

RCCD

RIVERSIDE COMMUNITY
COLLEGE DISTRICT



2026 Legislative Platform

The Riverside Community College District Board of Trustees, along with the chancellor and leadership from its three colleges, has established legislative priorities for the 2026 Legislative Program. These priorities center on three key areas: Equity in Success, Equity in Access, and Equity in Support aligning with the California Community Colleges Chancellor's Office Vision 2030, a framework for bold and thoughtful action. This plan prioritizes data-based, student-centered strategies to bring college to our communities and equitably strengthen access, support and success. The District is committed to enhancing the social and economic mobility of its students by promoting equitable opportunities for all individuals seeking to benefit from the educational programs offered across its colleges.

Equity in Access



FINANCIAL AID REFORM

1. Federal Aid – Issue:

On July 4, 2025, President Trump signed the One Big Beautiful Bill Act, completing federal budget reconciliation. The law includes key higher education changes: limiting Pell Grant eligibility for students who are enrolled less than half-time, increasing full-time Pell eligibility to 30 semester hours annually, and restricting student loans for programs where most graduates earn below their state's median high school graduation. Additionally, changes to the 2024–25 FAFSA under the Fostering Undergraduate Talent Act caused significant delays and processing errors, leading to confusion and reduced confidence among students and families. Due to restricted access to Federal Student Aid portals, colleges

cannot process FAFSA corrections or special circumstance appeals, which prevents many students from receiving their financial aid awards.

Legislative Actions:

The District requests assurances from Federal Student Aid that the 2026–27 Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) will launch on schedule on October 1, 2026, with full access for students and parents to complete the application, including all consent and signature requirements. Additionally, the District asks that schools be granted system access to submit batch corrections and overrides after the application's launch. Lastly, the District supports funding Workforce Pell Grants for short-term programs that help students enter the workforce.

2. California Grant Reform - Issue:

The District applauds Assemblymembers Jose Medina and Kevin McCarty, and Senator Connie Leyva for leading the California Grant Reform, which created the California Grant Equity Framework. This framework consolidates grants for community colleges, simplifies applications, and allows colleges more flexibility in awarding aid. Implemented by the California Student Aid Commission in 2022–23, the framework is expected to continue through 2024–25, but was not funded for 2025–26.

Legislative Actions:

The District urges that Cal Grant funding be allocated for the 2026–27 academic year to facilitate implementation of the California Grant Equity Framework.

3. Financial Aid Fraud - Issue:

The California Community Colleges (CCC) system is currently under significant threat from an escalating wave of fraudulent applications and enrollments. Over the last several months, California Colleges have witnessed an alarming increase in sophisticated attempts to defraud the system, primarily driven by organized entities aiming to fraudulently obtain state and federal financial aid. This crisis jeopardizes taxpayer funds, strains college resources, and, most critically, displaces legitimate students seeking educational opportunities.

Legislative Actions:

The District urges the Legislature to allocate \$225 million annually to identity verification and fraud detection across California's community colleges, authorize secure real-time data sharing between institutions and state agencies to flag suspicious activity, and conduct a statewide audit to assess the scope and impact of enrollment fraud. These actions are critical to protect public resources, maintain system integrity, and ensure financial aid reaches the students who need it most.

SPECIAL POPULATIONS

4. Foster Youth - Issue:

Riverside County is home to the third-largest population of foster youth in the state. Foster youth tend to face a disproportionate number of barriers to access and persist toward a degree. To expand college access and success for foster youth, the Foster Youth Support Network (FYSN) provides a comprehensive suite of services designed to create a connected and coordinated safety net for foster youth transitioning from high school. The Riverside Community College District colleges

support early intervention and transition support for foster youth; however, funding for this program is projected to end by 2027 and new funding will be needed.

Legislative Actions:

Allocate \$185,000 annually for the Foster Youth Support Network to support expansion of transitional and rapid rehousing opportunities for these youth.

