

## LIVING UP TO A PROMISE

Thank you Tracy, and thank you all so much for having me.

On behalf of Governor Newsom and the entire administration, I'm delighted to be here with you today and, if you'll forgive my myopia, to talk about California and our vision for higher education in the state. I want to start by thanking all of you for the tireless work you do each and every day, to ensure we have a robust system of higher education that is available and accessible to all students.

When I was a doctoral student and writing my dissertation, I had a professor who told me that ultimately, every dissertation is a personal story. So in talking with you about our priorities for higher education in California, I'd thought I'd start by sharing my personal story. My story, in many ways is the California story.

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I am the daughter of immigrants. Both of my parents immigrated here in the 1960s to seek higher education. They met as optimistic 20-year-olds in Chicago, both having been sent by their families from Nigeria to go to college. Their love story did not quite turn out as planned and before long I was the daughter of a single mom, who'd moved to California, who had bouts of public assistance as we tried to get on our feet, and who, ultimately never completed that four-year degree dream.

While she didn't get that degree, she was bound and determined to ensure her kids were on a strong academic path, and she was willing to make sacrifices to do it. For years she slept on the couch, forgoing a bed, so my brother and I could have our own beds and bedrooms and a proper night's sleep. After she became a respiratory therapist, she would work the night shift to earn a little of extra cash, so that she could send us to Catholic and then private schools, since she thought they offered higher quality education.

The biggest sacrifice came when I was in 10th grade. My mother took a trip back to Nigeria to visit her family, and while she was there, her passport and green card were stolen. Without credentials she couldn't return to the United States. But she chose to allow me to stay here so I could continue on my path to get the education she never did.

I share this with you not only because it's a remarkable story, even to me—and I lived it, but because it also paints a picture of the improbability of my life after that. To be clear, I was a young black girl, raised by a single mother who often lived on public assistance. And because I was in the country alone, I eventually had a dalliance in the foster care system before emancipating at the age of 18.

By all measures, my circumstances suggested that college might not be in my future. And if so, certainly not as a full-time student, and certainly not at a four-year institution. And yet that is exactly what we in higher education are called to do: to ensure that everyone has meaningful access to quality postsecondary education. But that'd not all. We must also ensure that the opportunity to be educated does not just reproduce the historic wealth and inequity deeply rooted in our *history* as Americans, but instead provides for the kind of economic and social mobility that is deeply rooted in our *ideals* as Americans. This, in my view, strikes at the heart of accreditation: to ensure that institutions are serving *students and the public good*.

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My path into this work was not only informed by my personal experience but also by our recent economic and political history. Everyone in this room remembers the economic boom early in this century, which was followed at the end of the decade by the nation's most gripping economic recession. Often cited in the news were numerous stats that the US was lagging behind other industrialized nations.

Back around that time, my colleague Bob, who's somewhere in the audience here, shared with me an advertisement that was either in *The New York Times* or *The Economist*, I can't recall, but it was an advertisement for Ontario, Canada, luring employers to locate there. Their primary argument was, "We have the highest percentage of adults with postsecondary degrees in the G7."

Despite Ontario's odd sense that they were a part of the G7, what they clearly understood is that businesses locate in places that have not just a lot of highly-educated people, but a high *concentration* of highly educated people.

In the 1960s, California emerged as an economic powerhouse, the envy not just of other states but of nations. We have been renowned for the richness and diversity of

our robust regional economies. We're at the top of our game in agriculture, natural resources, shipping and logistics, and the entertainment and computer industries.

Our state's GDP totals \$2.4 trillion, representing 13 percent of the nation's GDP and placing California 5th in the world in the size, scope, scale and impact of our economy. We are, indeed, a nation state. We came to occupy such an important place in our world's economy in large part because of our higher education system. The implementation of the Master Plan for Higher Education in 1960 expanded access to postsecondary education and focused our colleges and universities on distinct roles that have contributed to our unprecedented economic strength and vibrant communities.

