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Panel Discussion: "Access Denied: Rising Selectivity at California's Public Universities"

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LEAD Original Programming

“Access Denied: Rising Selectivity at California’s Public Universities” (2016)

START – 00:00:00

[Music]

>> Bienvenidos and welcome to the next installment of LEAD Medicine Programming from Studio 54, campus of California State University San Bernardino, the digital media platform for inspired educators, leaders, and community activists and advocates taking our message directly to the people, to la gente. Thank you for sharing our common interests in the analysis, discussion, critique, dissemination, and commitment to the educational issues that impact Latinos. I'm your host, Dr. Enrique Murillo, Jr., and this episode is a syndicated replay from season seven of LEAD summit 2016. The theme that year was Black, Brown, Indigenous Unity, which was our special effort to address the particular aspects that we believe will help create a more positive future. This panel was entitled Access Denied, Rising Selectivity at California's public universities. At the time, demand for college admission among state high school and community college students forced both the University of California and California State University systems to raise admission standards. This was called impactation. There were a lot of moving parts. California had reduced financial support for high education from previous levels as federal spending through student Pell grants had increased. Continue and enjoy the full value and complexity of this episode. We extend our appreciation to all our lead sponsors and planners, partners, volunteers, speakers, panelists, the production team, affiliates, and town hall chapters and commend them all for lifting their voice and uplifting the plight of Latinos in education. Thank you, gracias, [foreign language spoken].

>> Ever since I saw The Godfather, I wanted to be a godfather, and last year I was. So, Access Denied. It's the million dollar question in California, in Texas, in Florida, in Illinois, New York, because it's happening all over the country, not just here. How do we find ways to accept the thousands of qualified, qualified students denied admissions. For example, at the Cal State University over 30,000 qualified students were turned away because we didn't have a spot for them. Obviously, we need more dollars, and obviously we need more buildings. Out of fair disclosure, I want to tell all of you that I've worked with every one of these panelists. You have an incredible panel here. We have a 14-year partnership at Cal State with the Campaign for College Opportunity. Audrey and Michelle have been with us every step of the way in almost every project we undertook. I'm a lifetime LULAC member. Just switched from LULAC 12, which is the largest LULAC in the country, to LULAC 777, because it's now an all-veterans LULAC, and I'm a veteran, and we're advocating for more veteran's rights. And with Irene Tovar, she really is an icon from our community. She was there before any of us were on the

scene, helping us out. I'm going to introduce all three of our panelists, and then they're going to come up in the order that I'm introducing them. First of all, Audrey Dow is the Vice President for External Affairs at the Campaign for College Opportunity. They issue a number of incredible reports that we all need to be looking at and criticizing and analyzing and seeing how we can work together. Dr. Daniel Estrada is the Chairman of the LULAC Latin Education Attainment Committee, has been working very hard to bring the California LULAC up to speed on what they can do to be part of the solution. And Irene Tovar is a long-time advocate and an icon, and I use that word icon because she was there at the state personnel board before the State of California opened up to Latinos, African Americans, and women and the disabled, and when she got appointed by young Governor Brown, not the old Governor Brown that you have now, she opened up diversity at the state personnel board. In fact, I ended up getting a job because of the opening of diversity. So, we're going to start with Audrey, who is going to lay the groundwork and talk about her Access Denied report.

