

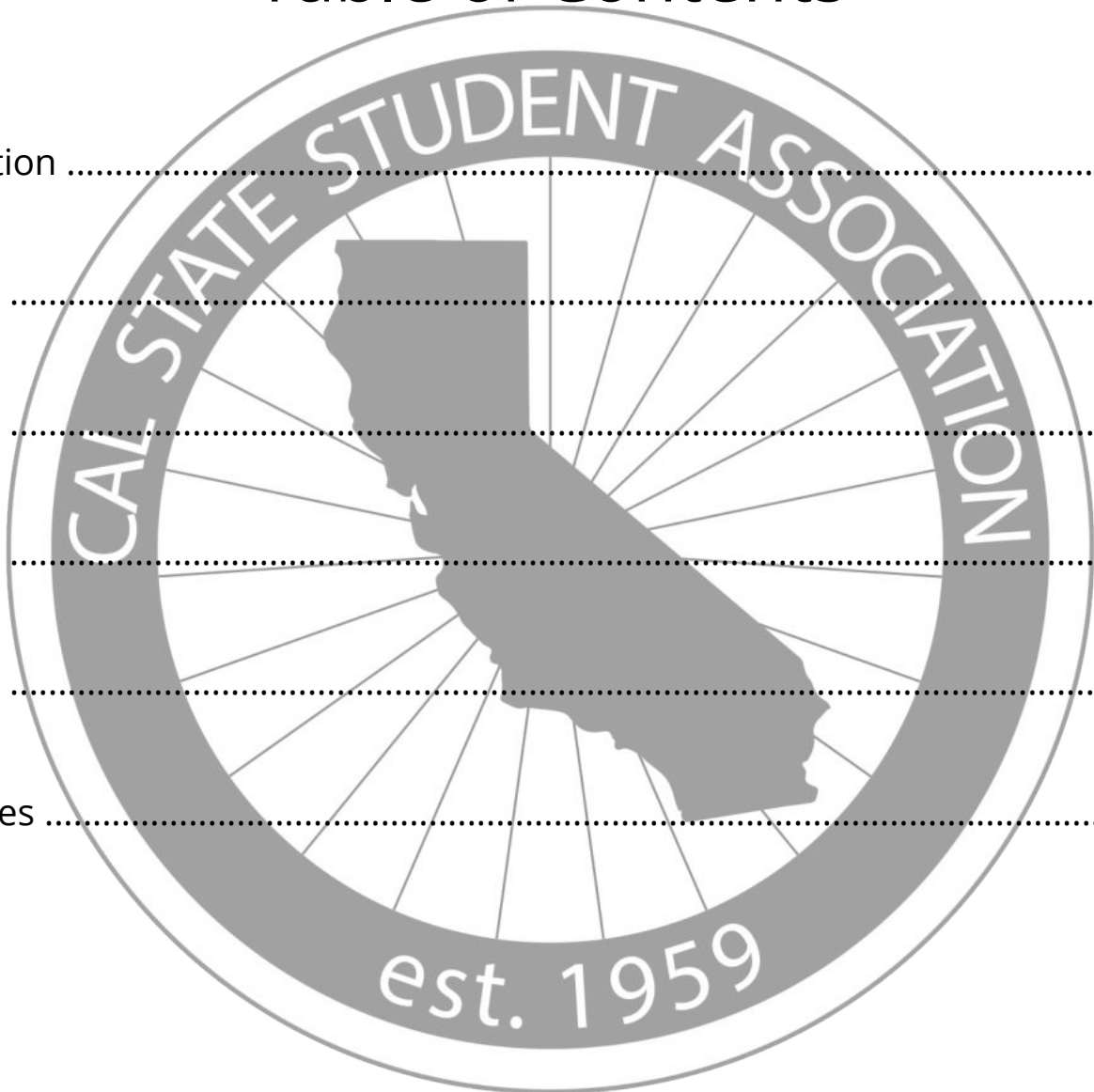
CSSA
CAL STATE STUDENT
— ASSOCIATION —



2024
Policy Agenda

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Our Core Values

The Cal State Student Association (CSSA) is a student - led organization that acts as the official voice of California State University (CSU) students to the CSU Board of Trustees and the State Legislature. Our mission is to improve the lives of California State University (CSU) students by advocating for student needs and engaging students in systemwide, state, and federal higher education policymaking.

In order to achieve this mission, CSSA believes that the following values must serve as the foundation for all decision-making and strategic activities:

Social Justice & Educational Equity. CSSA will pursue its mission guided by the belief that social injustices resulting from various forms of oppression must be addressed. CSSA will advocate to remove barriers to success for underserved and marginalized communities within the CSU and systems that influence outcomes for CSU students.

Servant Leadership. CSSA will pursue its mission guided by the belief that our purpose in our leadership roles is to serve the communities to which we belong with empathy and care.

Stewardship. CSSA will pursue its mission through the responsible, transparent, and prudent management of human and financial resources entrusted to us by CSU students through the Student Involvement & Representation Fee (SIRF).