5. Veterans - Issue:

Each year approximately 200,000 service members transition from military to civilian life with 55 percent reporting that their military skills and experience are often dismissed by civilian educators and employers. Credit for prior learning (CPL) can bridge this critical gap for Veterans and experiential learners statewide at little to no additional cost to taxpayers. In 2022, Mapping Articulated Pathways (MAP) was developed to maximize college credit awarded for military training and professional experience to a cloud-based platform. In 2024, the California Community Colleges Chancellor's Office devoted resources to make it possible for all 116 California community colleges to implement MAP and receive no-cost professional development and CPL support.

Legislative Actions:

Support the California Community Colleges Chancellor's Office in its statewide implementation of Mapping Articulated Pathways. Approve continued funding to expand programs to all 116 California community colleges, with the goal of eventually reaching colleges and universities nationwide. The goal is to give Veterans and working adults the academic credit they deserve through their service and work experience.

6. Justice Involved and Formerly Incarcerated - Issue:

California community colleges have played a key role in helping justice-involved individuals reintegrate into their communities through rehabilitative education and support. In October 2021, the Governor signed Assembly Bill 417, officially establishing the Rising Scholars Network to deliver dedicated services for justice-involved students. Since its launch, the program has faced several challenges, including lack of funding for dedicated staff capable of developing and sustaining faculty training and support. Additionally, annual funding has decreased due to the State's budget deficit.

Legislative Actions:

Advocate for \$15 million in on-going funding for the Rising Scholars Network. Support federal and state resources to support transcript sharing and instructional technology for incarcerated students. Develop mentorship and apprenticeship opportunities in collaboration with local businesses for student reentry and career readiness. Create a streamlined process for providing state-issued identification to incarcerated students. Foster partnerships with counties and cities to support programs that address students' basic needs.

7. Undocumented and Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals - Issue:

The District supports approximately 2,400 students annually through the DREAM Act and Assembly Bill 540 programs. Despite this, funding gaps persist. Many students continue to need help accessing legal resources, applying for financial aid and scholarships, and meeting basic needs. While the District is committed

to supporting marginalized students, its colleges face limitations in services they can offer without dedicated funding.

Legislative Actions:

Support federal legislation to codify the DREAM Act, expand Pell Grant and SNAP eligibility for undocumented and DACA students, and protect student visa holders. Allocate \$1.3 million in state funding for campus resource centers and staff liaisons. Promote bridge programs and dedicated learning communities with academic counseling to support undocumented students from high school through college completion.

8. Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, Intersex, Asexual, Two Spirit, and Other Sexual Identities - Issue:

According to the California Community Colleges Chancellor's Office, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, intersex, asexual, two spirit, and other sexual identities (LGBTQIA2+) students are experiencing a disproportionate impact in the following areas: retention and completion of a degree or certificate. Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, intersex, asexual, two spirit, and other sexual identities individuals encounter familial, social, economic, and educational instability, which inhibits their ability to succeed academically and holistically.

Legislative Actions:

Develop legislation that creates and provides \$125,000 annually for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, intersex, asexual, two spirit, and other sexual identities campus resource centers that provide wrap-around services, including mental health and basic needs support. Allocate \$479,232 annually to hire

at least one permanent, full-time, qualified professional employee at each college to meet students' needs and improve educational outcomes. Develop legislation to increase the number of gender inclusive restrooms and locker rooms.

9. Mental and Psychological Services - Issue:

According to the 2022-23 survey conducted by the Healthy Minds Network, 72 percent of students indicated a need for mental health support to help them achieve academic success. Mental health is correlated with higher satisfaction in college. Students with mental health problems, such as depression, are two times more likely than their peers to leave their institution according to the Healthy Minds Network. Thus, increasing on-site mental health experts, counseling services, and preventive programs can reduce risk and increase student retention.

Legislative Actions:

Advocate for legislation that requires a percentage of Mental Health Services Act funds go to community colleges to address student health and wellness concerns, including mental health and psychological services. The District requests \$500,000 annually to address students' needs.

