

Transcription

California Community Colleges Podcast Episode 13 – Janet Napolitano

Eloy: Hi. I'm Eloy Oakley, Chancellor of the California Community Colleges, and you have tuned into another edition of the California Community Colleges Chancellor's Office Podcast. I am joined today by none other than our President of the University of California, Janet Napolitano. Welcome, Janet.

Janet: Thanks, Eloy.

Eloy: So it is wonderful to have you with us. Obviously there is a lot going on right now in higher education in California and of course University of California is a big part of that, not only in California, but throughout the nation. And you have had the great pleasure of leading the nation and the world's number one public research university. So let me take some time to chat with you a little bit about where you think you see us going.

First, you know a little bit about the California Community Colleges. Our system has launched California Community Colleges' Vision for Success. And one of the pillars to that Vision for Success is really improving transfer to not only the CSU and our other sister colleges and universities, but specifically to the University of California.

And so, as we think about the changes that are coming up, the impacts that the State has had on all of our systems, and as we look at the election that is coming up, what are some of the things that you think the next governor will need to do to insure that our systems here in California continue to strive for and have the quality public education that our students have become used to? What advice would you give to our next governor?

Janet: Well, I would hope our next governor would fully appreciate and support the importance of higher education in California. From my perspective, that importance involves enrolling and graduating more students who have a bachelor's degree, and in line with the Vision

Statement that you have for the community colleges, that we facilitate the transfer of community college students to the University of California, where currently our transfer students do extraordinarily well. Once they are at the University they graduate and graduate actually in slightly higher numbers than those who started as true freshmen.

Eloy: Yeah, I agree. And of course, I am a bit biased. I am a transfer student from Golden West College to UC Irvine, so I certainly believe in that process. You know, one of the challenges certainly the University of California has had is in this question of access. And I know that you have been struggling to insure that, as we add more Californians to our nine undergraduate universities, that we also have enough funding to insure that they have adequate student housing, that there is room in the classrooms, that the infrastructure is taken care of so that the faculty and the students can enjoy the opportunity to conduct research. What are some of the greatest needs that you think need to be fulfilled, whoever the next governor is?

Janet: Well, I think funding for enrollment growth is top of the list. We currently have enrolled at the university more California undergrads than at any other time in the university's history. And that put tremendous pressure on the teaching load, the ability to have the undergraduates have a research experience while they are at the world's leading research university. It puts pressure on housing and other auxiliary services. And so, if we are going to say that we are accessible to the top students from California, we are going to need the resources to undergird that accessibility.

Eloy: Well, we certainly agree with that. We want to also insure, from the community college point of view, that as students come to the University of California, not only are they welcome, but they have the resources and the support that previous students attending the university have enjoyed.

Janet: Right. So a common statistic I use -- and it is a jaw dropper -- but it is that the University of California currently receives from the State approximately the same amount it received in the year 2000 and yet we have 90,000 more students. And so, at some point we've got to change that equation.

But on the other hand, we are engaged for example in a massive housing program. We will be adding probably close to 19,000 beds by the year 2020. These will be beds for undergraduates as well as

graduate students. We have been supporting efforts for food security on the campuses.

My office, the Office of the President actually has contributed funding to each of the campuses to support food pantries for those students who need access to food as the end of the month comes close, and trying to do everything we can to support the students that we have and that we want.

Eloy: So let's talk a little bit more about transfer. The master plan for higher education in California really laid this out as a key element of the master plan: the opportunity for Californians and students from throughout the country who attend community college to have that access to the University of California.

Now, recently there has been a new transfer agreement between the California Community Colleges and the University of California. I certainly believe that it is a huge step forward in streamlining and clarifying transfer opportunities for community college students. From your perspective, what does it mean to the University of California? And why do you think this is an important step forward?

Janet: So the agreement that we signed is in the form of a guaranteed admission to the University of California for transfer students who complete 1 of the 21 established Transfer Pathways. And a Transfer Pathway is designated curriculum that you take at a community college and that will be accepted for that major at any of our nine undergraduate schools. And so, it will be completing the pathway at the requisite GPA and the GPA will be set by the Board of Admissions, known as "BOARS,"[SP].