>> Thank you so much Jorge. It's so good to be with you, good afternoon. I'm Audrey Dow. I'm the vice president of external affairs and operations for the Campaign for College Opportunity, and I want to thank Dr. Murillo for always inviting us to participate in the lead advocacy days. When I grow up, I would like to be the president of Dr. Murillo's fan club and probably Jorge Haynes too right after. In 2003, the Campaign for College Opportunity was founded by an unlikely group of civil rights leaders, business leaders, and education leaders that were really concerned that California wasn't on track to provide the same higher education opportunities that it had been providing to previous generations, and we were equally concerned that our colleges and universities needed to do more to better serve the students that they have and get them to a certificate, to a degree, and to transfer. Today, we produce research and support public policy that expands college access, success once students are in college, preserving affordability, and of course, addressing issues of equity and the real persistent gaps that exist across race and ethnicity. I think that we would all agree that the state of California today is at a crossroads. The value of a college degree has never been higher. Students want to go to college. They're being better prepared. They're doing everything right. Employers need a more educated workforce, but at the same time that these forces are coming together, our institutions are turning qualified students away, and our state is chronically disinvesting in public higher education. Today, I'm going to reporting out on the important findings from a report that we released on November 30th of last year called Access Denied, Rising Selectivity at California's Public Universities. And we did this report for three key reasons. One, we heard from students, from parents, from college access providers, that it's getting harder and harder for students to find their rightful place at the CSU and the UC. Two, we know that the state is facing a looming workforce shortage. One point one million additional baccalaureate degrees is what this state needs by 2030, and we're not on track to meet that demand. And three, the state really doesn't have a vision for public higher education in the state beyond what was set out in the 1960s in the master plan, and I think we can all agree that that was a very long time ago, with very different students, and a very different economy. I think what you'll find is that our report actually verifies that it is harder today to get into the UC and CSU. This is not an imaginary problem. It is not political rhetoric. It is the truth. That's

me. This issue is very personal to me. You know, the reason why I'm passionate about the work of the campaign is because I was the first in my family to go to a four-year university like I'm sure many of this room can identify with, and I see myself in today's students. When I graduated from high school, I had a 3.4 GPA, a 3.7 weighted GPA. You see my SAT score. I wasn't at the top of my class, but I was a pretty good student. I really worked hard, and I had parents that were not going to accept anything less than me putting in long hours at night. And I was really lucky. I got into UC Berkeley. I got into UCLA. I got into Santa Cruz and some amazing private universities at that time. But what really makes me angry and sad is that that's not the story today for the class of 2016. You know, a few months ago, I had an opportunity to speak to some students from East Los Angeles, who are graduating seniors and were in the middle of applying to colleges and universities, and they shared their apprehensions with us. You know, they shared that despite having, one student in particular having a 3.7 GPA, a pretty average ACT score saying I'm not sure I'm going to get into UC. And sharing that, you know, I really want to be an engineer, and it's kind of that million dollar question of here's a kid who's doing pretty well, wants to be an engineer. We need more engineers in our state. Why are we making it harder for these students? You know, last week I followed up with his counselor to see how's he doing, what happened? I know those admissions letters were trickling in. You can see there on the left, he didn't get a spot at UC. He didn't get a spot at Cal State Long Beach. This is real, and this is happening to kids that look like you and I, at a time when we need them more than ever to go to college, at a time when we know that their ticket out of poverty is getting into these schools, and these are funded by you and I. What is going on? Well, this is what's going on. This is why it's so much harder for us to get, for our students to get into UC and CSU campuses. These are the six primary causes. We've got real enrollment caps that limit who can go where. We have a tremendous population growth in the college-age population. We have real limited physical space and capacity, limited state funding, and I'll talk about that a little bit more, an increase in the number of college applicants and college applications, and increased, of course, demand by both students and employers. Our students are doing everything we ask them to do. More and more high school graduates are graduating eligible for UC and CSU. This chart is showing you the growing number. Forty-two percent of high school grads that are completing their A through G requirements. Young people know that that high school diploma is necessary. But eligibility is just the beginning of the admission story. You've got to have that competitive SAT. You've got to be well rounded. So, what does that mean? Here's the reality at UC today for admissions. The average GPA of admitted students at six of the nine UC undergrad campuses had over a 4.0. Perfect, over perfect. And the SAT scores are off the charts too. As more students apply to the UC and competition increases, there's a growing gap between those applying to the UC and those enrolling. In the past 18 years, the number of high school students applying to UC has increased by 5%, but enrollment has actually gone down by 1%. I'm going to turn now to the CSU. While the UC was always intended to be a highly selective institution, that's not the same for the CSU, where the minimum criteria for admission is a 2.0 in A to G. First of all, let me just share that there's been a huge increase in demand for the CSU system. In 2000, we had 27% of all history graduates applying to the CSU system, but in 2013, nearly half of all high school graduates. So, that increased demand of course is pushing