10. Students with Disabilities - Issue:

Students with disabilities represent about five percent of the California Community Colleges system's population, with some districts reporting higher rates. At Riverside Community College District, 8.45 percent of students are registered with Disabled Student Programs and Services. The campus Disability Resource Centers collaborate with students to provide accommodations,

services, and resources that ensure access to their academic programs. As the number of students with disabilities grows, the District's colleges must enhance awareness, understanding and services as well as equip faculty to effectively support this diverse student population.

Legislative Actions:

The District requests \$465,000 to provide three student success coaches, two for Riverside City College and one for Moreno Valley and Norco College. Additionally, RCCD requests \$60,000 (\$20,000 per college) to cover supplies, outreach and engagement opportunities for students, along with professional development opportunities for each coach.

11. Adult Learners - Issue:

Adult education is vital for preparing individuals for today's changing economy and improving social mobility. Assembly Bill 1705 reformed placement rules in California Community Colleges by requiring the use of high school transcripts for English and math placement. However, AB 1705 has unintentionally reduced completion rates among adult learners by removing supports such as noncredit coursework, which were vital for adult students who may not have recently engaged with college-level math or who did not follow a traditional K-12 path.

Legislative Actions:

Advocate for a return of noncredit developmental education and funding to support adult learners ages 25 to 55 who need better access to higher education to strengthen the workforce.

12. Noncredit Programming for People with Disabilities and Older Adults - Issue:

California has the highest autism spectrum disorder rate in the nation. In a 2023 study from the Center for Research on Disability, 35 percent of Riverside County residents under age 65 have a disability. Many of these students could benefit from targeted noncredit courses designed for individuals with disabilities; however, such courses receive lower funding rates compared to English as a Second Language and career technical education programs. The Center of Excellence highlights that the fastest-growing demographic in the District's service area is residents aged 65 and older. Given this projected growth, expanding curriculum for senior citizens deserves further consideration. As this population grows, economic impacts will intensify. One-third of older adults live below the poverty line, and two-thirds rely on Social Security for at least half of their income, increasing demand for state-funded assistance programs. This sizable population is increasingly accessing education through online and hybrid formats. Ultimately, the benefits of noncredit education extend beyond individual students. Expanding employment opportunities and supporting longer careers for older workers will be essential to California's long-term economic stability.

As more students move into well-paying jobs, families gain financial security, and communities benefit from a more skilled and resilient workforce. When aligned with broader student success efforts, noncredit programs can lay the foundation for economic mobility and help build thriving, resilient communities.

Legislative Actions: Advocate for full apportionment for noncredit classes that serve people with disabilities and older adults. Advocate for support services and dedicated counselors for adults with disabilities. Support higher education initiatives that offer funding to provide classes to people with disabilities and older adults.

Equity in Success



1. Guided Pathways - Issue:

Guided Pathways are structured to provide students with clear enrollment avenues, course-taking patterns, and support services resulting in increased student access, equity and success. Unfortunately, barriers such as a lack of preparatory courses, unfavorable counselor-to-student ratio, and funding for wrap-around support services prevent Guided Pathways from being fully implemented. Wraparound support in the student centers is central to student success and is related to their standard of care.

Legislative Actions:

The District urges legislators to maintain and expand funding for key workforce and education initiatives, including the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA), Career Technical Education (CTE) pathways, the Golden State Pathways Program, the Strong Workforce Program (SWP), and the K-12 Strong Workforce Program (SWP K12). These programs are essential to strengthening California's talent pipeline and ensuring equitable access to college and career opportunities for all students.

2. Dual Enrollment Expansion - Issue:

The Inland Empire has some of the lowest educational attainment rates in the state. RCCD is working to address this challenge by partnering with K-12 districts through College and Career Access Pathways (CCAP), the High School Partnership Program, Middle and Early College High Schools, and other dual enrollment initiatives. These programs are already showing promise in increasing college readiness and participation among first-generation, low-income, and under-represented students. Dual enrollment is a critical

strategy to improve college access, reduce equity gaps, and strengthen local workforce pipelines.