Assuming a student does that, he or she will be guaranteed a seat at the University of California. And that is in addition to the existing, what are called "TAGs." These are individual transfer agreements that students have with individual campuses and departments within those campuses. So the TAG system will continue, but it will be overlaid now with this system-wide guarantee.

Eloy: That's great news for community college students. I know that we have had a similar agreement with the California State University system. And if history is any indication, I think the UC agreement will also lead to many, many, many more students looking to the University of California as a real possibility.

Now, as that happens -- and certainly if we are successful -- we will see more students, more eligible and highly qualified students applying for transfer to the University of California. How do you see the University responding to that increased demand? And what are the things that we need to do to insure that there is room at the inn at the University of California?

Janet: Well, part of the agreement is that the community college system and the University of California will advocate together for the additional funding needed to support any enrollment growth that is due to the growth in transfer students who are entering the University.

And that is going to be important, because if we are right and if having the guarantee encourages more transfer students to do the work necessary to prepare to enter the University of California, we want to insure that we have not only a seat for them, but a quality seat for them. So that, in the end, they get a UC degree that is the hallmark of the kind of quality that the University is known for.

Eloy: Well, as the number and types of students who are attending the University of California, particularly low-income student, first-generation students, students of color, I think it is doubly important that we insure that they have the same experience that students attending the University of California 10, 20, 30, 40 years ago have had. So I appreciate you making that push.

Janet: Yeah. In fact, there is another statistic that causes jaws to drop whenever I say it. And that statistic is that 42% of our undergraduates are the first in their families to attend college. That is an amazing number, because these are young people who are seeing the doors of opportunity open wide and wide for them. And all of the data show that, from an economic perspective, they will surpass their family and their families' incomes within just a few years of graduation from the University.

Eloy: That is an amazing statistic and it certainly points to the fact that the University of California is a huge engine of economic mobility and I think continues to be the envy of the country. Now, given that demand, given that if you look at some of the campuses in the University of California like UCLA or Berkeley, you are seeing huge increases in the number of applications to get into those campuses.

At the same time, there's huge concern expressed by students, parents, policy-makers about the affordability of going to college. And while the University of California continues to be relatively low cost in comparison to other, similar universities, I don't think there is any question that people are starting to feel the pinch and are starting to feel concern. What are some of the things that you and your team are doing and thinking about to manage their question of affordability?

Janet: Well, one of the things we do is we do offer very generous financial aid. So that, in point of fact, 57% of our California undergraduates will pay no tuition or fees at the University, because they come from families that make less than \$80,000 a year. And for those who come from families that are between \$80,000 and approximately \$150,000, they have the benefit of the Middle Class Tax Scholarship, so they get financial aid as well.

And in addition, almost three-quarters of a billion dollars in financial aid comes to our students via the Cal Grant program. And that they can use for things like food and housing. And as I mentioned earlier, housing is a big deal and a big expense for our students. Our campuses are located in some of the most expensive housing markets in the state, and some of the most expensive housing markets in the country. And so, we are very sensitive to the need for students to have financial aid not just for tuition, but to cover and help with their room and their board.

And so, with Cal Grants, with other forms of aid, half of our students in the end will graduate with no debt. And those who graduate with debt, the average amount is around \$20,000 for the 4 years, if they had attended for four years. And when you think about that, that is the price of a small car. And unlike a car, which goes down in value the moment you drive it off the lot, a university degree appreciates in value over the lifetime of the person who holds the degree.

So we want to keep that metric in mind, but recognize that our students are under tremendous pressure to financially afford attending the University. And so, it is our responsibility to provide as much assistance as we can in that regard.

Eloy: Well, we certainly agree with you. The value of a UC education is and continues to be an amazing investment. So you hinted to the pressure that students are under and this is not unique to California. This is a concern across the country, of students struggling with the cost of housing as well as other basic needs.

I know that you, as the president of the University, have seen and heard from a lot of students concerned about food insecurity as one of those issues that are of concern. What has the University done to try and address the issues of food insecurity?

Janet: Well, we have done a number of things. First of all, as I mentioned before, the Office of the President distributed close to \$400,000 to each campus to support food pantries, so that they have that resource available for food-insecure students.

And then we have a number of things. We have Swipe Out Hunger programs, where unused meals on students' meal cards can be donated for other students. We have Campus Basic Needs websites, awareness campaigns, and a Cal Fresh enrollment drive. And Cal Fresh, which is the state food stamp program, many of our students would qualify for. So we want to make sure they are taking advantage of that benefit, to which they are entitled.