We've seen how the world has changed over the past few decades: in the places where you have the creativity, the industriousness, the entrepreneurship that comes from training and higher education, good jobs are created. Those good jobs create strong communities. And those strong communities contribute to more education.

And it creates a kind of cycle, a cycle of upwards mobility and improvement an opportunity that benefits, students, families, communities and regions, and that reaches people from all backgrounds.

However, we also know that California is threatened as an economic leader because our colleges, universities – both two and 4 year – are not producing enough highly-skilled graduates. Among the states, despite our economic prowess, California ranks 22nd in terms of the proportion of adults ages 25 to 64 with an associate's degree or above. And among other industrialized nations, the United States ranks 13th.

Our ranking relative to the size of our economy is what led President Obama ten years ago to set a goal for the United States to create an additional five million more degrees and credentials than we were on track to produce by 2025. Getting that critical mass is what President Obama's goal was all about: returning the country to our place as number one in the world in terms of people with postsecondary credentials. President Obama declared a postsecondary education attainment goal for the nation, and a number of states have adopted complementary goals and plans. Surprisingly, California did not. In fact, beset by financial crisis, we took a step in the opposite. We zeroed out of the budget the California Postsecondary Education Commission, a largely ineffectual agency, but the only agency, nonetheless with any purview over how all the

segments of higher education work in our state. Since then, we've seen tuition increases, mounting debt, capacity constraints, technological advances that are reshaping how we think about and deliver education, and all the while we've made stubbornly little progress on increasing the proportion of Californians with degrees and credentials. These are among the significant issues our administration is now faced with addressing.

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The Governor's proposed 2019-2020 budget offers the best insight into our initial thinking about how to tackle many of these issues. As an Administration, we're working to promote access, increase affordability, and improve college completion. We've proposed adding an additional \$1.43 Billion to the higher education budget (for a total higher ed budget of \$36.4B).

First, access. At UC, CSU and the community colleges you'll see money devoted to expanding enrollment (\$72M). We provided these funds as ongoing dollars to ensure that students will be able to get through and that we'll have more seats in our institutions to chip away at that five million degree gap President Obama worked to close. But I will admit we did that with strings attached: the UC and CSU were asked not to increase tuition this year. We're thrilled to report that tuition at these institutions will remain flat. In the coming year at the community colleges, we're also addressing tuition by expanding the California College Promise to a second year, thereby offering first time, full time enrolled students two years of free college.

We've proposed even more significant investments in timely degree completion and student success (\$95M). We know now that it's not just about getting *into* college, it's also about getting *through* college. We also know that far too many students are spending far too long trying to obtain their degrees, and while they do, the queue for those who are trying to get to the college doors gets longer and longer. It's become commonplace to talk about six-year graduation rates for four-year institutions. I myself have three children – I can tell you that, personally, I'd rather pay for 12 years of college for them than 18! This is the reality of what we're talking about when we telegraph to students and parents that completing in four years is not the standard anymore. Worse than that, we have thousands of students who are attending college without completing

at all – many of whom go on to work in jobs with lower wages as they manage enormous debt that will constrain their opportunities for economic and social mobility for decades.

At the community colleges we're expanding that access by throwing our support behind the full implementation of the community college funding formula, and supporting the 115<sup>th</sup> fully online community college which is designed to provide working adults with short term certificates using flexible, self-paced and adaptive competency-based learning.

This Governor spent eight years on the governing boards of the California State University and the University of California, and what is also clear from the budget is that he knows, cares about and wants to support students. That is why you see money set aside to support legal services for vulnerable immigrant students (\$8M), to support mental health services for students (\$5.3M), and significantly to address their basic needs (\$30M). A fundamental commitment of our Administration is to address California's cost crisis, and nowhere does that show up most perversely than in the number of students who are homeless, or living in their cars, or frequenting one of the many food pantries that, shamefully, exist on so many of our campuses.