Legislative Actions:

The District is requesting a total of \$1,492,548 per college annually to support the operation of academic programs and student services on high school campuses, which includes funding for approximately 50 educational advisors, 10 counselors, and 150 peer mentors, as well as professional development, marketing, supplies, and essential equipment. Districtwide, the total funding need is \$4,477,643 per year. Additionally, resources are needed to support mandatory professional development for full-time and adjunct faculty, along with classified staff, to ensure the successful implementation and long-term sustainability of the program.

3. Increase Transfer Rates -

Issue: Each year, approximately 80,000 California community college students successfully transfer to a University of California (UC) or California State University (CSU) campus. Nearly 40,000 of them earn an associate degree for transfer, which guarantees junior-level admission to a CSU and other participating universities. The District receives \$674.94 per student who transfers to a CSU, UC or private institution. With about 42 percent of its students transferring annually, the District urgently needs increased funding to strengthen and sustain its transfer support services.

Legislative Actions: Support legislation that increases funding for the California Community Colleges system to strengthen transfer pathways. Advocate for reforms to the Student-Centered Funding Formula that makes it

more equitable and better aligned with increasing transfer outcomes. Promote the development and implementation of a statewide associate degree for transfer curriculum that works for the UC's and CSU's to streamline the transfer process. Advance the adoption of Program Pathway Tracker software to expand associate degree transfer opportunities.

4. Baccalaureate Degree

Program - Issue: The State of California is facing a significant and ongoing shortage of emergency medical services and public safety personnel, leading to longer response times, reduced operational capacity, and diminished public confidence. Many of California's largest counties and municipalities now require a bachelor's degree for entry-level emergency management roles. Unfortunately, affordable public options for these degrees are scarce, often forcing students to pursue costly private education, creating a significant equity gap in workforce access. In response, Moreno Valley College's School of Public Safety has launched California's first public bachelor of science degree in Emergency Management. This innovative program directly addresses the growing demand for trained professionals in the field and reflects a strong alignment with both state and regional workforce needs.

Legislative Actions: The District is requesting \$820,000 to support key personnel positions, essential supplies, equipment, and marketing needs to launch and sustain the program.

CAREER & TECHNICAL EDUCATION

5. Future of Workforce Development - Issue:

The Inland Empire faces considerable economic and educational challenges. To address this, the District aims to boost the number of certificate and degree holders in the area by expanding access to apprenticeships aligned with regional industry workforce demands.

Legislative Actions:

Advocate for continued funding and resources for workforce development at the community college level. Support regional apprenticeship programs that provide students with educational certificates and degrees that lead to well-paying careers that provide benefits and stable schedules.

6. Clinical Placements - Issue:

Private training centers are compensating clinical sites to host student internships, creating direct employment pathways that draw students away from public institutions. To remain competitive, the District requires increased funding for instructional staff, equipment and logistical support.

Legislative Actions:

Advocate for legislation that bans clinical institutions from accepting financial incentives, such as donations and scholarships from private education programs in exchange for clinical placements. Support increased funding for clinical placement programs that prioritize public institutions.

7. Emergency Medical Services Program - Issue:

Riverside County and the State of California are confronting a significant deficit of first responders particularly paramedics and ambulance transport providers, which poses significant public safety and healthcare challenges. Between 2020 and 2022, the state lost roughly 3,600 sworn and 1,200 civilian staff, according to the Peace Officers Research Association of California, exacerbating the workforce gap. To address this shortage, the Ben Clark Education Center at Moreno Valley College's School of Public Safety provides targeted emergency medical services training for emergency medical technicians and paramedics, supporting state and local efforts to strengthen the emergency response workforce.

Legislative Actions:

Support the proposed \$3 billion budget allocation for fiscal year 2026–27 for the Apprenticeship Program through the Department of Labor to strengthen workforce development and ensure alignment with regional workforce needs.

