May 28, 2026

Laura Ipsen
President & CEO
2003 Edmund Halley Drive, Suite 500
Reston, VA 20191

Dear President Laura Ipsen,

California community colleges serve over 2.3 million students, and several of our institutions are increasingly encountering structural limitations within the Ellucian products (Banner and Colleague ERP systems) that hinder compliance with statewide mandates, strain institutional resources, compromise long-term data integrity, and ultimately impact hundreds of thousands of students. These challenges are not isolated issues; they reflect fundamental architectural and support constraints that require vendor-level solutions. We recognize that institutions have adopted and implemented different types of ERPs (locally supported versus cloud-based systems). Many institutions are frustrated with the responsiveness, or lack thereof, and inconsistent guidance to concerns raised by customer colleges and districts. We are seeking not only issue-by-issue remediation, but a durable partnership model that recognizes the scale, complexity, and statewide policy environment of the California community college system. Below is some additional information about the challenges, including but not limited to the following:

System Architecture and Data Integrity Concerns
For Banner institutions, the core of these concerns lies in Banner's underlying course identification architecture. Banner defines course identity through a combination of subject code and course number rather than assigning a persistent system-generated unique identifier. While

this structure may have functioned adequately in earlier and less complex environments, it is incompatible with modern data standards and the operational realities of multi-college districts.

For many years, institutions have relied on local workarounds to maintain course uniqueness across colleges, including embedding campus identifiers directly into course numbers. These modifications are not reflected in official curriculum systems and have created longstanding inconsistencies between curriculum approval, scheduling, and reporting structures. They also place a substantial administrative burden on institutional staff.

The implementation of Assembly Bill 1111- Postsecondary education: common course numbering system has significantly intensified these challenges. Statewide standardized course identifiers, such as ENGL C1000, require a level of system flexibility that Banner's current architecture does not support. Institutions cannot simultaneously maintain statewide numbering conventions and locally unique identifiers across multiple colleges within the existing system structure.

The solution currently provided by Ellucian, an alias field limited to course numbers, is insufficient. Because Common Course Numbering also requires changes to subject codes, the absence of subject-code aliasing creates a critical gap. As a result, institutions have been forced to implement complex workarounds, including duplicate or "ghost" course records, to approximate compliance with state requirements. These workarounds are unsustainable and, frankly, unacceptable. They introduce duplicative data structures, require ongoing manual reconciliation, and permanently degrade institutional data quality. With each academic term, the issue compounds as new sections generate additional layers of duplicative and inconsistent records.

This is no longer an isolated technical concern. It is a system-level barrier to effective policy implementation, accurate reporting, and responsible long-term data stewardship across the California community college system.

API Limitations and SaaS Environment Constraints

Institutions continue to face significant limitations regarding third-party system integration, particularly within the Software as a Service (SaaS) environment, where Ellucian controls API connectivity. Additionally, institutions face limitations with Ethos. For example, institutions are struggling with program integrations in which "waitlist" registrations cannot pass through because Ethos does not support them; this is a problem with both Ellucian and non-Ellucian products. These struggles with API connectivity and Ethos mean institutions are creating workarounds, adding another burden.

Many colleges have sought to adopt non-Ellucian solutions to support student success initiatives, including early alerts, case management, curriculum management, and tutoring services. However, institutions have frequently experienced limited flexibility and, in some cases, have felt compelled to adopt Ellucian products to ensure viable system integration. This lack of interoperability not only restricts innovation but also forces staff, particularly within Student Services, to rely on manual, time-consuming workarounds that duplicate effort and create redundant processes across systems.

In other instances, institutions were informed that certain products could support specific operational needs, such as tracking tutoring usage and time in centers, only to discover later that the required integrations were not functional. Colleges subsequently purchased third-party systems and now rely on manual workarounds because API connectivity to Ellucian systems remains underdeveloped.

Multi-college districts have been forced to modify ancillary systems, such as class search tools, because existing Ellucian functionality is inadequate. However, institutions using SaaS are restricted in their ability to implement local solutions or system modifications that might otherwise resolve operational deficiencies.

Support Model and Resource Challenges

Neither Banner nor Colleague institutions have consistently experienced a proactive partnership model in their engagements with Ellucian. Access to knowledgeable resources and timely support remains a recurring challenge.

Key concerns include:

- Issues often require repeated escalation before receiving adequate, or any, attention;
- Access to subject matter experts is inconsistent and frequently delayed;
- Depth of expertise varies significantly across support resources, particularly in California-specific functional areas such as Cal Grant B;
- Different consultants often provide inconsistent solutions or workarounds rather than coordinated statewide guidance; and
- SaaS institutions experience a fragmented solution.

These conditions force institutions to operate tactically rather than strategically, creating operational risk, implementation delays, and additional unplanned costs.

Ellucian's California-dedicated support resources appear insufficient to meet the demands of the state's highly complex and evolving regulatory environment. Institutions frequently struggle to obtain timely and actionable guidance necessary to comply with the California Community Colleges Chancellor's Office mandates and reporting requirements. This places an undue burden on already stretched institutional teams and creates avoidable compliance risk.

Platform Complexity and Fragmented Implementation Support

The Ellucian ERP platform consists of numerous interconnected modules and tools; however, institutions experience a lack of cohesion across the platform ecosystem.

Specific concerns include:

- Specialized expertise is required to manage multiple modules and tools, yet that expertise is not consistently available through standard support channels;
- Institutions receive limited integrated guidance regarding how tools such as Page Builder, Automic, BCM, EIP, and reporting systems should function together; and
- Documentation, training, and implementation support are often experienced as fragmented rather than coordinated.

As a result, institutions expend substantial internal resources attempting to bridge gaps between products and processes that Ellucian should support more cohesively.

