



The Education Trust–West

2018 Candidate Questionnaire

Office: Lieutenant Governor

Candidate: Senator Ed Hernandez

- 1) **This year, Governor Jerry Brown signed into law a new equitable funding formula focused on student success for the California Community Colleges. This approach has the potential to dramatically increase student success and institutional performance. As the Lt. Governor is a member of the governing boards for both the University of California and California State University systems, if elected, what actions would you take to encourage and support the implementation of the Student Centered Funding Formula in ways that truly maximize the equitable student success incentive provisions?**

As a State Legislator, I have been a champion for reducing the financial burden on students and their families and I will continue working to ensure that California's public universities are more accessible and affordable for ALL students, especially those from underserved and underrepresented communities. As part of the budget discussions this year, I continually advocated for full funding to the CSU and UC systems to ensure no tuition increases. The enrollment-based funding formula is inherently flawed, making it difficult for disadvantaged students to achieve their educational goals without the resources that the current funding system does not provide.

I am proud to have supported the budgetary implementation of the Student Centered Funding Formula as a member of the State Senate. If elected to serve as Lieutenant Governor, I will continue to support the full implementation of the Formula, and work to secure resources and services necessary to ensure the educational success of all students in the California public school system.

I believe that we need to give increased opportunities to students from disadvantaged communities like we have done with the local control funding formula with K-12 students. As a student who was disadvantaged, I struggled to understand the educational process and truly afford a higher education – that's why it took me so long to transfer to a CSU from a community college and eventually graduate.

This Student Centered Funding Formula helps student reach and attain a community college education, with the combination of enrollment-based funding, educational equity by specific funds for low-income students, and additional resources for successful outcomes by students, especially those from low-income backgrounds.

Though I would not sit on the Board of Governors for the Community College system, I can utilize my platform at the CSU and UC systems, along with my relationships with former fellow legislators, as a vocal advocate for students across our education systems. If we are to solve our issues in higher education, we must look to all the segments as part of the solution. This includes aligning our educational segments, ensuring equitable access, and appropriate distribution of resources.

I will continue working to empower education stakeholders at all levels and give them a voice within our

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California State University and University of California systems, and more indirectly, the Community College system. Recently, I authored SCA 14, a proposed Constitutional Amendment that would have changed the makeup of the UC Board of Regents and make it more accountable to the students, faculty, and the broader educational community.

Beyond changes to the Board of Regents, the State of California needs to ensure we put measures in place at both the CSU and UC system to ensure more budgetary transparency and accountability, as well as provide more funding to our UC and CSU systems so that we can return to the dream of truly affordable higher education set forth in the California Master Plan for Higher Education. We need to ensure that funding is directed to those students in most need to remove barriers and create equitable pathways for students. We cannot expect students to successfully complete their higher education when they continue to have roadblocks.

- 2) **While California collects a substantial amount of education data, gaps in both collection and reporting hinder our ability to know how well students are learning and progressing through school, from kindergarten to college. Currently, we have no way to see where students from California high schools attend college and how successful they are, and it's difficult to have a full picture of how well our educational systems are serving low-income students and students of color. As a technology powerhouse state, it is unacceptable that we do not know how many of our high school graduates progress to and through higher education — something 45 other states can already do. If elected Lt. Governor, would you support a longitudinal data system, and if so, what specific steps would you take in your first year in office to put such a system in place?**

As Lieutenant Governor, I will absolutely work to ensure that we have an efficient longitudinal data system in place that will provide transparency and accountability. We can start addressing the lack of data by reconstituting a coordinating body for our greater educational system.

However, every recent effort by the Legislature to reconstitute a coordinating body has been stonewalled by the Governor. With a new administration coming in, I believe we have the opportunity to reverse that course. We can and should reconvene the Coordinating Body. This would provide a space for the segments to work collaboratively, rather than in silos, to help advance the cause of the students and the state. We can build on the work of effective policy over the last 7 years. It would also allow for better collection of data, which is seriously lacking in the education system.