Eloy: Certainly in the California Community Colleges we are experiencing the same issues, Janet, and we are agreed. I think that, as we move forward, the more that we can coordinate these benefits, because as students come to use in the community college, from K-12 or wherever they are coming from, they are coming with eligibility for some of these state, or county, or federal programs.

And I think the more that we can share that data across our systems, I think the better we can do to serve our students. So we certainly are going to continue to do everything we can to assist students and make sure that we do everything possible to hand them off to the University of California with an understanding about their needs and what benefits they may qualify for.

Janet: That's right. And you know, the fact is that we want our students focused on their studying and their classwork, and not to have to worry about where their next meal comes from or where they are going to bed down for the night. So housing and food security are key issues for us.

Eloy: So let's turn to one more issue and it is a key issue. And it is something that I know you have been intimately involved with for quite some time, before you came to the University of California and certainly since. This current administration in Washington, DC has certainly challenged some of our values in California, particularly in higher

education.

The Board of Governors for the Community Colleges, the UC Regents, the CSU trustees have all expressed their deep commitment to preserving the ability of students who receive the benefits of DACA, Deferred Action, remain in our colleges and in our university campuses, and continue to be allowed to make positive contributions to their communities and to our state.

What are some of the things that you and your team have been doing to continue to support and advocate for DACA students? And I know that the University of California has also led efforts in the courts. What are you doing lately? And what would you like to say to DACA students?

Janet: Well, first what I would say to DACA students is that I empathize with their situation and it is not their situation, but the situations of their families under the current administration. It is a very difficult time for our undocumented population generally.

With respect to our DACA students, I do have some personal attachment here. I created DACA when I was the Secretary of Homeland Security and there are now close to 700,000 young people who are enrolled in it and were enrolled when the Attorney General announced on the behalf of the President that they were going to rescind the program.

So myself and the Board of Regents of the University of California, of which you are one, took the next logical step, which was to sue the administration to prevent the rescission of DACA. We obtained an injunction in the Trial Court here in San Francisco, which has allowed the program to continue through this year. And we had oral argument in the Court of Appeals on that case in mid-May.

There are several other cases pending around the country. All have found that the rescission was improper and was done illegally. And so, they have also issued injunctions. There is a final case, brought by several states recently, that argues that DACA was itself an illegal exercise of executive power and that case is wending its way through the courts as well, although there's been no holdings from that case as of yet.

Ultimately I think one, or two, or all of these cases may end up in the US Supreme Court. In the meantime however, we continue to advocate for

Congress in a bipartisan way to enshrine DACA in statute, give it permanence, and give our DACA students the sense of relief that that would provide, that once they were in DACA they would be able to remain in DACA.

And DACA also carries with it of course work authorization. I think there are several matters that are pending in the House of Representatives now. I continue to hold out hope that one of those measures will be successful. And so we continue to advocate very aggressively in Washington, DC for that result, even as we continue to litigate and defend the injunction that we obtained.

Eloy: Well, I want to personally say that I appreciate the leadership that you have shown, Janet, on behalf of all of our students, particularly our undocumented students, so thank you.

So, as we wrap up, I want to give you a chance just to bring us home. Is there anything that you would like to say to our listeners about the University of California and where it is going before we wrap up?

Janet: You know, I think our relationship with the community colleges is such an important one and our transfer students are such an important part of our student body. They represent nearly a third of our undergraduates and I only see that number increasing as the guarantee goes into effect and more and more students are aware of the Transfer Pathways and opt into one of those pathways.

So we welcome the transfer students and when they come to the University, they are well prepared not only to enroll, but also to graduate. And in the end that is what we all hope to achieve for those students.

Eloy: Well thank you, Janet Napolitano, appreciate your leadership. And thank you for joining us today.

Janet: Thank you very much!

Eloy: You have been listening to my conversation with Janet Napolitano, President of the University of California, on this edition of the California Community College Chancellor's Office Podcast. Thanks for joining us and thank you, Janet, once again for being with us.

Janet: Thanks, Eloy.

Announcer: Be sure to join us for the next California Community College's Podcast. This has been a California Community College presentation.