

## **White Paper for CSSA: Oppose Impaction and Support Students**

### **Problem and Causes**

California State University schools are becoming more exclusive. Although originally established to serve, for free<sup>1</sup>, all California students who were qualified to attend, the current CSU system is a shadow of its former self. As student demand for a state-sponsored education has increased, the investment in CSUs at the state level has stagnated. Whereas in 1970-71 California spent 13.8% of its general fund on the CSU and UC systems, in 2014-15 that number dropped to 5.2%<sup>2</sup>. Funding comes increasingly from rising tuition costs and private sources. In 2017, tuition accounted for more of the CSU operating budget than state funding<sup>3</sup>. Students today graduate from CSU schools with an average of \$15,531 in student loan debt<sup>4</sup>.

In response to rising demand and dwindling resources, campuses within the CSU system have sought quick-fix solutions, such as declaring “impaction”, which means adopting more stringent admissions standards to compensate for lack of space. Such a policy fits well with Graduation Initiative 2025—a feel-good plan to increase general graduation rates and close gaps in graduation rates between racial groups. What better way to accomplish this than restricting access for high school students with low grades and low SAT scores?

The role of CSUs should be to support students who could benefit the most from a college education. What’s at stake here is a fundamental question of what our values are as a public higher education system. Impaction, which has affected almost all CSU campuses at this point, is a betrayal of our guiding principles, as stated in the original California Master Plan for Higher Education<sup>5</sup>. It results from disinvestment in the CSUs to the point that they cannot accommodate the growing number of qualified students.

### **Impact**

Our concern is that while administrators obsess over graduation rates, student well-being is not properly considered by governing bodies within the CSU. As of January 2018, 10.9% of CSU students had experienced homelessness in the last year, and 41.6% were food insecure. These are immediate sources of suffering that need to be addressed. At CSU Los Angeles, however, new and expensive dorms are being built—in a community where students need housing assistance, not condos<sup>6</sup>. CSU leadership appears more concerned with padding their statistics and making the system more marketable. There is already a huge (and unmet) demand for a CSU education. To whom is the product of CSU being marketed?

Communities that are hit hardest by austerity policies like impaction are predominately Black, Latinx, and working class. At CSU Long Beach, where impaction has already been declared, admissions rates for Black students and Native American students have declined 10% and 18%,

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.ucop.edu/acadinit/mastplan/MasterPlan1960.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.universityofcalifornia.edu/infocenter/california-expenditures-corrections-and-public-education>

<sup>3</sup>

<https://www2.calstate.edu/csu-system/about-the-csu/budget/2019-20-operating-budget/Documents/2019-20-Operating-Budget%20Book.pdf>

<sup>4</sup> <https://www2.calstate.edu/csu-system/news/Documents/financial-aid-fact-sheet.pdf>

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.ucop.edu/acadinit/mastplan/MasterPlan1960.pdf>

<sup>6</sup> <https://csulauniversitytimes.com/14106/news/a-new-way-to-dorm/>

respectively, since 2006<sup>7</sup>. At CSU Los Angeles, where many majors are already impacted, the percentage of Black enrollment in 2010 was 6.1%<sup>8</sup>. However, the 2018 incoming freshmen class was only 2.5% Black<sup>9</sup>. The chancellor's office recently approved CSU Los Angeles for impaction for general admissions in the 2020-2021 academic year. This will further strain CSULA's ability to welcome a more racially diverse group of students.

Rather than shutting out CSU-qualified students at a time when access to higher education is crucial to securing a sufficient livelihood, and a future for ourselves and for our families, our leadership should be fervently and publicly demanding more state funding. California, by itself, ranks as the fifth largest economy in the world<sup>10</sup>. There is enough wealth here to fully fund CSU. However, instead of going after the abundant resources of the state, CSU administrators have taken up other, more regrettable tasks, such as bolstering their statistics and being cost-effective.

The effects have been felt and seen CSU-wide. In an effort to meet the GI-2025 Initiative, and under the monetary strain imposed on the CSU system due to the steady decline of public funding, whole programs of study are under attack. The chancellor's office recently declared uniform General Education requirements across CSUs that exclude ethnic studies programs<sup>11</sup>. This affects CSU Northridge, where courses in Africana Studies, American Indian Studies, Asian-American Studies, and Central American Studies, were formerly a part of their comprehensive undergraduate education requirements. Faculty there voiced extreme concern over this administrative overreach<sup>12</sup>. Education is not just about learning how to market products to consumers—it's about understanding the world and becoming a culturally competent, critical thinker.

Again, what we're seeing is a general derailing of the original vision of the CSU system. Impaction is one small part of the problem. By opposing impaction, we also oppose the complacency that deems impaction a feasible solution to the fallout from underfunding and austerity.

### **Recommended Actions**

1. Draft a resolution requiring shared governance procedures, which must include input from faculty, students, and community, to be met whenever a proposal is made to alter admissions or transfer requirements at a CSU campus.
2. Draft a new guiding vision for the CSU system, independent of administrative input. This should be done by faculty, staff, students, and community organizations. Our belief is that the CSU system should be proactively recruiting marginalized communities, students of color, and working class students, and establishing curricula that reflect those goals. The CSU system should be more democratically run so that administrators may not push through policies like impaction without a vote of faculty, student, and community support.

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<https://csulauniversitytimes.com/13742/community-news/dreams-deferred-some-community-members-say-proposal-is-already-having-an-impact/>

<sup>8</sup> [https://www.calstate.edu/as/stat\\_reports/2010-2011/feth02.htm](https://www.calstate.edu/as/stat_reports/2010-2011/feth02.htm)

<sup>9</sup> [https://www.calstate.edu/as/stat\\_reports/2018-2019/feth03.htm](https://www.calstate.edu/as/stat_reports/2018-2019/feth03.htm)

<sup>10</sup>

<https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/nation-now/2018/05/05/california-now-worlds-5th-largest-economy-beating-out-uk/583508002/>

<sup>11</sup> <https://www.calstate.edu/eo/EO-1100-rev-8-23-17.html>

<sup>12</sup>

<https://www.insidehighered.com/news/2017/09/20/cal-state-northridge-faculty-members-say-system-attacking-ethnic-studies>