While this current administration has been hesitant to effectively utilize data, I believe there is vital information to be obtained from data. A coordinating body would provide the state with a clearinghouse to collect, store, and utilize such data. From this data, we can more effectively develop long-term policy agendas, to better determine where to direct resources, and create a more harmonious relationship amongst our various education segments.

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This is one of numerous efforts I will support to advance educational excellence in California and assure equality for all students, especially low-income students and students of color. Even without an advanced data collection system, we now know that our colleges and universities have disproportionate amount of students from marginalized communities and one of my top priorities is to address the underserved and underrepresented communities within our higher education and public K-12 education systems.

- 3) As students go back to college campuses this fall, many are facing food and housing insecurity. While tuition increases were not a part of the state budget this year, non-tuition expenses continue to be a huge barrier to access and success in our higher education systems. If you become the state's next Lt. Governor, what would you do to improve our financial aid systems and address the problem of non-tuition expenses in our state?**

California has long been the lead in providing financial assistance for tuition costs. However, any conversation about cost for higher education would be sorely lacking if we did not include the true cost of college. This means housing, food, books, transportation, and tuition. This conversation needs to be had at ALL levels of higher education - UC, CSU, and Community Colleges. Research shows that despite seemingly the least expensive option, in many regions throughout California, community college students bear the most cost.

I proudly coauthored a bill to provide free community college and have authored a bill to increase the number of Competitive Cal Grants available, but I also recognize that we cannot stop there. We have students who are homeless, sleeping out of their cars because they cannot afford to live in a given area. We have students commuting hours by any means to make a class in order to avoid further debt. We have students who are going hungry at institutions that offer buffet meals at every meal in order to keep food on their family's table instead. We cannot continue to talk about the promise of free college without addressing the true cost of college. Nor can we expect our students to graduate in 4 years without providing them the tools to do so. Students who experience homelessness or food insecurity can also experience physical and mental health consequences that impact academic performance.

Our Cal Grant system is very robust, and yet we are falling behind. I was a Cal Grant recipient, so I know what our students go through. As Lt. Governor, I will work to ensure that we evaluate how the systems could provide more affordable housing to those in need. We need to ensure that food pantries and CalFresh are available system-wide at an appropriate standard. We need to provide supplies to students so that they can appropriately learn in the classes they are taking. Additionally, we will also need to be open to a campus by campus approach rather than one size fits all model. Students in LA might experience different issues than students in Fresno.

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- 4) **In 2017-18 more than 340,000 students qualified for a Competitive Cal Grant award, but only 25,750 grants were available. In the past decade the number of students who are eligible for Competitive Cal Grants has more than doubled, while the number of awards available has increased by less than 15%. In other words, the state runs out of money for qualified students and isn't able to provide them with a Competitive Cal Grant. If elected Lt. Governor, what would you do to expand access to the Cal Grant in order to serve more nontraditional students?**

As Lieutenant Governor, I will continue to author and support legislation that expands access to the Cal Grant. This past legislative session, I authored SB 1471 to provide thousands more to students in their financial aid packages, proposing an increase of nearly \$5,000 per student. One of my top priorities is to expand college accessibility by increasing the number of available slots for students to apply for the Cal Grant Competitive Awards. During the 2017-18 application cycle, 400,000 eligible students applied for the 25,750 available awards. This shows how financial aid is in high demand, but often skewed toward younger traditional students applying for the Cal Grant Entitlement Awards. SB 1471 would have ensured more students, including those considered to be nontraditional, that qualify for financial aid actually are able to receive it.

If elected to serve as the next Lieutenant Governor of California, I will continue to fight to increase availability of the Cal Grant so that students of all backgrounds have the opportunity to pursue their educational goals. I believe it is appropriate to determine how we will reform the Cal Grant system to streamline it. There are students who can fall through the cracks and miss out on opportunities to receive financial aid. Cal Grant B access awards, which help offset the costs of non-tuition costs, have not kept up with inflation. Competitive Cal Grants have not kept up with demand. A Pew Research Center survey showed that 61% of respondents viewed higher education as headed in the wrong direction and many of them cited cost. Our students, including non-traditional students, need access to financial security. The economic future of California, and I believe our country, depends on it.

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