“ For 20 years the Campaign for College Opportunity has successfully advanced greater access and success in our community colleges and public universities while protecting and expanding financial aid and putting students first. Jessie Ryan's track record of success in securing historic policy victories is more relevant today than ever before as she leads the organization to protect college opportunity for all students, especially those traditionally excluded and underserved by higher education. With our collective support, the Campaign will continue to do what it does best—affirm equity, ensure inclusion, and empower action for a more just higher education system that strengthens California's economy.

—Michele Siqueiros, *Former President* ”

“ With mounting threats to student rights and higher education, the Campaign for College Opportunity's tireless fight for racial and economic justice on behalf of students is more needed than ever before. Bold, student-centered, and unwavering, the Campaign represents a force of hope against the backdrop of blatant attacks on students' civil rights to an education. I am proud to partner with the Campaign to continue to usher in the policy transformation we need to uplift California as a protector of our nation's students, democracy, and economy.

—Senator Sasha Pérez, *Chair of the California Senate Education Committee, Former Public Affairs Director of the Campaign for College Opportunity* ”



# Thank You to Our Funders

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