



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION  
OFFICE OF POSTSECONDARY EDUCATION

December 5, 2014

Chancellor Timothy P. White  
California State University System  
401 Golden Shore  
Long Beach, CA 90802

Dear Chancellor White:

It was my pleasure to visit California State University–Long Beach (CSULB) and see first-hand the U.S. Department of Education’s (Department) grants in action. In preparation for my recent visit, it came to my attention that the Department’s HSI-STEM and Articulation Title III, Part F program funds seven California State Institutions and a total of 48 two- and four-year institutions in California. This represents nearly half of the total 109 grantees nationwide for these programs.

The following California State Institutions are funded:

- California State University - Bakersfield
- California State University - Channel Islands
- California State University - Fullerton
- California State University - Long Beach
- California State University - Monterey Bay
- California State University - Northridge
- California State University – Stanislaus

The combined funding to the California State University (CSU) system is approximately \$6 million annually. The purpose of the HSI-STEM program is to increase the number of Hispanic and other low-income students attaining degrees in STEM; and to develop model transfer and articulation agreements between two-year and four-year institutions in such fields. We know that all the grantees, both in California and nationwide, are developing and implementing exciting and vigorous programs to meet the objectives of the grant. We would like to know more, however, about which program models are most effective. We would also like to have a better understanding of the relationship between these programs and student outcomes.

The number of grants made to institutions in the CSU and the number of students participating in these programs provide an exciting opportunity for CSU to be a national leader in advancing STEM degree attainment. The CSU can also inform the field about which programmatic features matter most for improving STEM degree attainment among Hispanic and other low-income students.

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I write to encourage the grantees in the CSU to collaborate in order to marshal and analyze common data points that connect program interventions and student outcomes. The number of students participating in Department sponsored grants focused on improving STEM degree attainment represents a rare and exciting opportunity to advance the nation's practical knowledge about student success. As you know, more robust and sophisticated evidence about effectiveness is a positive way to encourage continued support for grant programs—in public and private sectors. Equally important, learning more about which program features might be less effective helps us collectively ensure the best use of scarce resources.

In the interest of dissemination and collaboration, we ask you to consider a symposium or strategic retreat among the California State University campuses involved in this program. This would allow them to share best practices, exchange information about student outcomes, and provide opportunities to discuss the possibility of assessment products that could inform the field. California State University-Northridge has already taken a step in this direction by developing an HSI-STEM Web site for grantees to post and share relevant information with hopes of increasing collaboration among all HSI-STEM grantees.

The CSU System is an engine of economic growth and its student population is directly tied to California's workforce demands and the nation's future. By leveraging resources, ideas and rich data, I hope that you and your colleagues will consider this opportunity to demonstrate much needed leadership focused on the development of more sophisticated and informative program assessment.

I invite you to contact me directly about any of the foregoing. I look forward to hearing any ideas you might have about improving our collective intelligence about student success.

Sincerely,



James T. Minor, Ph.D.  
Deputy Assistant Secretary  
Higher Education Programs

cc. Ken O'Donnell