The University of California was founded to be a university that serves the state and its people. Its land grant origins remind us of the democratic promise embodied in our mission of research, teaching and service.

Throughout the years, UC has faced many challenges and opportunities, but we have remained focused on welcoming a diversity of outstanding students onto our campuses. We know that California consistently yields a large number of accomplished students, many of whom have had to overcome numerous challenges and obstacles to academic achievement, and many of these students are in the first generation in their family to even go to college. Others have risen from schools that unfortunately did not offer competitive coursework. Many arrived here with their parents seeking a better life and viable economic opportunities. And higher education, no matter what we may think about strides made toward social equity, still secures the greatest social mobility for those who participate.

This is why it is essential for the University of California to restore University financial aid funding for AB 540 students from immigrant families. These students did not choose their status, and those who qualify for UC admissions have worked through numerous hardships in order to stand out academically. They are as meritorious and financially in need as any other student in the state, and it goes against the populist principle of the land grant university to punish them for a choice they had no hand in making. Instead we should reward their industry and achievement, just as we do for other eligible students.

All California students represent the state’s future. We don’t just owe it to them; we owe it to us. It is time we all stand up for the American Dream.

February 3, 2010