
Information/Action Item

California Student Aid Commission

Policy discussion on FAFSA simplification and community college research with Lauren Asher, President, and Deborah Cochrane of The Institute for College Access and Success

Lauren Asher, President of The Institute for College Access and Success, and Deborah Cochrane, Program Director, have been invited by the Commission to discuss their recent work on the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) simplification and community college research. The following background information was made available through the Institute's website www.ticas.org.

The Institute for College Access & Success is an independent, nonprofit organization that works to make higher education more available and affordable for people of all backgrounds. By conducting and supporting nonpartisan research, analysis, and advocacy, the Institute aims to improve the processes and public policies that can pave the way to successful educational outcomes for students and for society. Since its creation in 2004 and launch of the Project on Student Debt in 2005, the Institute has become a widely known and highly respected source of research and policy expertise on financial aid, college affordability, and related issues. Their research and analysis has shaped public understanding of financial aid and influenced policy and practice at the federal, state, and college levels. The Institute's ongoing objectives are:

- Increase funding for and access to need-based grant aid
- Strengthen consumer protections for private student loan borrowers
- Ensure that eligible borrowers learn about and take advantage of Income-Based Repayment and Public Service Loan Forgiveness
- Simplify the financial aid application process
- Maximize community college students' use of financial aid, especially in California
- Improve the availability and usefulness of higher education data
- Increase colleges' commitment to and accountability for affordability for low- and middle-income students
- Promote college practices and communications that lead to student access and success

BOARD MEMBERS

Rosa Armendáriz	<i>Hispanic Serving Institutions Activity Director, Los Medanos College</i>
Annik Hirshen	<i>Dean of Students, University of California, Berkeley, School of Law</i>
Richard Kazis	<i>Senior Vice President, Jobs for the Future.</i>
Roger Nozaki	<i>Associate Dean and Director, Howard R. Swearer Center for Public Service at Brown University</i>
Lauren Asher	<i>President, The Institute for College Access & Success</i>

INSTITUTE STAFF

Lauren Asher joined the Institute in 2005 and oversees the organization's programs and operations. Ms. Asher also leads the Institute's efforts to simplify the financial aid application process. An expert in policy analysis and issue-based communications, her background includes management roles in nonprofit, government, and philanthropic organizations. After serving in senior positions at the Kaiser Family Foundation, National Partnership for Women & Families, and U.S. Department of Labor, Ms. Asher founded and ran Asher Policy Consulting from 2002-2005. Her clients included national, state, and local nonprofits and foundations working to improve the lives of children, youth, and working families. She holds a B.A. from Brown University and a M.P.A. from Harvard's Kennedy School of Government.

Debbie Cochrane directs the Institute's Keeping California's Promise program and oversees work relating to community colleges, transfer students, and foster youth. She is a leading expert on financial aid issues in California. Before joining the Institute's staff, Ms. Cochrane worked as a policy analyst at the National Center for Public Policy and Higher Education, focusing primarily on community college affordability and finance policy issues. Prior to that she worked as a researcher with AFSCME Local 3299, which represents service and patient care technical workers at the University of California. Other experience includes direct service and management roles within a variety of nonprofit settings. She holds an MSW with a focus on social policy from San Francisco State University and a B.A. from the University of Michigan.

Responsible Person(s): Diana Fuentes-Michel
Executive Director
California Student Aid Commission