

PRESS RELEASE

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“I *Can* Afford College” Campaign Highlights Existing Financial Aid Opportunities as President Obama Unveils Proposal to Make Two Years of Community College Free

Chancellor Reminds Current and Prospective Students of Many Financial Aid Opportunities Currently Available at the 112 Community Colleges in California

SACRAMENTO, Calif. – President Obama is expected to announce plans tomorrow that would make community college free to millions of qualified community college students, an initiative consistent with the many financial aid opportunities promoted by the California Community Colleges’ “I *Can* Afford College” campaign that makes higher education accessible to millions of students.

“Improving opportunities for all California residents to attend community college is critical to the wellbeing of our state and is an intense focus of ours,” said California Community Colleges Chancellor Brice W. Harris. “In fact, fees are waived for 45 percent of our students through the Board of Governors Fee Waiver. I urge anyone interested in attending community college to explore their options by visiting icanaffordcollege.com.”

The California Community Colleges has a long history of free higher education, and state residents did not pay any fees at California community colleges until 1984. While California community colleges continue to be an affordable option for those seeking a higher education, there are a variety of financial aid opportunities to help those that need financial assistance.

Financial aid at the California Community Colleges comes in a few basic types. In addition to the Board of Governors (BOG) Fee Waiver, there are grants and scholarships which don't have to be paid back, work study programs which require work in exchange for money, and loans which students have to repay when they complete their educational goals. Financial aid can pay for college fees, books, supplies and sometimes even help with rent.

To explore the variety of financial aid opportunities today, current and prospective students should visit the “I *Can* Afford College” website, www.icanaffordcollege.com. The site, available in both English and Spanish, features easy-to-understand financial aid information, new tools and helpful resources, as well as links to financial aid applications and a zip code locator where students can get connected with their local college financial aid office for more information and assistance completing the forms.

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To get the most aid available for the fall 2015 semester, students and prospective students should apply for financial aid by the March 2 Cal Grant deadline. Many colleges will be offering free financial aid workshops to provide one-on-one assistance to help with the financial aid forms as well as answer any questions. Upcoming workshops can be found at www.icanaffordcollege.com.

In addition to visiting the website, students and their families can also connect with the campaign through social media channels, at facebook.com/icanaffordcollege, twitter.com/icanafrcollege and instagram.com/icanaffordcollege. These tools provide tips, deadline reminders and other helpful information that students can use to navigate financial aid and enhance their college experience.

The California Community Colleges is the largest system of higher education in the nation, composed of 72 districts and 112 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/>.

*The California Community Colleges "I **Can** Afford College" campaign is a statewide, financial aid awareness initiative sponsored by state of California. The purpose of the campaign is to educate current and prospective students about the year-round availability of financial aid at California's 112 community colleges to help pay for fees, books, supplies and sometimes even rent. Since the campaign launched in April 2004, more than two million people have visited the icanaffordcollege.com website and the number of community college students receiving some type of financial aid has increased by 70 percent.*

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