June 3, 2013

The Honorable Carol Liu
California State Senate
State Capitol, Room 5097
Sacramento, CA 95814

RE: AB 955 (Williams) Community Colleges: Intersession Extension Programs
Position: Oppose

Dear Senator Liu:

The California Community Colleges Chancellor’s Office is opposed to Assembly Bill 955 by Assemblymember Das Williams, a measure that would create a differential fee for community college students attending extension programs during summer and winter intersessions. Although this proposal has been recommended with good intentions, the Chancellor’s Office believes that charging different students different fees depending on demand, ability to pay or program interest would ultimately be devastating to open access and undermine a system that has been the gateway to a better life for millions of Californians.

AB 955 offers a differential fee approach as a means of expanding access and serving more students. However, the reality is that a differential fee would benefit students who could afford the higher priced courses while disenfranchising those that do not have the means to access higher cost courses. California has long been the envy of community colleges across the country for sustaining a policy of affordable access to public higher education, regardless of educational, economic or family background. While I believe there is broad agreement that recent fee increases and funding cuts have caused educational rationing, our response should be a reaffirmation to our historic core value of low student fees and open access.

In passing Proposition 30, the voters offered their preferred solution to severely constrained access at the California Community Colleges. That measure provided the colleges with funding stability and the resources necessary to begin adding back the course sections that will provide access to those needing education and training. In addition, Proposition 30 promised an end to skyrocketing student fees that have themselves become a barrier to entry for large numbers of potential students. Community college leaders from across the state – faculty, staff, students, trustees, and administrators – fought hard for the passage of Proposition 30 and believe strongly that we must abide by the compact it contained. Through renewed public investment, we will build back equitable access to higher education at the California Community Colleges.
For the above reasons, the California Community Colleges Chancellor's Office opposes Assembly Bill 955. I thank you for your consideration and if you or your staff have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me at (916) 445-4434.

Sincerely,

[Signature]

Vincent W. Stewart
Vice Chancellor, Governmental Relations
California Community Colleges Chancellor's Office

cc: The Honorable Das Williams
    Members of the Senate Education Committee