



Karen Zamarripa Consulting

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#standwithCSU secures \$100 million in state funding.

“Through the #standwithCSU campaign, the tide finally shifted making the students and the system a REAL priority.”

The **#standwithCSU** campaign was an award-winning integrated advocacy and communications effort to build *legislative champions* and make funding for the California State University (CSU) a top budget priority for the California Legislature in the 2015-16 state budget. Karen Zamarripa was the architect behind this successful and innovative effort.

During the early 2000's, the higher education system lost one-third of its annual state funding, leading to reductions in enrollment, course offerings, and student services, as well as the 23-campus human and physical infrastructure. Through the **#standwithCSU** campaign, the tide finally shifted making the students and the system a real priority.

Working with the California State Student Association (CSSA) as well as faculty, staff and alumni, the campaign had three objectives:

- 1) secure \$100 million more in state funding,
- 2) create and inspire *legislative champions* to advocate for the CSU budget with their peers and legislative leadership, and
- 3) create a political and policy movement that policymakers would want to publicly engage with in the State Capitol and their local districts.

To secure full funding, all 120 members of the State Assembly and Senate were targeted by the campaign to ensure that they, and their leadership, made CSU a priority as they negotiated a final budget with the Governor; with this endgame in mind, our team developed a very clear message – *support the request for the additional \$100 million*. Communication materials were created to illustrate how funding would be used, the benefit to our students and the CSU mission, and why the additional investment was good for the state.

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Karen Zamarripa developed an *advocacy and communication campaign plan* which was implemented as follows:

- **Clear and Repeated Message:** CSU developed and distributed a series of two-page communication pieces throughout the year that clearly outlined how the funding would be used.
- **CSU Impact Days:** Throughout the year a series of one-day events were held in Sacramento, the events focused on how the CSU impacts the state in critical areas. Impact days are unique in that they are dedicated to telling a story without making a policy or budget “ask,” and key to the CSU story is that the CSU is vital to ensuring a highly educated workforce, as well as closing the projected shortfall of 1.1 million college graduates by 2030. CSU’s impact in areas such as health professions, community partnerships, and small business development were highlighted. At each Impact Day our team reiterated the message, that the CSU is vital to California.
- **Dear Colleague Letter:** A CSU champion was recruited in each house to circulate a “Dear Colleague” letter supporting the budget ask to the CSU budget. Every legislative office was asked to sign onto the letter, and in a strong sign of bipartisanship, 83 of 120 members signed onto the letters.
- **Door Signs:** Members who signed one of the “Dear Colleague” letters, were recognized with a #standwithCSU door sign, to post on their Capitol office door. When the sign was delivered a photo was taken of the member standing by their office door, beside their nameplate and with a student/s. This photo was tweeted out with a note of thanks and the member and local campus were tagged in the tweet. This door sign/hashtag combo was a positive way to acknowledge that the member was supportive of the CSU budget request, while at the same time creating accountability and increasing the profile of the CSU’s request in the Capitol.
- **#standwithCSU Socks:** Yes, that’s right, bright red #standwithCSU socks. Every member of the Assembly and Senate were given socks and asked to show their support by wearing them on June 4th on their respective chamber floors, they were also urged to post “sock selfies” on their social media accounts. The sock stunt achieved quite a buzz, and #standwithCSU was the trend on Twitter for over 8 hours that day, with over 40 members taking to social media with their pictures.

The **#standwithcsu** effort secured a final budget that was, in fact, higher than the additional \$100 million originally proposed by the Governor. The CSU was one of the only entities to receive additional appropriations above the proposed budget in that year.

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