

The Civil Rights Project



Proyecto Derechos Civiles

***** NEWS RELEASE *****

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Report from Civil Rights Project at UCLA Reveals Impact of CSU Cuts on Students is Worse than Expected

Fewer courses and rising tuition are compounded by nation's financial crisis

LOS ANGELES – The Civil Rights Project/Proyecto Derechos Civiles at UCLA, today released a report examining the devastating impact state budget cuts and the faltering economy are having on students at one of the California State University system's largest campuses, with a student body that mirrors the statewide enrollment composition of the nation's largest system of public universities. The report, *Squeezed from All Sides*, shows that students at CSU Northridge are struggling to finish college as tuition soars, class offerings shrink, and the families are devastated by the economic turndown, the housing crisis, and the very high levels of joblessness and underemployment.

This report, based on a survey of CSUN students, shows how serious these problems already were this fall before the Governor announced his proposal for a \$500 million cut in the CSU budget. The report concludes that this generation of students is paying much more and getting much less than those who came before, and this threatens the future of a state that needs a one million increase in college graduates.

Co-authored by Civil Rights Project Co-directors Patricia Gandara and Gary Orfield, the report asserts that the roles have reversed for many California parents and their college-age children during this entrenched recession. A large portion of students face enormous challenges to graduating and preparing for their future. While they try to support themselves and complete their college studies, many students now must aid their parents and brothers and sisters to make it through these difficult times—and this places an alarmingly high level of stress on CSU students.

“This research went to one of the largest CSU campuses and asked students how the cuts have affected their lives and prospects,” says Co-author Orfield. “What they told us shows that the challenges they face are severe. Many wrote of the terrible stress and uncertainty they are facing. It is important for Californians to listen seriously to student voices and weigh the cost of shifting the burden to these young people.”

The report notes that CSU is the largest system of higher education in California and is the key to mobility for young people in our state, with particular importance for students of color. In fact, across the CSU system, 53% of all students are from nonwhite

backgrounds. CSUN's diversity reflects the diversity of California: 31% Latino, 30% European American/white, 11% Asian and 7% African American.

Reductions in resources and access will affect the life chances of all groups of students in the state. Latino and black students responding to the survey report that their families are especially hard hit during this recession, but whites and Asians also report very serious problems.

-Key findings-

- 58.6% of students said their families relied on them more now for financial support
- 26% of both Latino and African American students' families in this study cannot pay their bills; 25.8% of Latino students had one or more parent laid off
- Parents of more than 1 out of 10 students overall had lost their job; 21.3% of students have parents whose hours or salary was reduced
- 40% of Latino and Asian students, 25% white students, and 20% of African American students helped support or provide emergency aid to other family members
- 80% of all students say it is harder to meet expenses today than two years ago; 30% say it is much harder or they simply cannot meet their costs.
- 2/3 of students say they are unable to get the classes they need to progress towards degree attainment; most think it will take at least one additional year to graduate

“One student relayed a story about their ‘vicious cycle’ of financial aid and debt,” says Co-author Gándara, “and explained that she or he pays for full-time enrollment just to access financial aid to pay bills -- but the student isn't really moving appreciably closer to graduating since the needed courses are either not offered or already full!”

The report's authors contend that policymakers need to understand the extraordinary situation young people are facing when they make decisions about tuition and aid levels. The consequences for the state are dire if the remedy for budget shortfalls lands only at the feet of students. There is substantial research showing that a great number of middle class jobs, and incomes that go along with them, are available to college graduates only.

The report concludes that if students are unable to obtain their degrees or must prolong graduation due to tuition increases and a bad economy, then students' futures are put on hold and the state also loses out—in terms of lost tax revenues and a workforce lacking the qualifications needed by the state. This also leads to increased costs to the state to subsidize students' education for longer periods of time, as well a reduction in the capacity of the institutions to enroll new students.

“If we care about the future of this state,” urges Orfield, “then there is only one option – to listen to the struggling students and to find ways to lift their burdens and preserve the state's promise.”

-More-

The report is based on an analysis of survey results collected at California State University, Northridge in fall 2010. The survey focused on students who had been enrolled for several years and thus could reflect on the changes to their educational situation since the deepening recession and concomitant increase in tuition and fees.

The researchers surveyed more than 2,000 students at CSUN; 83% of respondents were full-time students. CSUN enrolls more than 35,000 and is one of the largest universities in the nation. CSU students already faced mid-year tuition increases implemented last year and will have to overcome another 10 percent increase when the latest tuition changes take effect next fall 2011.

This report is the first in a series called *THE CSU CRISIS AND CALIFORNIA'S FUTURE*. The research was commissioned by the Civil Rights Project and reviewed by a panel of outside experts.

The full text of the report is available at: www.civilrightsproject.ucla.edu

About the Civil Rights Project at UCLA

Founded in 1996 by former Harvard professors Gary Orfield and Christopher Edley Jr., the Civil Rights Project/Proyecto Derechos Civiles is now co-directed by Orfield and Patricia Gándara, professors at UCLA. Its mission is to create a new generation of research in social science and law on the critical issues of civil rights and equal opportunity for racial and ethnic groups in the United States. It has commissioned more than 400 studies, published 13 books and issued numerous reports from authors at universities and research centers across the country. The Supreme Court, in its 2003 *Grutter v. Bollinger* decision, cited the Civil Rights Project's research.

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