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CSSA President 2017/2018

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At the last board meeting, I spoke about the importance of partnerships, with the Academic Senate, Alumni Council, CSU Administration and Staff, Board of Trustees, and students across the state. I'm excited that this theme of partnership has continued over the past few months. We recently returned from a trip to Washington, D.C., where we were able to partner with the Chancellor to discuss protections for our undocumented students, upholding the standards of Title IX to safeguard our survivors of sexual assault, and increasing the federal Pell Grant to meet the rate of inflation so that our students with the most need will not lose the purchasing power they rely on to pay their tuition and fees.

This past weekend we held our monthly plenary meeting at Cal State Fullerton. Over the course of this meeting, various committees and the Board of Directors discussed the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals program, more commonly referred to as DACA. Our student leaders shared their experiences and strategies, and asked questions about ways to advocate for and with the students most affected by actions taken by our nation's President. CSSA also discussed strategies for action moving forward.

Since the announcement was made about the rescission of DACA on September 5, 2017, CSSA has communicated the ever-changing landscape to students and the public through letters, statements, and calls to action, which can be found at our website calstatestudents.org.

It is clear that we must be united in our support for DACA recipients and do so by continuing to cultivate strong partnerships.

Although DACA was a main topic of discussion in many meetings, other important topics were covered as well. During a meeting in D.C. with James Manning, acting Under-Secretary of Education, Title IX was discussed at length. We expressed interest in ensuring a system that is fair and promotes the safety and well-being of victims and survivors of sexual violence. Under-Secretary Manning invited CSSA to provide formal feedback on student priorities related to Title IX, so our board will be working to produce a white paper that outlines CSSA's key considerations for this important federal policy that ultimately impacts all of our 23 CSU campuses.

I would like to highlight the CSSA 2017/2018 Public Policy Agenda, which was approved at our August Board of Directors meeting. This policy agenda is the result of much discussion,

research, and communication with our student board. I would like to highlight the four priority areas we will be focusing on throughout the year to come:

Our first priority is to ensure that mental health resources are responsive to the distinct needs of the CSU system's diverse student body -- which means not only working to ensure sufficient resources are available to our students, but that they are responsive to data that suggests that certain students are more deeply affected by these issues than others.

Our second priority is to improve the affordability of higher education at the CSU and ensure students' basic needs are being met -- which means not only addressing the ways in which tuition and fees factor into the price of college, but acknowledging that even our low-income students who receive financial aid are leaving our campuses with significant amounts of debt because they are struggling to afford all of the other costs of college life including securing affordable housing and healthy meals.

Our third priority is to promote safe and inclusive environments to ensure a positive campus climate for all CSU students -- which means respecting the constitutional rights of students, while understanding that some students, such as students of color, LGBT and non-binary gender students, and women, have disparate experiences on our campuses;

And finally, our fourth priority is to promote equity in the academic success of CSU students -- which acknowledges that every CSU student should have an equal chance to succeed, and that's currently not the case.

We encourage everyone in this room and watching this meeting online to view the details of this policy agenda, which can be found at calstatestudents.org. While this is not inclusive of all issues facing our students, we know that they are all important to supporting our students' needs and we will use this document as our guiding north star to keep us focused on some of the most urgent issues facing our nearly half a million students. More importantly, we ask that our partners and stakeholders, including the CSU Board of Trustees, refer to these policy priorities as you all make important decisions impacting the everyday lives of the students about whom you care so deeply.