

CCCI California Community College Independents

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California Community College Independents (CCCI) Resolution in Response to the Draft Recommendations of the California Community Colleges Task Force on Student Success

Whereas State Chancellor Jack Scott has encouraged input from California Community College Stakeholders and noted that the Task Force will meet on November 9 to “discuss input received [and] make adjustments to the plan as warranted”; and

Whereas the California Community College Independents (CCCI) represents nearly one quarter of all full-time and part-time community college faculty in California serving approximately 25% of California’s community college students; and

Whereas CCCI members have a longstanding and passionate commitment to student success and a clear stake in the future and direction of California community colleges,

Be it therefore resolved that the following points, both general and specific, be communicated to the Task Force and to members of the California Legislature and the Public, as input from CCCI on the draft recommendations published September 30, 2011.

1) General Feedback on Process, Timing and the Task Force’s Approach to Education Reform in California Community Colleges

- a. CCCI affirms and supports the mission of California Community Colleges as articulated in California’s Master Plan for Higher Education.
- b. CCCI applauds the Task Force for including faculty representatives and seeking faculty input because we believe that successful education reform must be driven by faculty, who are in the best position to understand the needs and challenges of our system and its students.
- c. We are concerned, however, by the speed of this process and the limited time to provide feedback. We believe that a genuinely inclusive, statewide discussion requires more than just a couple of months, and that broad dialog is worthwhile and could greatly improve these recommendations. Rather than rushing to the next step in the State Legislature, *we suggest that a full year be set aside for further work on these proposals* before any recommendation is made to the Legislature. We note that the productive work of the Task Force reveals the need for more time (and see this as progress, not as any failure on the part of the Task Force). We are also cognizant of the timeline that has been set by the Legislature in SB 1143 but urge that an additional year of study be a component of the report that goes to the Legislature in March 2012.

- d. CCCI feels strongly that the single most effective way to improve public education in California, including Community Colleges, is to *restore public investment in schools and colleges*. Our system is severely underfunded with the lowest per student funding among K-12, CSU, and UC. Recent funding cuts have done tremendous harm to California's students and to our economic future. Reforms without increased investment are unlikely to succeed, and while we agree that even in a bad economic environment, efforts to improve our colleges are worthwhile, and we are pleased to participate in processes aimed at improving outcomes, we urge the Task Force, the Legislature, and all concerned for California's community colleges to *keep front and center in any public statements on education reform the need for increased public investment in education*.
- e. With respect to Part 1 of the Task Force's report, "Refocusing California Community Colleges Towards Student Success," CCCI notes that as educators, our focus has *always* been on student success. We suggest a more exact goal be articulated; these recommendations are aimed at increasing measurable outcomes (transfer, graduation, certification), not at increasing "success." We note that success in college involves many other possible outcomes not considered in the Task Force report.
- f. We urge that efforts to increase measurable outcomes not come at the expense of opportunities for personal growth and exploration that our colleges now provide.

2) Specific Responses to Task Force Recommendations

- a. Recommendations Aimed at Increasing Student Readiness and Improving Basic Skills
 - We support the notion of expanding basic skills offerings and requiring students to begin addressing Basic Skills deficiencies in their first year. We note that this will likely require increased investment and should not become an unfunded mandate.
 - We oppose the concept of legislating pedagogy; not only is academic freedom crucial to student success, but faculty need to be able to adjust and revise curriculum to meet diverse student needs. Support for curriculum development and alternative approaches is a good idea, but comprehensive statewide strategies are less likely to succeed than strategies that empower faculty locally and provide student service resources in support of their efforts.
- b. Recommendations Aimed at Increasing Student Services
 - We support the general concept of strengthening support for entering students. While it varies among our districts, at present, our system wide ratio of students to counselors is greater than 1500 to 1. *We suggest setting a goal of achieving a ratio of 900 students to 1 counselor by 2020.*

- We strongly believe that full-time counseling faculty are best qualified to support and advise students, and we warn the Task Force that a shift of any part of our current counseling activities to paraprofessionals or computer programs would risk severely undermining student success. The students who most need help from counselors are often least likely to seek help. CCCI supports face-to-face counseling meetings and increased investment in counseling services.
- CCCI supports new categorical funding for additional counseling. Counseling services have been severely impacted by recent budget cuts. This trend must be reversed, but not at the expense of classroom instruction as is presently protected under the Fifty Percent Law. A 900 to 1 student/counselor goal together with the public investment to support it would be to student services what the 75 percent full-time faculty goal and 50 Percent Law are to instruction.
- We support the idea of centralized databases that would allow more sharing of student information within and between colleges.

c. Recommendations Aimed at “Successful Student Behaviors”

- CCCI supports the concepts of improving diagnostic assessments and placement procedures, and of education plans, but we suggest that students be allowed ample opportunities for experimentation and change within their plans. We worry that narrow definitions of success will lead to a narrowing of course offerings and opportunities, which would significantly diminish the quality of education available at community colleges.
- We believe that the core mission of California Community Colleges must include a sufficient breadth of course offerings to provide students in our system the first two years of a four-year college experience.
- We support open access and note that a great many of our students succeed in ways that may not include transfers, degrees, or certificates (and are harder to measure). As we seek to increase measurable outcomes, we must not do so at the expense of those students who seek us for career advancement, retraining, or other personal-growth agendas because these also strengthen our state and its economy. Enrollment priorities and financial aid should reflect the diversity of our students and their goals. We must be careful to avoid improving our completion statistics by limiting access to those students who need the most help and support to succeed.
- We support the Task Force’s emphasis on student responsibility and on updating policies to hold students accountable for their educational choices and behaviors, but we oppose narrowing the mission of community colleges or the definition of student success to exclude exploration, experimentation, a breadth of course offerings, and opportunities for growth and change.

d. Recommendations Aimed at Revitalizing Professional Development

- CCCI strongly supports increasing opportunities for professional development. We support categorical funding to support training.
- We oppose any mandatory training not negotiated through collective bargaining.

e. Recommendations Aimed at Aligning Resources with Student Success Recommendations

- CCCI supports local restoration of categorical funding cut in recent years. We support investment in a Student Success Initiative that includes new categorical funding for increased support for faculty and student services (especially counselors). It is a sad irony that funding the state once provided for student success under Matriculation has been cut so drastically in recent years.
- We oppose funding models that are tied to specific scorecards or outcomes statistics. Outcome-based funding would be bad for California Community Colleges. Financial incentives are less important than setting goals and providing resources to meet those goals. The most effective strategies for improving instruction and student services, we believe, result from empowering faculty, staff, and administrators at the local level.

f. Recommendations We Find Missing from the Task Force's List

- Without investing significant new money, an increased focus on professional development, innovative teaching, lowering achievement gaps, and improving graduation, transfer, and certificate completions might still be made possible by lowering the bureaucratic demands currently placed on faculty, staff, and managers. Our system squanders resources today meeting too many demands connected to accreditation and statewide audits. Without diminishing accountability or assessment, we could reduce this paperwork and empower faculty, staff, and administrators to spend more time working on actual improvement.
- CCCI believes that students are best served by full-time instructional and counseling faculty. Any discussion of improving our community college system should include improving both our full-time to part-time instructional ratio and our students per counselor ratio.
- CCCI supports the professionalization of part-time faculty. If part-time faculty were equitably compensated, not only for their instructional assignments, but also for office hours and professional contributions outside the classroom, students would be better served.