

# FUNDING OUR COMMUNITY COLLEGES DURING THE PANDEMIC



COMMUNITIES FOR OUR COLLEGES

JULY 2020

## COVID-19 is smothering college equity

Communities of color are battling the twin challenges of racism and the pandemic. **Soon, they will be fighting to recover from a recession.**

Data from the Pew Research Center shows that, from the start, COVID-19 recession is having a disproportionate impact on people of color:

**31.7%**

*of the United States' population is Black or Latinx*

**55%**

*of COVID-19 cases come from Black and Latinx patients*

The resulting recession will cause even more inequities:

- **Greater rates of disease and death**
- **Increased economic hardship and food insecurity**
- **Soaring unemployment and family poverty**
- **Greater educational challenges because of limited access to distance learning**

Community and Technical Colleges (CTCs) are central to recovery for these communities. CTCs can provide an entryway to affordable training and retraining, open access to university careers, and become a pathway for employment.

During the last recession, CTC budgets were repeatedly cut – right as enrollment increased as the unemployed sought new skills and job opportunities. The CTCs were forced to increase tuition, making them less accessible for the communities that needed them the most.

In 2019, the Washington Legislature enacted a significant expansion of the tuition waiver and student aid programs. Washington invested

**\$373 million**

to expand tuition forgiveness and for support services and loan refinancing.

These very commendable improvements could help break down barriers to employment that communities of color commonly face. They could also build the workforce for tomorrow's economy, something especially important as the economy suffers due to the pandemic. **Despite these community-building and high return investments into CTCs, the legislature is poised to cut their budgets again.**

## CTCs are essential for college equity

Data from Harvard University and UC Berkeley researchers has shown that **investments in CTCs lead to higher retention rates:**

**10%**

*increase in institutional funding*

*can lead to*

**14.5%**

*increase in degree completion*

During the last recession, **Washington slashed CTC budgets:**

**16%**

*decrease in state resources for public colleges from 2008-2018*

During this time, CTCs all over the nation enrolled over a million new students, providing displaced workers with the training and retraining necessary to enter the workforce in new ways.

**45%**

*of CTC students are students of color*

Not only did CTCs certainly contribute to necessary job growth in the recession, but they also made these opportunities affordable and welcoming for communities of color. **This can only continue to be true if CTCs are fully funded.**

## LET'S FIGHT FOR EQUITY

Let's not make the same mistake again! Instead, we should make investments in the CTCs that lead to:

- **Schools that are fully funded for success and equity**
- **Providing a debt free future for students**
- **Quality teaching provided by committed, respected, and supported faculty**
- **Colleges that are welcoming and respectful places for all**
- **Colleges that are free places of joy, exploration, and critical thinking for all.**

The Communities for Our Colleges Coalition is committed to making the demands of CTCs met, especially those from our most vulnerable communities such as low-income or students of color.

Right now, investing in our CTCs is the right step forward. Cutting budgets will only reverse the progress made to make CTCs more accessible and fulfilling for the communities who need them the most

For more information, contact us: [ourcolleges@juststrategy.org](mailto:ourcolleges@juststrategy.org)