8. Apprenticeships & Internships Pathways - Issue:

The Inland Empire faces significant multi-generational poverty, with about 54 percent of the workforce lacking formal training or skills. The District is involved in the LAUNCH Apprenticeship Network Hub, aiming to connect students and employers with apprenticeship programs and resources across the region. However, other work-based learning opportunities are scarce and mostly unpaid, creating unequal access for individuals who cannot afford to work without compensation.

Legislative Actions:

The District received \$4,697,637 to advance apprenticeship development in the Inland Empire, including a subaward of about \$2.3 million to the LAUNCH Apprenticeship Network via the California Community Colleges Chancellor's Office for local intermediary support. The District is requesting \$2 million to continue and expand these efforts at the state and federal levels. Additionally, the District supports creating paid internships and other work-based learning opportunities that offer equitable access for students seeking industry experience in areas without apprenticeship programs.

9. Inland Empire Technical Trade Center - Issue:

The Inland Empire suffers from low rates of degree attainment and high rates of multi-generational poverty in marginalized communities throughout the region. Approximately, 54 percent of the region's current workforce is neither formally trained nor skilled and earns insufficient pay with no benefits in jobs and no viable career pathways. The Inland Empire Technical Trade Center is a partnership with local labor, trades and business as a response to the urgent need for good paying jobs, a diverse job market, and a skilled workforce for the region.

Legislative Actions:

The District requests \$400 million in funding for Phases II and III of the Inland Empire Technical Trade Center for building costs, educational equipment, program implementation, and instructional materials. An additional \$10 million annually through the state General Fund or workforce development programs to cover operations, maintenance, and instructional continuity.



10. Inland Empire Tech

Bridge - Issue: Diversifying the Inland Empire's economy requires investment in innovative sectors that create well-paying local jobs and reduce the need for residents to seek work elsewhere. These sectors drive new technologies and solutions that advance climate resilience, energy efficiency, and national security through reshored manufacturing and stronger supply chains. To meet this need, the District partnered with the Naval Surface Warfare Center Corona and the County of Riverside to establish the Inland Empire Tech Bridge, providing programs and support for regional innovators, entrepreneurs, and job seekers.

Legislative Actions: Support the proposed 2026-27 budget allocation of \$70 million for the Department of Defense to expand the Tech Bridge's Maverick Innovation Lab across the Inland Empire, and sustain resources for regional job creators and seekers, including APEX Accelerator programs and connections to the County Workforce Development system.

Equity in Support



1. RCCD Capital Construction Plan/Deferred Maintenance for District Facilities - Issue:

The rising costs for new construction and modernization projects are placing increasing pressure on resources, while campus infrastructure, building systems, and technology continue to age. To support enrollment growth, there is an urgent need to construct and upgrade educational facilities and campus amenities. However, escalating expenses for construction, modernization, and deferred maintenance coincide with reductions or eliminations in state-scheduled maintenance funding. This has caused significant delays in repairing and updating outdated college facilities that are essential for student learning. Postponing these projects risks catastrophic failures that could severely disrupt educational delivery.

Legislative Actions:

Advocate for fair changes to the capital outlay funding scoring,

especially the hardship exemption requiring 25 percent local funding. Allocate \$280 million to address maintenance backlogs and instructional equipment replacement. Request the Department of Finance update outdated budget estimating models to reflect current market costs and establish an expedited budget augmentation process based on actual bid prices to prevent project delays and funding shortfalls.

2. Field Act - Issue:

The District is committed to maintaining safe and modern learning environments. RCCD already adheres to rigorous construction standards and undergoes local and state review for major capital projects. However, the expansion of the Field Act to cover all community college buildings, especially leased and off-campus facilities, would impose unreasonable compliance burdens, drive up costs, and limit our ability to serve underserved students flexibly.