up the requirements to get into the system. So, again, as more students get prepared, that average GPA is increasing. What I think is more concerning is the number of CSU campuses in response to this increased demand and state funding cuts, they're raising the admissions bar. So, six campuses now have higher than the minimum admissions requirements for every single major on their campus, and more and more campuses are getting close to having the majority of their majors declared impacted. Together, the CSUs on this slide represent over half of the CSUs in the system. I just want to make one little point here. Impaction is not only setting a higher admissions bar. It's also proving quite complicated for students to navigate when they're trying to find the right college for themselves, and every different campus, every different major has a varying GPA. As the admissions bar is raised, eligible students can't get in, and in fact, since 2009, nearly 140,000 eligible CSU students, eligible students, were denied admission because state funding to provide them a spot simply wasn't there. And yes, there have been some recent increases in funding, but our public universities have not recovered from the tremendous cuts that were made during the Great Recession. This slide is looking at tuition increases, and we all know that there's a freeze right now on tuition at both the CSU and UC, but it's clear from this graph that families are shouldering a larger portion of that amount. It also means at the UC that they are increasingly turning to revenue from international students, and I'm sure that most of you saw in the news just yesterday the state auditor's report that is confirming some of I think the negative effects that turning to international and out-of-state students is having on our local students and their ability to find their spots. So, what can we do about this access crisis? We have seven key recommendations that we talk about. The first and the only one I'm really going to spend any time on right now is that we need a new vision for high education in this state. We need our elected leaders, our next governor, our state assembly, our state senator to put together a state-wide plan for public higher education that goes beyond the master plan, that actually has targets and metrics that we're going to hit annually that aligns budgetary priorities and policy priorities and helps every single institution meet goals for not just producing BAs but ensuring that regions don't get left behind, by ensuring that certain groups of students don't get left behind, and ensuring that we can meet the demands of our workers and our workforce. And so, with that, I'm going to turn it over to Dr. Estrada.

>> All right.

[Applause]

Thank you, Audrey. That was a lot of information, and it looks like I'm going to present even more. I also want to say something about Jorge. We were both undergraduates at the CSU when we got together to talk about pretty much the very same issues that our panel discussion is talking about today, and that is tuition. Initially, there was not supposed to be tuition in our public universities in California. That was part of the master plan created in 1960 for higher education in this state. Besides tuition, the other issue, of course, was access, which Audrey has explained extensively in her presentation. We wanted to see underrepresented students in the CSU, in particular, in the CSU accommodated that. Now, we have almost all the CSUs, of which there are 23,

