Seeking to help keep the University of California accessible and affordable for California students, UC President Mark G. Yudof today (Oct. 23) announced an ambitious fundraising effort that aims to raise $1 billion for student support over the next four years.

Yudof also announced that he would be asking the UC Regents in November to expand the reach of an ongoing financial aid plan to ensure that eligible undergraduate students with family incomes of $70,000 or less will pay no systemwide fees.

"Our message today is simple," Yudof told an assembly of students at Sunnyside High School in east Fresno. "If you can earn the grades, you can get into the University of California. And if your family needs help, you can get financial aid.

"We're in the opportunity business, and even in hard fiscal times we are going to be doing everything we can to preserve one of the greatest attributes of the university — its rare combination of world-class education and research and its high proportion of students from low-income families."

Through the fundraising effort, Project You Can, all 10 UC campuses have committed to raise $1 billion in the aggregate over the next four years — doubling the amount of private support the system has raised for scholarships, fellowships and other gift aid in the previous five years. The UC Board of Regents will be asked to endorse the effort at its November meeting.

Likewise, Yudof will ask the Board of Regents in November to expand the university's Blue and Gold Opportunity Plan to include California families with incomes below $70,000. The plan, approved by the Regents in February, currently covers all systemwide fees for resident undergraduates with financial need whose family incomes are $60,000 or below.

Yudof made his announcement at Sunnyside High School, which for 10 years has propelled promising students toward health careers through its Doctors Academy, a program sponsored by UCSF Fresno. Despite facing social and economic barriers — 87 percent of Sunnyside's students are eligible for free or reduced lunch — all Doctors Academy graduates have gone on to college, 43 percent of them at UC campuses.

"You can get into UC, and you can get assistance if you need it. That's our message today," Yudof told an assembly of about 250 students, with 50 participants in the Doctors Academy seated behind him.
"And it's appropriate to deliver this message here in the heart of the San Joaquin Valley, which is the heart of California."

Yudof reminded the students of the story of the academy's founder, Dr. Katherine Flores. Raised by her grandparents, she left the fields behind to earn her bachelor's degree from Stanford University and later graduated from UC Davis' medical school. She returned to the Fresno area where doctors are in short supply and started the program as a way to help future generations follow her trail.

"The chancellors and I agree that we need to be working on all fronts to maintain and enhance access and affordability even in times of tight budgets and continuing state disinvestment," Yudof said in comments preceding his address. "Our goal is to increase aid significantly for UC students receiving financial support and to make sure no qualified UC student is shut out simply because of a lack of resources."

Even before Yudof called on the chancellors to embark on the ambitious undertaking of raising $1 billion for student aid, UC campuses had been ramping up their efforts to raise private support as increases in student fees and other expenses have intensified the need for additional student financial support.

For campuses already conducting comprehensive fundraising campaigns, ambitious goals for student support have been set. On other campuses, the goals may be smaller and more specific to particular schools and colleges. On all campuses, however, there is clear recognition of the need to focus fundraising efforts more sharply on student support.

Project You Can and the Blue and Gold Opportunity Plan build on ongoing aid programs for UC students that enabled the university in 2008-09 to provide gift aid averaging $11,100 per student to more than half of all UC undergraduates, and to enroll more low-income students (nearly one-third of all undergraduates) than any comparable public or private institution.

Over the last five years, UC campuses collectively have received more than $100 million each year in philanthropic support for students. Privately funded scholarships and fellowships have played a smaller role than government and UC grants in providing financial support to students. In a typical year nearly 22,000 UC students receive approximately $110 million in private gift aid, or almost 1 in 10 students.

Yudof said increasing private support is more pressing than ever as UC has seen its state-funded budget slashed by $814 million in the last two years, and state support for each student decline by half over the last two decades. Bridging that funding shortfall has forced the university to take painful actions, such as a proposal to increase student fees over the next two years, and the implementation of furloughs for faculty and staff.

At the same time, the university has been exploring potential sources of new revenue in a variety of ways, including the recently formed UC Commission on the Future.
"While what I have proposed today will allow us to preserve access and help students with financial need, they are not a substitute for adequate state support," Yudof said. "We must continue our relentless advocacy in Sacramento for increased state funding, even while we explore new ways to increase support for the university and our students. We must be creative and flexible, except when it comes to one thing: the historic excellence of the university. That is one area where I will not compromise."

For more information on Project You Can: [http://youcan.universityofcalifornia.edu](http://youcan.universityofcalifornia.edu)
For more information about the Blue and Gold Opportunity Plan: [www.universityofcalifornia.edu/blueandgold](http://www.universityofcalifornia.edu/blueandgold)