Legislative Actions:

Urge the state to reject legislation that would broadly impose Field Act requirements on all community college facilities, particularly leased or nonstate-funded buildings. RCCD recommends establishing a state-funded seismic retrofit grant program for high-risk, permanent instructional facilities and allowing colleges to demonstrate compliance through certified local building officials and engineers, rather than duplicative DSA oversight. Additionally, leased or short-term use buildings used for temporary or non-core instructional purposes should be exempt from Field Act mandates.

3. Student Housing - Issue:

In 2021, the Riverside Community College District commissioned a feasibility study to identify student housing needs across the three colleges. Key findings show that students need affordable on-campus housing options, resulting in a need for over 4,600 beds. In 2023, the District was awarded \$75 million

in a joint application with the University of California, Riverside, totaling \$126 million to fund the North District project. Ultimately, 652 beds will be created with 326 beds for community college students. Unfortunately, this leaves a gap of approximately 4,000 beds to meet the student housing needs in the District.

Legislative Actions:

Allocate \$155 million in state funding to support student housing projects at Moreno Valley College and Norco College. Support increased state funding for rental assistance programs and broaden housing eligibility at the federal, state and county levels to include community college students and their families. Oppose legislative proposals that allow students to use parking facilities for overnight stays in their vehicles as a means to address student housing insecurity.

4. Safety and Emergency Preparedness - Issue:

In recent years, California has grappled with the looming threat of both severe natural disasters and human caused emergencies. The District must proactively elevate its emergency readiness and response capabilities to ensure the safety and welfare of students, faculty and staff.

Legislative Actions:

The District is requesting a total of \$65,340,000 to address the District's Safety and Emergency Preparedness needs. This funding will facilitate vital enhancements in the following areas: lock system assessment and upgrade, security camera system, update campus lighting, emergency generators, emergency operations center supplies, and micro-grids.

5. Access to Technology and Teaching Modalities - Issue:

The District is committed to expanding digital equity through broadband access to ensure community college students benefit from high-quality technology experiences, including reliable high-speed internet at home. Following the pandemic, the California Community Colleges system has embraced hybrid learning models. To support this shift, the District must continue upgrading its technology infrastructure to expand real-time data analytics, improve access to systemwide data resources, and provide cloud-based instructional tools. These efforts will strengthen online education delivery, better assist faculty, and offer flexible class options to meet the needs of working families.

Legislative Actions:

Support funding for public-private partnerships with community-based organizations or local government agencies to provide students with high-speed internet access at home. Pursue funding to establish partnerships with cloud service providers to enable access to top cloud-based instructional platforms and tools at lower costs. Advocate for resources to develop ADA-compliant accessible technology and to train faculty in its equitable use for all students.

6. District Sustainability and Climate Action - Issue:

Southern California is at risk for environmental and climate-related hazards. In the past few years, wildfires, extreme heat waves, historic drought, and aging utilities and facilities have threatened Californians' health and economic livelihood. The impact of these crises is more significant for vulnerable, low-income and disadvantaged communities,

many of which exist in the Inland Empire and within the District's service area.

Legislative Actions:

Identify federal and state funding for energy conservation measures. The District needs funding to support the replacement of natural gas appliances with electrical alternatives, replacement of aged campus central plants, and converting infrastructure systems with energy-efficient alternatives to reduce energy consumption and optimize efficiencies which is estimated at \$55 million.

7. Equalize Apportionment - Issue:

Proposition 98, passed in 1988, guarantees state funding for K-14 education, including community colleges. In 2025–26, community colleges are expected to receive 72 percent of their total funding from Proposition 98, yet they receive only about 11 percent of the overall allocation despite playing a key role in workforce development and access to higher education. Proposition 98 funding depends on annual state revenues, which leaves community colleges vulnerable to economic downturns. Recent budget reductions have lowered the funding guarantee, creating uncertainty and potential shortfalls. Without stable investment, access, equity and opportunity for millions of Californians are at risk.

Legislative Actions:

Protect and increase the portion of Proposition 98 funding allocated to California Community Colleges to prevent disproportionate impacts from budget cuts. Ensure stable funding to help colleges sustain vital programs, services and student support—particularly for underserved and underrepresented populations.