Program History
The California Community Colleges CalWORKs program was established in 1997 as part of California’s response to 1996 federal welfare reform legislation. At that time, the California Work Opportunity and Responsibility to Kids (CalWORKs) program included an annual appropriation of $65 million for community college services to recipients of federal Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) benefits engaged in welfare-to-work activities directed by county social services. This appropriation’s expenditures are counted towards meeting the state’s maintenance of effort requirement for the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) program. In fiscal year 2002-2003, due to the State’s budget deficit, the community college CalWORKs program funding was cut by 46%, resulting in a reduced appropriation of $43 million ($35 million Proposition 98 and $8 million federal TANF). In July 2006, the colleges received a $9 million augmentation in State Proposition 98 funding to expand work-study and job development services, increasing the program’s funding level to $51.58 million. In fiscal year 2009-2010, also due to the State’s budget deficit, the program received an additional cut of 39%, bringing the funding down to $34.7 million ($26.7 million Proposition 98 and $8 million federal TANF). In fiscal year 2013-2014, the program received a partial funding restoration of $7.8 million in Proposition 98 funding, bringing the funding up to $42.5 million ($34.5 million and $8 million federal TANF).

Description
As an integral partner in the state’s welfare system, the community colleges’ 113 CalWORKs programs are instrumental in providing critical education, training, support services, and job opportunities to assist families living in poverty to reach their educational/employment goals and achieve economic self-sufficiency.

Services Provided
Services offered to the CalWORKs student include: 1) coordination of services for CalWORKs recipient students between the colleges and the counties, 2) academic, career, and personal counseling services to focus goals and develop student education plans, 3) case management to track progress, support persistence, and make appropriate referrals to on-campus and off-campus services 4) work study employment, 5) job development and placement services, 6) child care, and 7) curriculum development and redesign to accommodate TANF benefit time limits. Since July 2013, each community college district that administers a priority enrollment system shall grant priority in that system for registration for enrollment to any student who is a CalWORKs recipient.
Students Served
In 2012-13 the community college CalWORKs program served 31,358 community college CalWORKs recipients.

Appropriation for 2013-2014
$42.5 million ($34.5 million CalWORKs Proposition 98 and $8 million federal TANF funds).

Eligibility Criteria
Students who are CalWORKs/TANF cash aid recipients whose education program has been approved by the county as part of their welfare-to-work plan.

Critical Issues:
The CalWORKs programs on community college campuses have been challenged by the effects of budget cuts in recent years. CalWORKs students have been experiencing reductions in course offerings and services. Many colleges have been forced to redirect or expand the responsibilities of their CalWORKs Coordinators, causing a loss of expertise and dedicated service to a vulnerable population. In addition to reduced course offerings and services from the community colleges, the maximum amount of time that an adult on CalWORKs can receive cash aid has been reduced from 60 months to up to 48 months. Subsequent to the reduction to time on aid, other changes to CalWORKs were enacted in 2013, including additional changes to eligible activities and the reengagement of CalWORKs clients who have previously received a “young child exemption.”