are Hispanic-serving institutions. Of course, there's also Asian-serving institutions as well. So, things have changed, but in many ways, things remain the same. And that's what I'm going to explain today. First of all, I mentioned that tuition and access were issues when I was in the state university system decades ago. It's still an issue. What has changed has been the mission of our state universities, in that the economies, or the economy in California was very much different in the '50s and '60s when this plan was being developed. We were coming out of the second world war. We had a defense industry, and most of all agriculture was still a major part of the economic output of the state. Today, that economic picture has changed tremendously. Today, the demography of the state has changed. One thing that I've come up with from reports on our public schools is that Latino students make up over half the public school population of this state, and yet, the educational attainment rates for this population is some of the lowest of any group within the country, within California. Getting back to the role of the CSU, it was never envisioned to be the foundation of our economy. What we have in California are numerous information-based industries. Could I have the next slide please. Those industries are before you up on the screen. And you can see that with these industries, our economy has been productive to the point where California, I've heard figures like ninth and tenth in the world in terms of economic output. How did California get into that position? Reports coming from the state university and the University of California are more and more affirming that these institutions are the engine of our economy. And Audrey has already said that there's been tremendous divestment in higher ed in this state, and if we're divesting in higher ed, then what is happening to our economy? What is happening to those industries that you see in front of you on this screen? Could I have the next slide? Audrey has also mentioned the problem of impactation, which is a phenomena in the state university system. State university campuses in California number 23, they're at 23 campuses in the state of California. And if you look at the top, if you look at the top of this list, there are at least five, six of those campuses are fully impacted, which means that if you live out of the service area of this university, you're looking at being admitted on academic standards that are much higher than what the master plan for higher education in this state had ever conceived to be. And then down below, if you can see the list of names, Pomona or Cal Poly, California State Polytechnic University of Pomona, out of their 23 academic majors, 20 are impacted. So, that may become a fully impacted campus very soon. Now, I mention that the state universities are an economic engine of this state. Could I have the next slide. There it is up there, I'm sorry. What you see on this slide are the number of degrees or the percentage of degrees that the CSU system grants in the very same industries that make up our information base industries. You see agriculture. You see business. In both of those areas, you have BA degrees in this state more than half are granted by the state university system. We are the largest. We are some of the most productive institutions granting degrees in this state. You also see at almost 50% health and medicine. Hospitality, which is hotel industry and tourism. Engineering at 45%. Media, culture, and design, that's Hollywood, 44%. Oops. I'm sorry. I'm having some technical difficulty, but again, what I'm trying to affirm is the fact that the state university system, UC, are economic engines of our economy. Now, Audrey also brought out another problem. In spite of the fact that the state university system produces a high number of bachelor's degrees and master's degrees, we're still looking at a shortage. And if you

see on the bar chart, less than high school, there's no problem there. A high school diploma. We're meeting that demand. Some college. We're meeting that demand. That might be a community college AA degree. But then when we get down to bachelor's degrees, there's a gap. That's the different between the blue line and the orange line. The prediction right now is we're already behind in terms of meeting the needs of industry. By 2030, we're going to be behind by over a million degrees. And at the same time, the State of California and many other states in this country have been divesting from higher ed. Now, how does that make this state in particular competitive with a world economy? Are we competing, or are we going downhill? This is another chart that Audrey brought up, and you can see that in 2007, you had different levels of funding for higher education, both for the UC and the state university system. We have not gone back up even though we're out of the recession. We have not gone back up to the levels before 2007. And yet, the world economy is not slowing down. It's probably accelerating, and where are we going to be able, when and how are we going to be able to compete. And then finally, with this divestment, the only alternatives that the state university and the University of California have to balance their budgets is to increase tuition. Now, if you're talking about access to traditionally underrepresented students, and in spite of the fact that we have numerous Hispanic-serving institutions in this state, which means that at least 25% of that college or university's full-time student enrollment is Latino, in spite of the fact that we've achieved some representation, we're still looking at a gloomy picture when you understand that those students are paying tuition when these institutions, when I went there, were tuition free. Not only are they paying tuition, but every year, and in some cases every semester, that tuition increases. Now, Governor Brown has said that he wants to see the state university system in particular improve its graduation rates, because unfortunately, in spite of all the accomplishments of the CSU, it has some of the lowest graduation rates in the country. And that is an institution that has also served the traditionally underrepresented student since the conception of those campuses. So, they've taken on a big challenge. But the real challenge is getting those students to finish with their bachelor's or graduate degrees. So, the state university, the chancellor's office has come up with a graduation initiative, realizing that this state is going to have a serious shortage of degrees give that we have an information-based economy. Now, the federal government has intervened to some extent, whereas most states in this country were providing at least half the operating budget of colleges and universities, or the public colleges and universities. Today, after the recession, most states are down below a third, and that includes California. What the federal government did was to intervene and prop up these institutions with larger and larger amounts of Pell grants, and thereby the tuition that students are paying to some degree is being covered by the federal government, but again, that's a great investment. That's a greater burden on the federal government. And also, on top of that, you're leaving it up to the politicians to decide if your son or daughter is going to be able to afford a college education. Now, the last, one of the last charts up there, which is tuition, the orange line or the top line shows you what changes have occurred in tuition since 1973, and the green line is the average income of a median household. That green line is almost parallel with tuition rates up until 1983. And then, after 1983, you see the rise in tuition going up tremendously, but that median income is staying almost the same.

