

WSCUC ARC Conference
Plenary Session, Friday, April 30, 2021
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As you already know, especially if you saw the unveiling of the American families playing just a few days ago. Education is a foundational part of the President's agenda. He believes that every student, regardless of their parents income, regardless of their skin color, or even regardless of whether they were the first in their family to enroll in college, he believes that each and every one of our students should have the opportunity to benefit from and contribute to a thriving middle class. And I want to share with you four ways that we are hoping to do just that.

The first is recovery. President Biden signed the American rescue plan which includes a \$40 billion investment in higher education. Campus leaders told us they needed more support and we responded. These funds are to help students and institutions recover and we intend to help you emerge from the pandemic even stronger than you, then we went in. Now if you think about what life was like before the pandemic we all can recognize that there were some things that just weren't working well within our institutions and for our students. We want to come out of this pandemic having resolve those issues and on a path to do it so much they things so much better than before. In March and mid March actually we released an updated our guidance on the stimulus packages and since then, over 2000 colleges and universities have increased their spending.

The updated guidance makes it clear that colleges can offer financial aid grants to students who need help with their basic needs. And when I say basic needs, I mean things like food, shelter, childcare and the light and the grants can also be given. And the grants can also be given to nearly all students, including refugees and those and dual enrollment continuing education and cannot credit classes are updated guidance offers flexibility with these funds to ensure that campus leaders have all the resources needed to eat Radek eat the inequities and other problems, brought on by the pandemic related to the topic of recovery.

We will soon launch the safer schools and campuses best practices clearing house, which will highlight lessons learned and best practices. For example, many campus leaders have shared their plans to use the institutional awards that are given through the stimulus dollars so they want to use their institutional wars to offer even more virtual advising options and counseling options, and they also want to support campus and community, and community vaccination efforts. Many also intend to discharge student debt, which will make it easier for students to re enroll or transfer. I'm confident that you will find the best practices Clearinghouse to be a resource that meets the needs of your students, and we hope will also accelerate transformation and recovery.

The second component of the President's agenda is college affordability college affordability is a systemic problem. That must be addressed comprehensively and when I say comprehensively, I mean at the federal, state and institutional level. You heard just this week that President Obama Biden announced this groundbreaking free college program. He also plans to double the Pell Grant.

As you know, millions of Americans rely on the Pell grants for higher education, each and every year, but unfortunately the program has failed to keep costs with the rising costs. Keep, keep pace with the rising cost of college for students, especially those students from low income and working class backgrounds. These grants are lifelines so reinvesting in the program is a priority because we believe that it is the foundation of helping students get into college, But as you all well no getting students the funding to attend college is only one step, we. That's why we commit to our third step.

And our third essential component of our plan is related to college access, and not just college access but access to college and access to careers. President Biden wants to create a bold new \$62 billion grant program to assist colleges, particularly community colleges serving the largest numbers of low income students and to implement evidence based practices and solutions to help with their retention and graduations. These could include innovations such as improved academic and career advising wraparound support services and emergency grants, as well as enhanced transfer policies.

President Biden also wants to make a nearly \$50 billion investment to high quality workforce development programs. These funds will create and support partnerships partnerships from up with an array of partners like community colleges, businesses unions apprenticeship providers governments universities and high schools, all of these individuals coming together so that we can collectively, identify and respond to that high in demand knowledge and skills that are needed to develop and modernize training programs. Getting to the students to and through college and into the workforce with high quality degrees and credentials, is one of the administration's top priorities, and it is an essential component of our transformation and recovery agenda. We look forward to working with each and every one of you to identify the strategies that work and to help students get on a pathway for long term and I want to stress and long term social and economic mobility.

The fourth issue of great importance to the Biden Harris administration is equity is core to our beliefs, and it is and will continue to be integrated into everything we do. We are deeply committed to advancing equity for all, including people of color and others who have been historically underserved marginalized and adversely affected by persistent poverty and inequality. President Biden has signed an executive order pledging to focus on advancing racial equity through systemic and policy change eradicating racism and discrimination won't be easy, but this administration has put a very firm stake in the ground.

Just last week, the President announced support for nearly \$40 billion to subsidize tuition for low income and low income and middle income students at our historically black colleges and universities, tribal colleges and other minority serving institutions, as well as unprecedented investments to support research and support services for students at the schools, transforming higher education writ large requires that we uplift Diversity, Equity and Inclusion within all facets of our educational system.

Many campus leaders have already recognized that to truly address equity. One, identify and

address the underlying systemic barriers those embedded policies and practices that are so entrenched within our institutional culture that we may even not even realize that these things are choices, and these choices are driving and equitable outcomes and perpetuating a system of haves and have nots. Right on our college campuses, the urgency to embed diversity, equity and inclusion as at a fever pitch, especially now with the rise in brutality and Xenophobic hate crimes. We look forward to working and partnering with you, institutional leaders, and as an accrediting body to ensure that we are creating safe and inclusive campus environments. As we move forward together, we will uphold a principle that I know you will share, and that is that every student, regardless of circumstance