ABOUT

The Association of Independent California Colleges and Universities (AICCU) is the organizational voice for over 80 independent, nonprofit higher education institutions in California. As recognized in the Master Plan for Higher Education, the Independent California College and University (ICCU) sector plays an important role by providing higher education choice and access to California’s diverse students. The ICCU sector educates over 180,000 undergraduate students and 148,000 graduate students, helping the state meet its demand for a highly educated, highly skilled workforce.

AICCU advocates for policies that increase college access and strengthen student success; leverage the innovation and efficiencies of independent institutions to maximize education opportunities for Californians; utilize the capacity of the sector to meet the workforce needs of the state in a myriad of sectors; and ensure the ICCU sector has a “seat at the table” during discussions about the future of higher education.

FOCUS

For the 2023-24 Policy and Advocacy Priorities Plan, AICCU and member institutions will focus on the following policy priorities:

- Distance education and reciprocity agreements
- Student financial aid
- Other important legislative topics
DISTANCE EDUCATION & RECIPROCITY AGREEMENTS

With the National Council for State Authorization Reciprocity Agreements (NC-SARA) facing criticism from the attorney’s general in approximately 24 states, it is unclear what the future holds for NC-SARA as currently constituted. To continue efforts to educate key policymakers about the burdens of the status quo, AICCU will organize a series of meetings in Sacramento between those policymakers and university leaders to highlight the specific challenges institutions in California continue to face.

STUDENT FINANCIAL AID

Over the last two years, AICCU has advocated for financial aid investments. At the federal level, AICCU engaged in a nationwide campaign with students and national higher education groups to double the Pell Grant, from the previous maximum level of $6,495 to $13,000. While the campaign continues into the new Congress, we were successful in increasing the award to $6,895 and garnered commitments from both Congressional leaders and the White House to double the Pell over five years.

At the state level, AICCU secured $10.9 million in the last two state budgets to increase Cal Grant award, from $9,084 in 2020 to $9,358. These increases build on the $235 million in total Cal Grant funds that are distributed to eligible students at AICCU institutions.

AICCU successfully advocated for the expansion of supplemental financial aid awards for foster youth, student parents, and transfer students to include those who attend an ICCU, totaling $10 million in additional financial aid for approximately 1,600 recipients and $10.4 million in next year’s budget for the transfer entitlement change (if budgetary conditions are favorable).
In 2023, AICCU will advocate for:

- Elimination of the trigger cut language in the Cal Grant statute and the establishment of a growth mechanism for the award to increase through a policy-based formula.

- $10.4 million in funding to implement the expanded portability of the California Community College Expanded Entitlement Award for students who transfer to an ICCU. Based on AICCU estimates, this funding would expand Cal Grant eligibility to approximately 1,200 additional students at member institutions.

- The implementation of the Cal Grant Reform Act, which would provide a net increase of approximately 4,300 additional Cal Grant recipients at ICCUs. This expanded Cal Grant population would draw approximately $40.2 million in additional Cal Grant funds to students attending member institutions annually.

- Additional investments to realize a doubling of the Pell Grant award, working in collaboration with our federal and segmental partners, coordinating with campus leaders and students at member institutions, and direct engagement at the federal level.

Looking Ahead

Over the last two years, there were several instances of out-of-state institutions attempting to access state aid programs for their students.

AICCU advocated for policymakers to instead focus limited state dollars on California students and California-based institutions of higher education.

Looking ahead, AICCU will continue to advocate for state policies that invest first and foremost in California students and institutions of higher education.
OTHER LEGISLATIVE TOPICS IMPACTING ICCUS

The above priorities are not meant to be viewed as comprehensive of the totality of legislation and policy issues that AICCU is involved in each legislative session. Each year, AICCU is involved in a myriad of legislation, both state and federal, that impacts independent colleges and universities in all aspects.

AICCU will continue to:

Support policies and legislative proposals that promote student transfer to ICCUs, including the Associate Degree for Transfer pathway.

Be the leader on important policy topics such as: student athletics, employment, healthcare and mental health workforce, adult learners, and Title IX.

Represent the sector on the Cradle-to-Career data system and will advocate for liability protection for potential data breaches.

Be the organizational voice for independent higher education on legislation that impact member institutions’ operations and the students they serve.

Work with the state, public higher education counterparts, and coalition partners in the business and social equity communities on workforce education.

Support the work of the Education Deans Council and their policy efforts to strengthen the teacher workforce pipeline and address the teacher shortage, increase teacher diversity, and support equity in financial aid access.

Advocate at the federal level on legislation and regulations on topics such as federal financial aid, increased funding levels and equitable access to research grants, funding mechanisms that are fair and equitable to all segments of higher education, Title IX regulations, support for undocumented and DACA students, and more.