>> We got to go, Daniel.

>> Yeah, I better hold. So, again, these are the challenges that California is facing. I'm saying that we can't address those problems until we start coming up with a new plan to finance higher education. We seriously need to rethink that situation. Today, we compete with two major service areas of the state of California in the general fund. One is health care, which is only going to increase with our senior population increasing, and the second is the prison population, or prison budget. We can't be in the general fund and expect that we're going to get our fair share. So, I'm recommending that we look at higher education trust, that we encourage and find ways to get our state universities and UCs to build their endowments. Both a trust fund and an endowment can assist lower income students, first-generation students. They can be targeted to assist those students in particular. But also, we already have this in California. If you're a middle-income family, you can contribute to a state trust fund so that money is there when your son or daughter are college aged. So, LULAC is definitely going to be talking about trust funds, setting up endowments, given tax breaks to industries that contribute to higher education. These are all ideas that are being thrown around right now, but we need to work with people and organizations like Irene's to come up with some very concrete proposals to present to our state legislature and turn around the situation that we're confronting. We used to be in the top five, top 10 of the country in higher education. Now we're down to 48. That is a dismal picture, but I believe it's one that we can still confront and turn around.

[Applause]

>> First and foremost, I'd like to thank you who have stayed here to the end. Secondly, I want to thank the President Morales and absolutely Dr. Enrique Murillo, the executive director of LEAD, for making sure that we're aware of the crisis in higher education. And I want to congratulate them for their network, which promotes, and I want to quote, working together to connect with relevant leaders to address how to improve access and outcomes for the Latino community. And I also applaud you for the townhall concept that you have in practice. Almost a year ago, it was actually mid-March, that I was invited, well, actually I invited myself, to a public hearing on higher education, and it was very interesting. The only reason I found out, and I'm very active in my community, is that I'm an alumni of CSUN, and CSUN was having that public hearing. And sure enough, there was the absence, conspicuous absence of the community. And I made sure that we invited as many as I could from the community come, and we heard about a program, something called impaction. And as the president's staff outlined to us in the audience, what the impaction plan meant, we were highly concerned, and as Latinos in the community, we expressed to the president our dissatisfaction with such an answer to budget cutbacks. And what in fact they were telling us, and I'm more or less, as you have heard some very well-documented panelists tell you, but we were hearing for the first time as lay people, was that some in effect students were going to be denied admission even though they were qualified freshmen, and that in addition to that, transfer students may no longer be guaranteed a spot, when they transfer, they may not

