



# CALIFORNIA COMMUNITY COLLEGES

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## CHANCELLOR'S OFFICE

### PRESS RELEASE

September 16, 2015

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### **The California Community Colleges System Keeps Its 30 Year Promise to the State's Students**

*More than five million Californians have attended community college for free through the Board of Governors Fee Waiver program since 1985*

SACRAMENTO, Calif. – With the national conversation surrounding affordability of higher education, the California Community Colleges, the largest system of higher education in the nation, is proud to celebrate the 30<sup>th</sup> birthday of the Board of Governors (BOG) Fee Waiver, a program that waives community college fees for qualified students unable to afford it. As national leaders deliberate over President Obama's America's College Promise initiative, California serves as a shining example of how to keep higher education affordable.

"The BOG Fee Waiver is a historical promise made to ensure that students who could not otherwise afford to attend, can pursue their higher educational goals," said California Community Colleges Chancellor Brice W. Harris. "I'm so proud to be part of a system that has led the nation for 30 years in providing quality higher education to every Californian willing to invest time to make their future brighter."

Prior to 1984, enrollment at a California community college was free. Following the recession in the early 1980s, the California Legislature introduced a low enrollment fee for community colleges during the 1984-85 academic year. In order to ensure affordability and accessibility for all Californians seeking higher education, lawmakers introduced the BOG Fee Waiver, which was signed into law by Governor George Deukmejian in 1985.

Over the past three decades, the BOG Fee Waiver has helped more than 5.1 million eligible students by exempting them from fees at any California community college. Currently, more than 1 million of California's 2.1 million community college students enrolled statewide receive a fee waiver and 66 percent of the units taught are attended by students whose fees are waived. Since 1985, California has invested more than \$5 billion in assistance to students through the BOG Fee Waiver program – a state commitment to access that is unrivaled and has positioned California as the national leader in this area.

"President Obama has launched the College Promise campaign, an initiative designed to make college more affordable by eliminating fees at American community colleges," said California Community Colleges Board of Governors President Geoffrey L. Baum. "The Board of Governors and policy makers in California are proud to have had led the country with such a program for three decades. Thanks to this early vision by state leaders, California now does more than any other state to provide free community college to students who could not otherwise attend."

Participation in the fee waiver program has grown by 86 percent in the past decade. Since 2002-2003, the number of

students receiving a BOG Fee Waiver has increased by 514,000; a figure that is larger than the number of students currently enrolled in the California State University and University of California systems combined.

The BOG Fee Waiver is the “first dollar” of assistance – meaning students are not required to receive another form of financial aid in order to qualify for the waiver. For current and prospective community college students, applying for the BOG Fee Waiver is easy. To get started, students should visit the California Community Colleges financial aid awareness website at [www.icanaffordcollege.com](http://www.icanaffordcollege.com) to learn more about the BOG Fee Waiver, as well as other year-round financial aid opportunities, such as grants and scholarships.

“A 30 year old promise that continues to provide college access is a something everyone in our state can be proud of,” said California Community Colleges Chancellor Brice W. Harris. “It is estimated that our state will need another one million college degree and certificate holders by 2025 to fuel our workforce and the BOG Fee Waiver is an important tool in getting us there.”

To continue to raise awareness about the BOG Fee Waiver with current and prospective students, the California Community Colleges will "celebrate" with a year-long 30th birthday party through the "I **Can** Afford College" campaign. Outreach and awareness activities will include community events, on and off-campus activities, social media postings, promotional contests supported by businesses and elected official engagement.

*The California Community Colleges is the largest system of higher education in the nation composed of 72 districts and 113 colleges serving 2.1 million students per year. Community colleges supply workforce training, basic skills education and prepare students for transfer to four-year institutions. The Chancellor’s Office provides leadership, advocacy and support under the direction of the Board of Governors of the California Community Colleges. For more information about the community colleges, please visit <http://californiacommunitycolleges.cccco.edu/>, <https://www.facebook.com/CACommColleges>, or <https://twitter.com/CalCommColleges>.*

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