



# NEWS

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**For Immediate Release**

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**El Camino College to Participate in Hands Across California;  
Will Join 1 Million People to Raise Awareness, Scholarships for Community College Students**

On Sunday, April 17 at 2:00 p.m., students, faculty, staff and members of the community at El Camino College will join hands along with an estimated 1 million people including celebrities, students and other elected officials in a line up and down California in support of the state's nearly 3 million community college students for the Hands Across California event.

Participants will meet at the Humanities Building on Crenshaw Boulevard at 1 p.m. on April 17.

El Camino College (Torrance) student-participants will receive a chance to earn Enrollment Fees for Fall 2011 (up to 12 units).

HAC will recall the historic 1986 event "Hands Across America," which saw more than 6.5 million Americans hold hands across the country to raise money and awareness in support of hunger and homelessness issues. HAC, which will take place just one month shy of the 25th anniversary of Hands Across America, is estimated to be the largest charitable event for higher education in American history. It will connect Sacramento to San Diego in a nearly 1,500-mile route. See details at [www.HandsAcrossCalifornia.org](http://www.HandsAcrossCalifornia.org).

"I've often said that the two-year community college network is one of the most successful public entities in the country," said former U.S. President William Jefferson Clinton, one of the many HAC supporters. "Even during the worst of the recent economic downturn, the unemployment rate for Americans with associate degrees was nearly three percent lower than for high school graduates without degrees. In fact, last year 96 percent of associate degree holders got a job in their field of study within a year of finishing school. That's a remarkable record of success."

"Twenty-five years ago in Little Rock, Hillary and I were honored to take part in Hands Across America, which raised millions of dollars to fight hunger and homelessness. I encourage everyone to participate in Hands Across California and create their own unforgettable experience, while at the same time raising awareness of the tremendous challenges facing higher education in the Golden State, and our country."

Music legend and HAC supporter Quincy Jones notes the importance of an education as one of the reasons why this event is so needed: "The nearly 3 million students enrolled at California's Community Colleges make up 25 percent of America's college students, and they know the importance of an education. For them, it can mean the difference between poverty and prosperity, between failure and success, between hopelessness and promise."

The event will involve most of the state's 112 community colleges and comes at a critical time for the colleges and their students. Amid continuous budget cuts and the ever-rising cost of an education, many of the state's community college students are struggling to pay for college. Full-time students have an annual median income of \$16,223, and nearly a quarter have incomes of less than \$5,544 per year. Nearly 90 percent of full-time

students are in need of financial aid and almost half (47 percent) of all students have no resources to pay for college.

Ken Kragen, the architect behind Hands Across America in 1986, is the executive producer of HAC, collaborating with the Foundation for California Community Colleges to manage the event.

"At times you simply have to do something amazing to get people's attention and get them to take action for a particular project or cause," said Kragen of his involvement in HAC. "That was true 25 years ago when I and 6.5 million other Americans created a line that stretched all the way across these United States. Now we're doing it again in a smaller, but no less spectacular and important version. Hands Across California will shine a light on the critical issues confronting our community college students and help raise needed funds for student scholarships. It's an event everyone should participate in."

HAC is organized by the Foundation for California Community Colleges and made possible through the support of major corporate partnerships with AT&T, Clear Channel, Southern California Edison, UPS and Yahoo!

Due to the colleges' impact on the state and the number of students served, HAC is also drawing support from several top entertainers, politicians and sports legends, many of whom benefited directly from the California Community Colleges. Those participating in some way include:

- Actors George Lopez, Mark Harmon, Lily Tomlin, Yvette Nicole Brown, Joe Spano, Ben Vereen, Suzanne Whang and Michele Lee
- Music legends Quincy Jones and Dave Koz
- NHRA racing champions John Force and Courtney Force
- California State Congresswoman Karen Bass, State Senators Alex Padilla and Sharon Runner, and Assemblymember Roger Hernandez
- Los Angeles Mayor Antonio Villaraigosa and Los Angeles County Supervisor Mark Ridley-Thomas

California's Community Colleges serve as the nation's largest system of higher education and were created to provide affordable and accessible educational opportunities for all Californians. Today, the system serves nearly 3 million students each year, enrolls three out of every 10 Californians age 18-24, educates the majority of the state's workforce, and provides a stepping-stone for students on the pathway to four-year and graduate degrees. Playing a significant role in the state's workforce, California Community Colleges educate 80 percent of firefighters, law enforcement officers, and emergency medical technicians. In addition, 70 percent of the nurses in California received their education from Community Colleges.

Thanks to a commitment from The Bernard Osher Foundation, every dollar raised through HAC will receive a 50 percent match that will be donated to the CCCSE. The ultimate goal is to build a \$100 million scholarship endowment that will work to provide desperately needed financial support to at least 5,000 students every year, forever. The CCCSE was established in 2008 thanks to a \$25 million gift from The Bernard Osher Foundation. The foundation also committed another \$25 million as a challenge grant to the California Community Colleges, pending their ability to raise an additional \$50 million for the endowment by June 2011.

Net proceeds from the event will directly benefit the California Community Colleges Scholarship Endowment (CCCSE), a permanent fund that provides annual scholarships to thousands of students every year.

To learn more about HAC, be a part of this historic event or donate to the cause, visit [www.HandsAcrossCalifornia.org](http://www.HandsAcrossCalifornia.org). Donations of \$10 can also be made to the cause by texting HANDS to 27722.

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