AICCU
ASSOCIATION OF INDEPENDENT CALIFORNIA COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES

July 16, 2025

The Honorable Robert Rivas
Speaker, California State Assembly
1021 O Street, Room 8330
Sacramento, CA 95814

The Honorable Mike McGuire
President Pro Tempore, California State Senate
1021 O Street, Room 8518
Sacramento, CA 95814

The Honorable David Alvarez
Chair, Assembly Budget Subcommittee #3
1021 O Street, Room 5320
Sacramento, CA 95814

The Honorable John Laird
Chair, Senate Budget Subcommittee #1
1021 O Street, Room 8720
Sacramento, CA 95814

Re: Inclusion of Independent California Colleges and Universities Higher Education and Workforce Coordinating Entity

Dear Esteemed Members:

On behalf of the Association of Independent California Colleges and Universities (AICCU) and the undersigned institutional leaders, we write to share our perspectives regarding ongoing discussions about the structure of a higher education and workforce coordinating entity.

AICCU represents over 85 independent, nonprofit, WASC-accredited colleges and universities across California. Our institutions are a vital part of the state's higher education ecosystem, enrolling 21% of undergraduate degree-seeking students and 54% of California students pursuing graduate degrees. We are proud to provide diverse learning environments that play a critical role in preparing the skilled and professional workforce that fuels the state's economy.

We understand there are ongoing deliberations regarding the formation of a California coordinating body for higher education and workforce alignment. We strongly support the Council's stated goal of aligning education and workforce strategies to meet the state's economic and equity needs. With projections showing that 40% of California jobs will require at least a bachelor's degree by 2030—and another third will require some college education—we must expand and align our education and workforce strategies. Our sector is eager to contribute in meaningful ways to this effort.

With campuses throughout the state—from Redding to San Diego, as well as robust online offerings—our institutions are deeply embedded in their communities and are well-positioned to help meet regional and industry-specific workforce needs. Consider the following:

- With over **40 schools of education**, we support California's K-12 system and help meet the needs of school districts. In 2022-23, we awarded 39% of the new educator credentials in the state.
- With over 25 nursing programs, we train over **50% of the state's nurses** with baccalaureate or higher-level degrees, and many of our institutions offer accelerated RN to BSN partnerships with our community colleges.
- We educate **90% of California's clinical, counseling, and applied psychology professionals**, contributing significantly to the state's mental health workforce.

To date, we have been supportive of the Senate approach as outlined in Senate Bill 638 (Padilla) because it appropriately recognizes the importance of including our sector in the governance of a statewide coordinating entity. California's independent colleges and universities includes more institutions of higher education than the UC and CSU combined, and given the significant contributions we make through research, training and preparing the key workforce areas noted above, we want to ensure that the independent California colleges and universities sector are represented in the governing body of any coordinating entity.

This inclusion is consistent with the long-standing recognition of our sector by the state as an essential higher education partner. AICCU holds formal seats, as defined in statute, on the California Commission on Teacher Credentialing, the California Student Aid Commission, the Cradle-to-Career Data System Governing Board and the California Educational Facilities Authority. We also actively participate, as defined in statute, in intersegmental bodies such as the ADT Implementation Committee and the Common Course Numbering Council and were full participants in the now-defunct California Postsecondary Education Commission.

Given our contributions and historical role, we respectfully urge that you ensure the independent sector is included, alongside the UC, CSU, and California Community Colleges, on the governing body of any new higher education and workforce coordinating entity.

Sincerely,

Kristen F. Soares
President, AICCU

Michael J. Beals
President, Vanguard University

Erika Bustamante
Assistant Vice President, Stanford University

Martha Escutia
Vice President, University of Southern California

James T. Harris
President, University of San Diego

Ruthann Heinrich
Chair of the Board of Trustees, National University

Amy Marcus-Newhall
President, Scripps College

Ann McElaney-Johnson
President, Mount Saint Mary's University

Mark Milliron
President, National University

Krista Newkirk
President, University of Redlands

Fred Prager
Trustee, Claremont McKenna College

Ravi Rajan
President, California Institute of the Arts

G. Gabrielle Starr
President, Pomona College

Andre Stephens
President, Fresno Pacific University



Daniele Struppa
President, Chapman University

CHAPMAN UNIVERSITY

cc: Nichole Munoz-Murillo, Deputy Legislative Secretary, Office of Governor Gavin Newsom
Mónica Henestroza, Special Assistant to Speaker Robert Rivas
Kimberly Rodriguez, Deputy Chief of Staff and Policy Director, Office of Senate pro Tempore Mike McGuire
Mark Martin, Consultant, Assembly Budget Committee
Diego Lopez, Consultant, Senate Budget Committee
Jeanice Warden-Washington, Chief Consultant, Assembly Higher Education Committee
Olgalilia Ramirez, Principal Consultant, Senate Education Committee