be accepted. Not only that, but they were going to cut the geographical service area of CSUN, which when we looked at the map, it included sections where a lot of our Latinos, Chicanos came from, such as the [inaudible] area and East LA, and yet the map was including sections where they don't come to our area, such as Marina del Rey and in fact was in the map, and also told us very frankly that there would be an increase in tuition. And we were obviously very disheartened because not only that but there were five majors at CSUN that were going to require higher admission qualifications, and some of those majors were the ones that led to really well-paying jobs if you got a degree. And it really cut back the opportunities for our community to take advantage of those majors. And as we looked a little bit more closely after that meeting on who was going to be impacted by that, a large percentage were people of color, first generations like I have been, and we definitely said we cannot accept this. We cannot accept this. We cannot accept that our kids, any young man or woman who is interested in the higher education be denied. And we said, well, why, why was this? The master plan of 1990, of which I benefited from, was very different than what was happening now. I went, I had the grades, but my family didn't have the monies to where I really wanted to go. I could have gone to UCLA, which is where I wanted to go. And therefore, I went to a community college, and I remember what happened. I didn't know the language of a college. I didn't know what a semester meant. I didn't know what a tuition meant. I didn't know what any of those words meant, but I had the strong desire to have a higher education. And with \$30, I paid for all my books, 16 units, and guess what? A \$5 fee, a \$5 fee, \$30, and that's about what I, and I thought that was a lot. Okay. Think about what a community college student now has to go through and what a state university student has to go through. From there after, I got my A degree. I transferred to CSUN, and again, I was guaranteed automatically that I would have a spot there. That is no longer a reality for many of our young people. And I know I've spoken to many families where they say, well, you know, I don't know why Juanito has to go to this community college, and he then has to take another class at a different community college because they don't offer it over here. So, he's going to two or she's going to two campuses just to get their general requirements. What a tragedy. What a tragedy that the State of California has breached its commitment to the people of California. And therefore, you don't know me, but things like this really get me, okay. And I said, no, we're not going to accept this. We are not going to accept this. We are the largest population in the State of California. How can we possibly allow our kids to be denied a better future? How can we deny us producing self-sufficient taxpayers, homeowners, people who are engaged in civic affairs, affect the political future of this state. How can we possibly tolerate it. And so, I, along with other Latino/Chicano leaders, decided that we were going to organize, we were going to empower ourselves. We were going to work with our community. We were going to make sure that the information and the data that we were receiving was going to connect with the community. Often, and I say this respectfully, scholars talk among themselves, and we as activists sometimes don't have the resources to present our argument the way that the establishment likes to accept it. We who are in the front lines of the community know all these issues. We know them, but our credibility is not as great as when it's put in the manner that the system accepts it. So, our function has been, and our mission, and I want to read to your mission, is we are a statewide community-based coalition against the California State University

impaction plan, and committed to equal education opportunities to all Californians. We advocate for a new California higher education master plan. And our motto is very clear. Education is the greatest enemy of poverty. If we don't educate our community, [applause] if we don't educate our community, we are condemning the present and the future youth to live in conditions that are not acceptable at a time where our society is highly technical. You know, it used to be, and I'm dating myself, if you had a high school diploma, you were doing pretty good. You could get a, you know, sort of a good job. Now, you don't have a PhD, oh my God. You know, oh my God. You're not really as worthy, you know. And it's true, unfortunately. I speak to the business communities, and what is it that they tell me? Well, Ms. Tovar, you know, there's a lot of jobs opening. We just don't have qualified people to fill this position, so guess what? We have to go out of state, even out of the country. What a scandal. What a scandal when we have the natural resources, human resources, and we're not investing in them. It's a shame. I as a native Californian, and I'm ashamed that we now are that low in our educational attainment when we used to be the pride of this country. So, we are organizing ourselves, and we are really asking each and every one of you, you belong to a community. You know your community. There are many community based organizations in your community. And don't overlook parents. Somewhere along the line, we have overlooked them. We tell them what their children's needs are, but we do not help them advocate for their children. I've been fortunate enough to have worked with low-income parents, and guess what? If you sit with them, if you give them training, they're the best advocates for your children. I guess that's it, right. So, just one little thing. I will be passing around the form on how you can become a member and have a symposium that we had and we were rather successful, and we brought the power people to hear the parents of the community. Thank you.

>> How about a hand for our panel?

[Applause]

You can go to the CampaignforCollegeOpportunity.org page and download a lot of information. I would you encourage you to please visit that page and stay in touch. You're going to hear a lot more from these folks. They're going to put together a coalition that's going to result in relieving impaction at the CSU, also at the UC, and the community college, we didn't talk about it, but they turned away 400,000 students last year. Thank you very much.

END – 00:41:15