Of the various break-out groups I attended at the Spring Plenary Session of the Academic Senate for California Community Colleges, one that particularly stood out as significant was the session on the State Chancellor’s Student Success Task Force on April 15th. This report and input session was provided by the four faculty members of the Task Force appointed by the State Academic Senate: Richard Hansen, David Morse, Jane Patton, and Cynthia Rico-Bravo. An additional faculty member was appointed to the task force by the Chancellor’s office – Manuel Baca. He was not at the break out session.

Caveat: these are my personal notes on the meeting and doubtless contain some errors.

The State Chancellor’s Task Force on Student Success (http://www.cccco.edu/ChancellorsOffice/TaskForceonStudentSuccess/tabid/1894/Default.aspx) was created by Senate Bill 1143 in September 2010. It is tasked with developing a plan to be adopted by the Board of Governors and subsequently presented to the State Legislature. The Task Force is now meeting monthly, with an expectation that the Task Force will report specific recommendations to the Board of Governors in December and to the Legislature in March, 2012. So far, the Task Force has had minimal time discussing and debating issues. Outside speakers have come in and spoken, but "this is not supposed to be a lecture course." Our faculty members on the Task Force are looking for more opportunities for discussion, and experience some frustration when misleading or simplistic ideas are presented by invited speakers or members of the panel without opportunity for discussion. Some of the Task Force participants are not well informed on current community college issues -- in particular they seem to have a set idea of what a community college student is that doesn't match our multiple realities. In presentations to the Task Force, the problems we face (such as low retention rates) have been amply demonstrated with data, but there has been no analysis provided to show that the proposed solutions will actually address the problems. There are a set of principles that the Task Force was asked to sign on to at the beginning, but some Task Force members declined to sign off on them because commitment to particular types of recommendations (such as performance based funding) where inherent in some of the principles.

Most of the meetings have been held in Sacramento and the audiences at the meetings frequently include legislative staffers. Some of the ideas presented at meetings have shown up already in conversations on proposed legislation. An example is legislation potentially being drafted to add a student success course to the requirements for the transfer degree, an idea that was suggested at a Task Force meeting. (See excerpt from ASCCCC resolution at the bottom of these notes.)

At the Task Force this past week the task force divided into workgroups:

- College readiness, matriculation and support to students
- Basic Skills and instructional and curricular issues
- Data and the use of data
- Funding

One of the charges to the Task Force is to make recommendations concerning funding options for promoting student success. So far, the discussion of tying funding to success have been focused on how to add money for success. However, Nancy Schulock, an outspoken critic of community colleges and a member of the Task Force, published an article recently which discusses taking away funding for failure to meet goals.
What kinds of metrics will be used to measure progress towards goals? There hasn't been detailed discussion of metrics yet, but it is expected that the Task Force will recommend multiple measures, including completion, certificates, degrees, transfer, moving from one level to another, basic skills to transfer, accumulation of a certain number of units. The panel at the breakout session, and the session attendees expressed concern about metrics that will capture all forms of success. One of the attendees talked about a police officer who reached success in improving his report writing and dropped out of an English class at that point, thus showing up in retention statistics as not successful. We need metrics that will register the success of students who 'job out' in this way. Participants at the breakout session recommend measures that compare each institution to itself. If colleges are to be measured against each other, they must be measured against comparable colleges.

Our faculty on the Task Force are trying to pull into the discussion of the Task Force not just endpoints of success, but how students get there. For instance, students need to be encouraged to identify their goals and update them regularly. It was in this context that a possible requirement for a student success course was brought up at a Student Success Task Force meeting.

The Chancellor's Student Success Task Force will continue to meet monthly. The meeting dates are posted online (http://www.cccco.edu/ChancellorsOffice/TaskForceonStudentSuccess/TimelineandMeetingSchedules/tabid/1896/Default.aspx) Specific times and places are in the agendas posted a few days before the meeting. The web site provides a link to a public comment forum at http://studentsuccess.ideascale.com. Many of the Task Force members are not inclined to put much weight on postings on that, which may be pseudonymous. Nonetheless, the faculty members of the Task Force recommend that faculty provide input through that online forum. There will also be a 'road show' of town hall meetings in September and October after an initial draft of recommendations has been created.

**Addendum:**
On Saturday, April 16th, the Academic Senate for California Community Colleges adopted the following resolution:

15.02 S11 Mandatory Student Success Courses in Associate Degrees for Transfer
Cynthia Rico Bravo, San Diego Mesa College, Student Success Task Force

Whereas, Many students enter California community colleges with limited knowledge and preparation not only in academic areas but also in terms of time management, study skills, and other areas that impact academic performance, and these students would therefore benefit from student success courses that would help them to develop such skills;

Whereas, The associate degrees for transfer created under Senate Bill (SB) 1440 (Padilla, 2010) do not allow for additional requirements beyond the established general education transfer plans and major or area of emphasis requirements, and therefore colleges currently cannot require student success courses as an aspect of the transfer degrees;

Whereas, Discussions at the state level, including those of the Chancellor’s Office Student Success Task Force in response to SB 1143 (Liu, 2010), have acknowledged the importance of student success courses and have even suggested the possibility that such courses should be a requirement for students; and

Whereas, Development of a position on the issue of mandatory student success courses should be driven by faculty rather than non-faculty;

Resolved, That the Academic Senate for California Community Colleges explore the potential positive and negative impacts of making student success courses (i.e., those that facilitate the development of skills that foster student success, such as time management and study skills) a mandatory aspect of community college education in California, conduct a survey of local senates, and, based on these findings, permit the Executive Committee to either support or oppose the addition of a student success course to associate degrees for transfer should such a change become a proposal from the Chancellor’s Office Student Success Task Force prior to the Fall 2011 Plenary Session.