End Users Experience Issues
Both students and faculty report a poor end-user experience. The navigation is not intuitive and is hampered by poor design and a lack of customization, making it difficult for end users to find what they need. The lack of configuration options prevents institutions from providing tailored and guided end-user experience. The system is not designed with a mobile-first approach, which further limits access for a majority of our students who use mobile devices.

These design flaws often lead to frustration and anger, which are frequently directed at the institutions and their staff, eroding trust and access. Specific design problems include:

- Error messages are not discrete enough to provide actionable guidance to end users;
- Information on pages is often repetitive, incomplete, and not always accurate; and
- Relevant information is difficult to find because it is often buried within unnecessary content or inconsistently placed.

Cost, Value, and Regulatory Responsiveness
Annual price increases have not translated into increased institutional value. Years ago, when Banner and Colleague were brought in under a single corporation, clients were promised a single, superior product. This has not come to fruition. Beyond licensing costs, colleges continue to incur substantial additional expenses for professional services, consulting engagements, extended implementation timelines, local customization, and additional staffing to manage system complexity.

Institutions are increasingly concerned by pricing strategies that appear designed to force migration from locally supported ERP environments to cloud-based SaaS models. In many cases, SaaS base licensing costs are more than double what institutions currently pay for on-premises environments. At the same time, annual escalators for on-premises installations have increased from the traditional 3 to 5 percent range to a proposed 7 to 9 percent range. This creates a financial model that is unsustainable for California community colleges, particularly when these increases substantially exceed typical inflation and statewide apportionment increases.

When institutions raise concerns about the long-term affordability of this model, the response has often reinforced the perception that districts have no meaningful alternative but to accept significantly higher costs or move to SaaS on terms dictated by Ellucian. This approach is inconsistent with the partnership model California community colleges need from a mission-critical ERP vendor.

At the same time, the functionality required to comply with California regulations is not consistently implemented in a manner that aligns with the requirements. Examples include limitations in 320 reporting calculations and in faculty roster management functions involving student holds, which affect accurate reporting for apportionment purposes.

The cumulative impact of these issues has raised serious concerns about the Ellucian platform's overall value proposition for California community colleges.

Documentation and Training

Many institutions are receiving assistance through paid professional and advisory services with Ellucian. When items are resolved, institutions should be provided with documentation in the form of "How To" guides or desk manuals, so when new staff come on board, institutions are not required to request these same services. For example, some institutions have requested documentation of work completed during and after the Banner SaaS implementation and were assured that the documentation would be provided. To date, many institutions have yet to receive documentation, which is problematic, as they will depend on professional and advisory services during staff transitions from their institutions.

Institutions are also reporting that they have not received current, relevant module-specific training. Additionally, current and relevant training is needed for users and local information technology staff supporting the modules and integration.

Position Control and Position Budgeting

Institutions using Colleague continue to experience significant limitations in position control and budgeting. These are not peripheral features; they are fundamental ERP requirements for effective human resources, finance, budgeting, payroll, and organizational control. For nearly a decade, the California Community College Colleague Users Group has identified position control as one of the most critical operational gaps affecting Colleague institutions. User group leadership has met with Ellucian product leaders, internal consultants, and corporate leadership to ensure these concerns are clearly understood. Despite repeated discussion and prioritization, the promise of meaningful position control and position budgeting functionality remains largely unfulfilled. This has required districts to rely on local workarounds, custom processes, shadow systems, or third-party tools to support basic operational controls that should be native to a modern ERP.

The impact is significant. Without reliable position control and position budgeting, institutions face increased risks in staffing approvals, budget development, vacancy tracking, salary projections, payroll validation, and long-term fiscal planning. Several California community college districts have already chosen to move away from Ellucian Human Resources and Finance modules because the product does not adequately support this fundamental operational requirement.

The purpose of this communication is to share with you these concerns at the architectural and operational levels and respectfully urge you to proactively:

- Aligning Banner/Colleague with modern data practices through system-generated unique identifiers;
- Implementing fully flexible aliasing capabilities for both subject codes and course numbers;
- Expanding API connectivity options, including support for non-Ellucian products;
- Implementing functional position control and position budgeting within Colleague;
- Ensuring sustained support for all Ellucian environments (locally supported, on-premises, cloud-based, and SaaS systems) to maintain stability, functionality, and access to resources and expertise;

- Increasing California-specific staffing and expertise;
- Re-evaluating pricing and escalation models to ensure they are financially sustainable for California community colleges and aligned with public-sector funding realities;
- Providing more coordinated, timely, and strategic institutional support;
- Improving responsiveness to the needs of SaaS institutions and California regulatory requirements; and
- Treating California community colleges as a coordinated statewide system with shared operational, regulatory, and compliance needs, rather than as isolated individual institutions.

In closing, institutions remain frustrated and face unresolved issues. Institutions feel unsupported yet continue to pay for professional and advisory services. As public officials, many of us are concerned about the amount of public funds being paid to Ellucian, and the issues persist. Please note that, without meaningful changes, institutions will continue to face escalating operational burdens, compliance challenges, and long-term risks to data integrity.

We appreciate your prompt attention to these concerns and welcome the opportunity for continued dialogue regarding solutions that better support the needs of California community colleges. In order to facilitate that dialogue, we would like to provide the opportunity for you to personally meet with the CEOs at the Community College League of California conference, November 19-21, 2026, at the Riverside Convention Center. The specific meeting date and time will be determined at a later date. While we appreciate that members of your team may also engage with institutions regarding their specific concerns, we believe these broader conversations are best initiated in partnership with the CEOs, who can then involve their institutional teams as appropriate.

Sincerely,

William H Duncan
President
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State Center Community College District

Dr. Beatriz S. Chaidez
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