August 27, 2014

The Honorable Edmund G. Brown, Jr.
Governor of California
State Capitol
Sacramento, California 95814

RE: SB 174 (de León) Student Financial Aid: Cal Grant Program

REQUEST FOR SIGNATURE

Dear Governor Brown:

On behalf of the Board of Governors of the California Community Colleges, I urge you to sign Senate Bill 174 by Senator Kevin de León. This bill increases the annual Cal Grant B access award from $1,473 up to a maximum of $5,000. SB 174 also provides guidance to the California Student Aid Commission regarding the use of new financial aid funding generated through the College Access Tax Credit Fund, which would be established by its companion measure, Senate Bill 798, also introduced by Senator de León.

The Cal Grant B access award is a crucial resource for low-income community college students because it provides financial aid to help cover the cost of living expenses, transportation, textbooks and other college related costs. However, the effectiveness of this grant has diminished over time because it has not been adjusted for inflation. The Cal Grant B access award was established in 1969 when the maximum award was $960 per year; in today’s dollars that maximum award would be $5,900.

Access to college is often a daunting prospect for low-income individuals and as students continue to lose ground on the purchasing power of their Cal Grant, completing educational goals becomes even more difficult. SB 174 would benefit community college students throughout California. Each year our students receive the largest number of Cal Grant B awards; approximately 50 percent or a total of 72,400 students. The proposed increase to the Cal Grant B access award would enable many of those students to attend college full-time, or at a minimum reduce work hours in order to spend more time concentrating on their studies.

I thank you for your consideration and urge you to sign Senate Bill 174. If you or your staff has any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me at (916) 445-4434.

Sincerely,

Brice W. Harris
Chancellor

cc: Senator Kevin de León