PRIORITY 1

Address the Total Cost of Attendance for CSU Students

Goal 1

Ensure the CSU remains accessible and affordable for all students

California's public higher education tuition is at an all-time high, yet at least half of the students in these systems do not pay tuition due to financial aid programs. However, non-tuition costs have emerged as the primary barrier for students, with expenses for housing, transportation, and other academic necessities increasing by 24 percent since 2012¹. To ensure systemwide affordability, it is crucial that the CSU, along with state and federal governments, prioritize investments and policies that alleviate the financial burdens students face.

Goal 2

Ensure students have access to high quality student support services that address student's access to food, housing availability and affordability, and technology

Since 2020, students' concern regarding access to food, affordable housing and technology has sharply increased². Housing insecurity and homelessness is more prevalent at four-year institutions and disproportionately affects students from vulnerable communities³. Programs at the state and federal level such as CalFresh (federally SNAP) are important safety nets to aid students in times of need and it is important that campuses can support students in navigating these types of programs.

Technology and reliable broadband are also critical for students to have access to a quality education. The digital divide has impacted more students than ever but is most prevalent in communities of color and lower income households⁴. It is imperative that students are provided access to affordable and reliable technology and that the state of California improves broadband capabilities throughout the state.

PRIORITY 2

Ensure Students Have Access to High Quality Wellness and Mental Health Support Services

Goal 1

Support campus and systemwide efforts that address increasing access to counseling and psychological services

Students' concern about their personal well-being has drastically increased⁵ since the beginning of the pandemic in early 2020. However, students at the CSU seeking mental health services struggle to find appointments on their campus⁶. To address the lack of resources and availability, the system will need to new ways to provide services like counseling, and it is important that new modalities of service are assessed and integrated to provide more options for the diverse needs of CSU students.

Goal 2

Ensure students have access to quality and affordable wellness services

Student health services and programs are essential to student success and to the health of the campus community. In a diverse institution like the CSU, students have unique needs and access to resources that improve their experience on campus and contribute to their sense of belonging. It is important to assess student needs and provide resources for all student populations.

PRIORITY 3

Ensure the Academic Success and Holistic Educational Experience of all CSU Students

Goal 1

Support systemwide efforts to address diversity, equity, inclusion, and belonging within the CSU community

The pandemic continued to show that students from vulnerable communities are not receiving equitable resources that are readily available to their peers, like access to state and federal food programs, housing programs, and expanded financial aid. However, as important as basic needs is the sense of belonging. A student's sense of belonging contributes to their academic achievement. Creating a community of inclusion and belonging is particularly important for our most marginalized communities to excel in their overall curricular and co-curricular activities⁷.

Goal 2

Ensure students have the ability to thrive academically in a safe and supportive environment

The physical safety of all members of campus communities is imperative to student success and wellbeing. It will take all members of the community to work together to improve the policies, procedures, and structures that contribute to safety. It is imperative that students are involved in the creation of policies, practices, and advisory committees for providing safety and evaluating the effectiveness of programs on campuses and at the systemwide level.

PRIORITY 4

Foster Inclusive Engagement for Students to Find Agency in the CSU Community

Goal 1

Ensure students are regarded as equal stakeholders in higher education policy making

Students are experts in the day-to-day experience on our campuses. Therefore, it is crucial that they are actively involved in decision-making processes that impact their pursuit of a CSU degree. When students are not engaged, it diminishes their investment in education, leading to lower retention rates, a weakened sense of belonging, and a less diverse campus community. To ensure that all students have equal access to the transformative power of a CSU degree, the CSU must more effectively engage students as stakeholders in future policy decisions.

Goal 2

Strengthen CSU accountability to promote equitable and inclusive student engagement

When students are given the opportunity to engage meaningfully in the CSU community, they are more likely to develop a sense of ownership and responsibility towards their education and the broader campus culture. This engagement not only enhances their personal and academic growth but also contributes to a more vibrant, diverse, and supportive community. By actively promoting inclusive engagement, the CSU ensures that all students—regardless of their background, identity, or circumstances—can find their voice and agency within the university system. This approach not only helps to break down barriers to participation but also fosters a more equitable and just campus environment, where all students can thrive and contribute to the collective success of the CSU.

References

- 1 Public Policy Institute of California “Making College Affordable” (page 1)
- 2 California State University “Study of Student Service Access and Basic Needs” (page 28-29)
- 3 The Hope Center “#RealCollege During the Pandemic: New Evidence on Basic Needs Insecurity and student Well-Being” (page 7)
- 4 California Student Aid Commission “COVID-19 Student Survey” (page 6)
- 5 The Education Trust-West “The Digital Divide in Higher Education”
- 6 California State University “Study of Student Service Access and Basic Needs” (page 28)
- 7 Hurtado, S., & Carter, D. F. (n.d.). Effect of College Transition and Perceptions of the Campus Racial Climate on Latino College Students’ Sense of Belonging. *Sociology of Education*.
- 8 College Board “Engaging Campus Stakeholders on Enrollment Issues Associated with Student Diversity: A Communications Primer”

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