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## Dr. Daisy Gonzales selected to lead California Student Aid Commission

**SACRAMENTO, Calif., June 11, 2024** – The California Student Aid Commission (Commission) has named Dr. Daisy Gonzales to serve as the next Executive Director of the Commission, the nation’s largest state financial aid system. The announcement comes following an extensive national search and unanimous vote of the Commission. Dr. Gonzales currently serves as the Deputy Chancellor of the California Community Colleges, where she oversees 116 colleges and supports the implementation of learning environments and services for 2 million students.



“I am honored to be selected to lead the California Student Aid Commission. As a former Cal Grant and Chafee Foster Youth student, I experienced firsthand the transformative power of higher education and financial aid,” **Dr. Gonzales** said. “The California Student Aid Commission is a champion for college affordability and equitable student success. In recent years, California’s students have benefited through historic advocacy and investments in financial aid and our work will continue with urgency. Our economy demands an educated workforce and financial aid is the foundation to provide every Californian access to high-quality education and socio-economic opportunity.”

“As an alumna of the Cal Grant and Chafee Foster Youth Grant programs and an experienced higher education leader, Dr. Gonzales is well-positioned to lead the California Student Aid Commission during this pivotal time,” said **Governor Gavin Newsom**. “I look forward to working with Dr. Gonzales to expand opportunity for all.”

“Guided by her dedication to student success and economic opportunity for all, Dr. Gonzales is a long-time champion and proven partner for California students,” said **U.S. Senator Alex Padilla (D-CA)**. “Her leadership will help California continue to set the national standard in protecting marginalized students and comprehensively meeting their needs through financial aid. I commend the Commission for its selection and look forward to continuing to partner with her to ensure that all of California’s students can afford and attain higher education.”

Dr. Gonzales is an experienced student-centered leader whose innovative programs and policies have helped hundreds of thousands of students gain access to higher education in California. During her tenure at the California Community College Chancellor's Office, Dr. Gonzales led the implementation of *Vision for Success*, a bold systemwide plan focused on reducing time to completion, increasing degree and credential attainment, and boosting transfer to four-year institutions. During the COVID-19 pandemic, Dr. Gonzales served as Acting and Interim Chancellor, supporting California's community colleges to innovate as they navigated unprecedented challenges. Through collaboration with students and system partners, Dr. Gonzales led efforts to secure historic levels of state and federal funding, while redesigning policies to remove barriers to equitable success, including Cal Grant reform, Dream Resource Centers, open educational resources, basic needs centers, streamlined transfer pathways, affordable student housing, and credit for prior learning.

Dr. Gonzales began her career in the classroom as a dual-immersion third-grade teacher. She also focused on higher education and budget policy as a consultant for the California Assembly Appropriations Committee and Assembly Budget Committee during the state 2009-2011 fiscal crisis. Dr. Gonzales previously served as the Associate Director of Policy Analysis for California Education, a non-partisan research center at Stanford University focused on designing equitable outcomes at all levels of the state's education system.

"Dr. Gonzales is a fierce advocate for students who has a proven track record of serving the students of California, especially those coming from marginalized communities," said **Catalina Cifuentes, Chair of the California Student Aid Commission**. "Having helped lead the California Community Colleges, Dr. Gonzales is uniquely familiar with the students that California is serving today and tomorrow – there is no one better suited to lead the Commission into the future and to help us continue to adapt to the changing needs of our students."

"Dr. Gonzales is an equity-driven leader who understands how life-changing financial aid can be and how crucial it is for those who seek to access our institutions of higher education," said current **Executive Director, Marlene Garcia**. "Dr. Gonzales has a long record of delivering student-centered policy change and I look forward to working with her to ensure a seamless transition."

Dr. Gonzales comes from an immigrant household in Southern California and was raised as a former foster youth. She credits her time in the foster care system and public schools for shaping her view of the integral role that government institutions play in the lives of young Californians, as well as her desire to transform public services with dignity and compassion at their center. Dr. Gonzales was a first-generation student at Los Angeles Valley College and later Mills College before earning her Master's and Ph.D. in Sociology from the University of California, Santa Barbara. She currently lives in San Diego with her husband, a K-12 education leader.

Dr. Gonzales will succeed current Executive Director Marlene Garcia, who has led the Commission since May 2019. Coming from serving the largest public system of higher education, Dr. Gonzales will now look to lead the largest and most comprehensive state financial aid system in the country. Dr. Gonzales will begin her tenure as Executive Director on July 15, 2024.

Additional statements responding to today's announcement on Dr. Gonzales being named as Executive Director of the Commission can be found here:

[https://www.csac.ca.gov/sites/main/files/file-attachments/what\\_others\\_are\\_saying\\_about\\_the\\_new\\_executive\\_director\\_0.pdf](https://www.csac.ca.gov/sites/main/files/file-attachments/what_others_are_saying_about_the_new_executive_director_0.pdf).

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*The California Student Aid Commission currently serves over 400,000 students and administers the state's \$3 billion portfolio of student financial aid programs and services, including the federal student aid, Cal Grant, the Middle Class Scholarship, and the California Dream Act Application. The Commission serves as a resource for policymakers and the public on college affordability and financing issues, and advocates for policy changes to eliminate cost as a barrier to any qualified California student pursuing a higher education. Visit our website at [www.csac.ca.gov](http://www.csac.ca.gov) or follow us on social media by clicking on our [Link Tree](#).*