

FROM RECLAIM CALIFORNIA HIGHER EDUCATION
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MEDIA ADVISORY

Public Higher Education: Free Tuition for California Students to the UC, CSU and Community College Systems Is Possible Today

January 24, 2017--A tuition-free college education in California is possible. A new policy paper released today demonstrates that it is entirely possible today to provide the same accessible, low-cost university experience that California successfully offered its students from the 1960s through the 1990s.

The report demonstrates that we can revive the California Master Plan for Higher Education—eliminating tuition, restoring state per student funding to where it was in 2000 (adjusted for inflation), and providing seats for all students—would only cost the median California household \$48 per year.

The paper, *The \$48 fix: Reclaiming California's Master Plan for Higher Education*, is collaboratively authored by a working group of academics whose exhaustive research points the way to a logical, coherent way for California to afford no-cost community college and university tuition.

“The two-decade experiment in privatizing public higher education in California has failed,” says Stanton Glantz, PhD, a professor of Medicine at UC San Francisco and a collaborator on the paper. “But it doesn’t have to be that way. The original idea for a publicly funded system is still the best idea, and it can work if we make the commitment.”

In 1960, lawmakers created the Master Plan for Higher Education, which was originally committed to free tuition for all Californians pursuing education in California’s community colleges, the 23-campus California State University system, and the 10-campus University of California.

Highly successful in building a system with the best public universities in the world, the plan quickly became a key component of the state-funded infrastructure that has made California the sixth largest economy in the world.

Beginning around 2000, this public model increasingly shifted to one in which higher education has been viewed as a commodity. State funds have been slashed and replaced with billions in student debt as tuition and other fees have risen dramatically.

The “reset” proposal described in the paper would restore state per-student funding to the three-segment public higher education system to the level it received in 2000-2001 while ending tuition and mandatory fees.

“Today’s graduates are burdened with \$12 billion in student debt,” says Glantz, who serves as president of the Council of University of California Faculty Associations. “The loss of state funding and prohibitive rise in tuition fees is the direct result of policy decisions at the highest levels. A reversal is within reach, if we can just find the political will to move forward.”

Community College faculty leader Richard Hansen said, “We must take action to reopen the pipelines of student progress and success. We did this for the post-World War II generation of students, and it worked for decades, helping to build an economy and quality of life that is the envy of the rest of the country and the world.”

“It is counterproductive for California to insist that the public good of higher education must be financed by individual students and their families,” said Jennifer Eagan, president of the California Faculty Association, which represents the faculty in the CSU system.

Eagan added, “We need to go back to the Master Plan and figure out how we all can support public higher education for the future of this state. We need to talk about long term and sustainable ways to fund higher education in California, and ‘The 48 Dollar Fix’ proposes a concrete, fair, and realistic solution.”

Collaborators on the paper include Hansen, professor of Mathematics, De Anza College, president, Foothill-DeAnza Faculty Association, and past president, California Community College Independents, and Christopher Newfield, PhD, author of *The Great Mistake: How We Wrecked Public Universities and How We Can Fix Them*, past chair, UC Systemwide Committee on Planning and Budget, and professor of English, UC Santa Barbara.

Endorsements of the paper are being collected to reach a wide audience in California. Early endorsers include the California Faculty Association.

The paper is downloadable at the [Reclaim California Higher Education coalition website](#).

[View a discussion of the paper on Facebook](#) (January 24, 2017).

ABOUT THE RECLAIM COALITION

The paper’s release has been facilitated by the Reclaim California Higher Education coalition. Our mission is to reclaim the Donahoe Act of 1960, otherwise known as California’s Master Plan for Higher Education. We advocate for a return to its vision of affordable, accessible, quality public higher education for all Californians. In our advocacy, we include all stakeholders, such as students, parents, workers, unions, community groups, faith leaders, educational organizations, elected representatives, and the faculty, staff, and administrators from the higher education systems: the California Community Colleges, the California State University, and the University of California.