

Dear Members of the Board of Education of OUSD and Superintendent Yee:

We wish to express our appreciation for your dedication and service on behalf of students. We deeply appreciate the support and leadership provided by the Oakland Unified School District (OUSD), Dr. Gary Yee, and Kevin Taylor to increase educational and economic opportunity for students in Oakland. We, the undersigned, have provided support to thousands of students and teachers, worked for better funding for OUSD schools, and invested over \$3.5 million for scholarships and programs to improve college access and attainment for low-income OUSD students. We now respectfully request that you consider incorporating financial aid as an important component in OUSD's Local Control and Accountability Plan (LCAP).

As you work with the community to draft the LCAP for OUSD, we would like to suggest that you use FAFSA completion as a way to clearly define actions and easily measure progress on a number of the plan's key elements, especially in the state priority areas of student achievement (comprising college and career preparedness), student engagement, and parental involvement.

**Incorporating FAFSA completion rates into OUSD's LCAP will lead to measureable improvements in student outcomes and makes sense because:**

- Financial aid application rates are an important indicator of college and career readiness.
- Financial aid application rates are easy to track over time and available by late spring of every year.
- The financial aid application process requires parent involvement.
- Focusing on financial aid is a good way to support and engage low-income students.

**A focus on FAFSA completion will provide OUSD with a significant return on investment for the district, students, and the entire region:**

1. Increase Cal Grant Awards to Students: As a result of OUSD conducting the electronic upload of GPAs required to apply for Cal Grants, 45% more students from OUSD were offered Cal Grants in 2013 than in 2012.
2. The Ripple Effect – Fewer Barriers, Stronger Schools, Better Opportunities for Kids: Cost is one of the most-cited reasons low-income students do not consider higher education. Pell and Cal Grants help make higher education more affordable for eligible students. Helping your students access these grants by completing the FAFSA is an essential investment because it translates into real dollars for your students. FAFSA completion also strengthens college-going culture, which in turn can lead to reduced absenteeism, higher high school graduation rates and, ultimately, better college and career opportunities for all OUSD students.

3. Increase Likelihood Students Will Enroll In, Persist Through, and Graduate from College: A substantial body of published research and our own deep experience supporting low-income students show us that the relationship between FAFSA completion, college enrollment, and college graduation is a strong one.
- The experience of Chicago public schools has shown that students who complete a FAFSA are almost 50 percent more likely to enroll in college than those who don't.
  - FAFSA filers are 72 percent more likely to persist once they are in college. This number jumps to 122 percent for low-income filers.
  - A study found that eligibility for Florida's Student Access Grant, which is similar to our Cal Grant, increased the likelihood of obtaining a bachelor's degree.
  - Receiving need-based financial aid from completing the FAFSA increases the likelihood that kids will persist in higher education and complete a postsecondary education within six years by 22 percent.

We see opportunities in the Local Control Funding Formula (LCFF) and the related LCAP for OUSD to invest and leverage more resources to better prepare students for college success.

We encourage you to include FAFSA completion rates as a metric in your LCAP this year and welcome the opportunity to talk with you or provide additional information. We look forward to continuing to work in partnership with the district and board of education to make postsecondary opportunities a reality for all OUSD students.

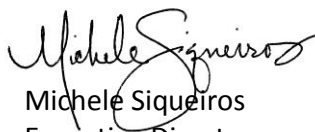
Respectfully,



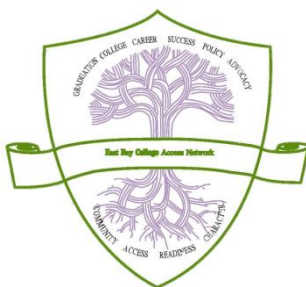
Alicia Dixon  
Executive Director  
Marcus Foster Education Fund /  
East Bay College Access Network



Julia I. Lopez  
President & CEO  
College Access Foundation of California



Michele Siqueiros  
Executive Director  
Campaign for College Opportunity



The Campaign for  
**College  
Opportunity**



**COLLEGE ACCESS  
FOUNDATION  
of California**  
*Opportunities for Students*