Finally, financial aid, which is near and dear to my heart. This year the Governor has proposed two significant augmentations to the state's financial aid commitments. First, as a complement to his comprehensive early childhood education initiative, the governor is proposing that the state increase its "access grants" to student who are also parents. For those of you who don't know, California's financial aid system is predicated upon covering tuition costs, and so most of the \$2.5B in state aid that is disbursed annually goes to cover fees. But this governor has made a commitment to addressing the issue of affordability through the lens of total cost of attendance. Our proposed budget allocates \$120M to support the living costs of student parents, enabling them to go from receiving a living expense grant of \$1,672 to receiving between \$4,000 to \$6,000. Think about what several extra thousands of dollars a year could mean to a parent who is juggling rent, day care, and their own education.

Our other proposal for financial aid is to acknowledge that we need to incrementally do better at serving the millions of Californians who didn't attend college

within a year of graduating high school. We have proposed increasing the number “competitive” awards for these students from 25,750 to 30,000.

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The purpose of all our proposals -- enrollment funding, student services, financial aid, all of it – is to live into California’s promise made in the Master Plan for Higher Education that guaranteed that every student would have access, and furthermore, the implicit promise that each of those students would also complete with a degree, or certificate in hand. The entire enterprise of college access and completion in California is based on a premise that quality education is offered and obtained, that choice and opportunity are preserved and that, at the end of the day, students are left better off than they were. This is where your work, as college instructors, leaders, and accreditors, comes in.

There is no doubt that we need to have a system that is predicated upon choice and fairness for students, which is why we see a great diversity and proliferation of educational choices. At the same time, the number of bills that are moving through the Legislature that question what our educational institutions are providing for students, and how fairly that work is being done, should give us all pause. Bills on gainful employment, bills around legacy admits, bills on standardized testing, bills on college admissions consultants, bills around increased institutional oversight – all of these bills together suggest that there is a public trust that has been broken (or at least is threatened) in terms of our belief that colleges and universities are operating with students at the center of their thinking.

The bond between students and their education begins with the instructor, and faculty have a unique role in meeting students where they are at, providing them with an education that stretches their skills, intellect and capacity, and ensuring that the work they do in their courses results in measurable outcomes. We need faculty to go beyond the imperative of articulating student learning outcomes in a course syllabus to demonstrating through actual student work how those outcomes are being attained. Our faculty are charged with the responsibility of ensuring there is equity in how those outcomes are manifest across individual students for an academic course, or for a department as a whole.

College leaders have the responsibility both to support faculty in this work and to hold them accountable. They must also ensure that the conditions for teaching and learning are optimal for both students and instructors. The range of responsibilities here are endless: making sure that they are packaged with appropriate and sufficient financial aid, that students are getting strong counseling and guidance, that faculty are given the tools and the time they need to educate our students. And most importantly, professors have to go beyond only professing and make certain that learning is happening as well.

And finally, accrediting teams and the commission are on the hook for making sure that the entire college enterprise – admissions and financial aid, teaching and learning, labor issues, costs management, right up to and including gainful employment and reasonable debt – is operating within the purview of what is fair for our students. While those involved in accreditation care very much about the strength and well-being of the institutions, the work is not about benefitting institutions. Accreditation exists to help serve students and the public good, and we must be mindful of a sometimes natural tendency to assume that institutional interests are one and the same as student interests. Too much rides on this basic proposition for it to be any other way. This is the primary responsibility on which trust and faith in these institutions – and the financial aid dollars that flow to them – are based.

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“Living up to a promise” as California has pledged to, and being “of service to students and the public good” as our institutions are called to, these are no doubt tall orders. But they are ideals that we, as a state and a nation, have lived up to before. It was barely a century ago that college was only for the most elite families. It’s up to all of us to make sure we don’t go back to those days.

Access to a quality education did not expand on its own. We decided to expand it – worked for it, funded it. And we have the power – and the support of the Governor – to keep moving toward access for all Californians.

Thank you. I’d be happy to take any questions.