

Editorial: Don't deny students a CSU education

By The Bee Editorial Board

We hope that Jerry Brown will forgive us for reminding him that his plan for rebuilding California's middle class calls for more young adults — many of them from immigrant families — to acquire the knowledge and skills to successfully compete in our 21st century global economy.

Where do young adults acquire these things?

Many utilize the state's two public university systems, and we applaud them for striving to better themselves.

The rub is, Gov. Brown's observation about the direct link between higher education and economic prosperity isn't reflected by his proposed funding for the University of California and California State University systems.

And while Brown's showdown with UC President Janet Napolitano over tuition costs garnered much attention, we are more concerned about the governor's skinflint approach to the 23 CSU campuses.

Brown's May budget revise calls for an additional \$38 million in permanent funds — \$59 million less than was requested by the CSU Board of Trustees. If the governor doesn't loosen the purse strings, tens of thousands of academically eligible high school graduates will be denied admission to a CSU campus next fall.

"At Fresno State alone, we had to deny admission to over 5,000 academically eligible students for fall 2015 because of insufficient state funding," Fresno State President Joseph Castro told the Editorial Board. "This is projected to increase to 7,000 or more academically eligible students denied admission in fall 2016 without additional state support for enrollment growth."

Brown's failure to fully fund the CSU is puzzling in light of California's concerted effort to improve high school graduation rates and better prepare students for college.

Though the state's overall graduation rate is climbing incrementally, San Joaquin Valley school districts — large and small — have shown significant increases in recent years.

Given that many of these Valley graduates are from poor families, their four-year college options often are limited to the nearest CSU: Fresno State, CSU Bakersfield, CSU Stanislaus. We imagine this is true for many high school graduates in other parts of California.

It's too bad that Brown didn't attend Fresno State recent commencement ceremonies. If the governor had, he could have seen for himself that young Californians — many of them Latino, many of them first in their family to attend college — are poised to launch themselves into the middle class.

According to the CSU, every \$1 invested by the state in the system returns \$5.43 for California's economy. If Gov. Brown is serious about making his "California Comeback" a reality, he'll carve out \$59 million more from the state's projected \$3 billion budget surplus and send it to the CSU.