September 13, 2021

The Honorable Dianne Feinstein
The Honorable Alex Padilla
U.S. Senate
U.S. Senate
331 Hart Senate Office Building
112 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington D.C., 20515
Washington D.C., 20515

Subject: Continued Support for Doubling the Pell Grant Award – Budget Reconciliation Package

Dear Senators Feinstein and Padilla:

On behalf of the Association of Independent California Colleges and Universities (AICCU), I write to respectfully ask that continue your support for doubling the Pell Grant as the Senate committees begin building out details of the budget reconciliation package. While we know that you are not on the Health, Education, Labor & Pensions Committee, we hope that you can express your support to your colleagues in that committee. The Pell Grant is critical to creating access and educational pathways for underserved students and has been underfunded for too long. Doubling the Pell would be the most effective and efficient way to increase college access and success for all underserved students.

AICCU is the organizational voice for over 80 WASC-accredited, nonprofit higher education institutions in California. As a sector, we enroll over 180,000 graduate students and 200,000 undergraduate students, including over 57,000 Pell Grant recipients. Our students reflect the rich diversity of California, and we are committed to them and their families and need the help of Congress to meet their growing financial needs. Students in our sector are facing significant financial challenges, only exacerbated by the global pandemic, including growing housing and food expenses. Many of our students are first generation and face growing pressure to support their families while they attend college. Students in our peer public colleges and universities face these same challenges.

Not only would doubling the Pell make college more affordable for students in two and four universities and colleges, it also would make community college free for those Pell students who choose that path to further their educational goals. Doubling the Pell Grant is the single most important thing Congress can do to increase access to college and make it more affordable for low-income students, as it targets the aid to students that truly need it. The Pell Grant is a well-known and proven program that is at once cost-effective and an equitable way to support students.

President Biden has proposed a Pell Grant increase of $1,450. The House Education and Labor Committee committed to only a $500 increase in its mark-up—this is not enough to
support today’s students, facing immense needs. If the Senate HELP committee will not double the Pell Grant, it should at least maintain the $1,450 increase in this once-in-a-generation investment.

Thank you for your work on behalf of California. Doubling the maximum Pell Grant will help build the workforce of the future and an educated citizenry that is reflective of the rich diversity in our state and country. I look forward to working with you to address issues of college access, affordability, and success. If you have questions, please contact me or Tom Vu, AICCU Vice President for Policy (thomas.vu@aiccu.edu.)

Sincerely,

Kristen F. Soares
President

CC: Senator Patty Murray, Chair, Senate Health, Education, Labor & Pensions Committee