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 199,000 undergraduate students and 170,000 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. Given the tremendous disruption caused by the COVID-19 pandemic and ongoing ramifications for colleges and universities, AICCU strives to promote and support policies that provide relief to institutions and aids their recovery.

For the 2021-22 Policy and Advocacy Priorities Plan, AICCU and member institutions focus on these policy priorities:

- COVID-19 Relief
- Student Financial Aid
- Distance Education and Reciprocity Agreements
- Cradle-to-Career Data System
- Promoting Regional Partnerships
- Other important legislative topics
The novel coronavirus pandemic of 2019 created unprecedented challenges across nearly every industry. Colleges and universities were among the first sectors to significantly shift to remote operations. The financial implications of this shift and the ongoing effects of COVID-19 have created significant financial and regulatory challenges for institutions as they seek to carry out their missions. To aid institutions in their recovery from this unprecedented disruption, AICCU will:

- Advocate for policies that assist institutions in their recovery or assist in their ongoing efforts to serve and support students, including but not limited to financial assistance and regulatory relief.
- Work with our partners at the public colleges and universities to advocate for limited liability protections at the state level.
- Engage with national higher education associations, Congress, and U.S. Department of Education to secure federal funding for independent higher education in future relief packages, ensure all students are eligible, and that funds are disbursed in a fair and equitable manner to institutions.

## Student Financial Aid

During the 2019-20 legislative session, AICCU was part of a stakeholder group, convened by the California Student Aid Commission, that was charged with developing recommendations for how to improve the Cal Grant program. As Cal Grant reform is revisited in the next session by legislators, the governor, other policymakers, and higher education advocacy organizations, AICCU will ensure that California students attending ICCU institutions are included in new or redesigned programs. AICCU will advocate for:

- Equitable access to financial aid programs.
- A strong, stable award amount for students in the ICCU, set by a policy-based formula.
- A broader, more nuanced measurement of the sector’s commitment to transfer pathways.
As California remains the only state that is not part of the State Authorization Reciprocity Agreement (SARA), the process for California institutions to sign individual agreements with other states is inefficient and costly, diverting valuable resources from students. While SARA remains the preferred solution to this issue, given the political barriers for the state’s entry into SARA, AICCU will also seek:

- Innovative policy and legislative solutions that move California law towards SARA, working with our partners at the public colleges and universities.
- Ongoing engagement with external stakeholder groups that potentially stand in the way of California entering SARA.
- Collaborative solutions for member institutions to share resources to find economies of scale and enact best practices.

### CRADLE-TO-CAREER DATA SYSTEM

AICCU is a member of the state’s Cradle-to-Career Data System Work Group, established in the 2019-20 Budget. Representatives from several member institutions serve on subcommittees. Over the past year, AICCU has engaged in this work with the goals of ensuring the system provides important information for policymakers, institutions, students, and the families, and also protects student privacy, but adds minimal burdens on colleges and universities. This work has been greatly assisted by the formation of a working group consisting of institutional staff. AICCU will continue to pursue these goals, while also advocating for a system that functionally works well for the ICCU sector.
PROMOTING REGIONAL PARTNERSHIPS

While AICCU continues work to improve ADT promotion and data collection, the value of regional partnerships remains as important as ever, particularly as student decision-making patterns in the wake of COVID-19 potentially change. AICCU will engage with the public segments and other stakeholders to identify opportunities for new collaboration among willing partners to promote new pathways and partnerships for member institutions.

OTHER IMPORTANT LEGISLATIVE TOPICS

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 be the leader on important policy topics such as: student athletics, employment, teacher education, healthcare workforce, faculty diversity, Title IX, and transfer students.
- AICCU will continue to be the organizational voice for independent higher education on legislation that impact member institutions’ day-to-day operations and the students they serve.
- AICCU will work with the state, public higher education counterparts, and coalition partners in the business and social equity communities on workforce education.
- AICCU will advocate at the federal level on legislation and regulations on topics such as federal financial aid, burdensome oversight, reauthorization of the Higher Education Act, Title IX reform, and more.

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