



Jessie Ryan

President (Effective July 1, 2024)

A state and nationally recognized education equity leader with nearly two decades of experience courageously advocating for California students, Jessie Ryan leads the Campaign for College Opportunity as President, working to increase access to higher education, improve the success rate of students reaching their educational goals, and close racial/ethnic equity gaps. Jessie was formerly Executive Vice President until June 30, 2024.

Jessie grew up in the Central Valley and was raised by a struggling single mother who instilled in her a love of learning and commitment to social justice. Her mother's strong sense of civic service, empathy for others, and dream of earning her college degree inspired Jessie to become the first in her family to graduate from college. Jessie, knowing firsthand the transformative power of a college degree as a proud product of California Community Colleges and the California State University system, has since devoted her professional life to making it possible for generations of Californians—regardless of race, ethnicity, gender, or zip code—to prepare for, access, and succeed in college.

Jessie began her career—driven by a passion for educational opportunity, leadership development, civic service, and care for her local community—as a Circuit Rider for the Great Valley Center's Community-based Assistance Programs supporting activities and organizations that promote the economic, social, and environmental well-being of California's Great Central Valley. Jessie provided extensive outreach and capacity building services to rural and underserved communities as a technical advisor on local issues throughout a 21-county region.

Continuing to build power in her Central Valley home base, Jessie went on to join the Campaign for College Opportunity, first as a Community Organizer, then Outreach Director and Associate Director, leading public awareness and coalition-building efforts. As Executive Vice President, Jessie has had a remarkable track record of transforming higher education as the lead architect of some of California's most consequential, student-centered policy reforms. Jessie leads the Campaign's strategic direction for efforts centered around improving racial equity and strengthening college pathways through policy advocacy, communications, and coalition-building. She has shepherded groundbreaking victories, simplifying the transfer pathway (SB 1440, 2010 & AB 928, 2021) with over 500,000 community college students earning Associate Degrees for Transfer (ADT) to date, expanding enrollment funding for the CSU and the University of California, reforming remedial education at community colleges (AB 705), and increasing access to financial aid. Since 2017, she has secured statewide education investments totaling 5.3 billion in the areas of access, affordability, and student success. Recognizing the power of uplifting student voices, she also created a pipeline of nearly 1,000 student leaders through leadership development and training programs at the Campaign. Many of these student leaders have gone on to run for elected office, work for

policymakers, serve in higher education governance or leadership positions, or are otherwise engaged in social justice work.

Jessie is a sought-after state and national leader, serving as a spokesperson on education issues, engaging with regional and national press and media outlets, and representing the Campaign at convenings and conferences on education equity. Jessie has also expanded the Campaign for College Opportunity's national footprint serving as the driving force to implement federal office expansion, leverage Department of Education guidance, secure education appropriations, and advance strategy for equal opportunity in higher education in response to the U.S. Supreme Court decision on race-conscious admissions.

For many years, Jessie has operated at the nexus of K-12 and higher education, serving on the [Sacramento City Unified School District's Board of Education](#) from 2014-2020, additionally serving as Board President from 2017-2020. She proudly represented some of California's most vulnerable communities, dedicating herself to ensuring that all students would have a pathway out of poverty through public education. During her time with the Board of Education, Jessie pioneered a nationally recognized data equity system to drive investments and target student support, increased graduation rates, and increased college preparation with Latinx and students with disabilities seeing the most significant gains. Her "Safe Haven School District" policy was promoted as a state and national model by Superintendent of Public Instruction Tom Torlakson.

Jessie is a proud product of community colleges in the Los Rios Community College District. She received a Bachelor of Arts degree in Communications from San Francisco State University and a Master of Arts degree in Leadership Studies from Saint Mary's College of California.

She carries extensive leadership training, including the Public Education Leadership Program (PELP) at Harvard School of Business, the 21st Century Leadership Program at Harvard Kennedy School of Government, the Women's Policy Institute at the Women's Foundation of California, and Emerge —a political leadership training program that trains Democratic women for office.

In her free time, she enjoys traveling with her husband, [Arsenio Mataka](#), Senior Advisor on Climate and Health Equity with the Biden administration, and their two children.

Recognitions

NATIONAL EXCELLENCE IN ADVOCACY AWARD FINALIST

2023 | Women in Government Relations

TRANSFER CHAMPION-CATALYST

2023 | National Institute for the Study of Transfer Students

DISTINGUISHED ALUMNI AWARD

2022 | Community College League of California

RACIAL EQUITY VISIONARY AWARD

2020 | Center for Urban Education

WOMAN OF INSPIRATION

2018 | The Sacramento Kings

CINDY MARANO LEADERSHIP AWARD

2016 | Women's Foundation of California

Boards and Leadership Experience

- **Governor Newsom's Appointee** | Intersegmental Transfer Implementation Committee
- **National Policy Advisory Council** | Complete College America
- **Member, Board of Directors** | Alliance for Regional Collaboration to Heighten Education Success
- **Emerge California** | Oakland, CA
- **Art of Leadership & Managing for Change** | Rockwood Leadership Institute, 2017
- **Women's Policy Institute** | Women's Foundation of California, 2009
- **Fellow** | Institute for Developing Emerging Area Leaders Coro Program
- **Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility (DEIA) Implementation Workgroup** | California Community Colleges
- **Board President** | Institute for Developing Emerging Area Leaders Alumni Association
- **Governing Board Member 2016-2020** | Sacramento City Unified School District
- **Former Board Member** | Chicano Latino Youth Leadership Project