

...I am thankful for the opportunity to address this body today. In beginning, I would like to thank all the members of the Student Success Task Force for the dedication they've shown to the educational process in California by serving on that body. We were honored to have members from the task force meet with us during our annual conference to present their plan and receive our feedback. As members of the Board of Governors are aware, the California Community Colleges EOPS Association is always vigilant in its efforts to participate in any discussions that have a bearing on how the EOPS program serves its students. That is why I am speaking to you now. After following the entire process of the Student Success Task Force, and after a detailed review of its report to this body, I must announce that I have cause for concern as to what elements of this report mean to the future of the EOPS program.

To be succinct, I don't believe that it is just or fair that the Student Success Task Force would attempt to create a new model for student success in the state of California by recommending measures that would undermine the ability of the EOPS program, which has been referred to as a model program, to continue to well serve its population of disadvantaged students. California has lost a lot of ground in its effort to remain a leader in providing a quality education to everyone in the state who wishes to receive it. I speak today to ask the Board of Governors not to adopt measures that, although well intentioned, seek to make up lost ground by stripping the EOPS program of its autonomy, thus subjecting the most under-served students in our educational system to the inequalities of limited educational access and limited opportunities for social and economic advancement.

EOPS was created by wise leaders who realized the truth of the adage, "the true judgment of any society is to judge how it treats the least within the society". Until the civil rights movement that led to the establishment of EOPS, our educational system didn't give much regard to those at the bottom—the poor, minority students facing social and economic barriers that stood between them and the promise of advancement through education. EOPS solved that problem and allowed these students the opportunity to participate in our educational system and reap the rewards. Now, a group of men and women who want what we all want—better outcomes for all of our students—is asking you to adopt a document that contains ideas that we know will create the worse outcomes for the most vulnerable of our students.

I support the efforts of this body to reform education in California. I believe the Governor, legislature, and Chancellor all have the best of intentions. However, I was appointed by my colleagues in EOPS to advocate strongly on behalf of our programs and our students. These are the students who need the most care as they pursue their educational dreams. The recommendations set forth by the Student Success Task Force threaten those dreams. That is why I can't support these recommendations in their entirety. Specifically, recommendations 3.1, 3.2, 5.2, 8.1, and 8.2 stand to cause the most harm to the EOPS program as will be witnessed by my colleagues. I ask that you listen intently as they describe to you the negative consequences that will occur if these measures are put in place.

Again, I thank you for the opportunity to speak to you, and I appreciate the continued opportunity to share with you in the discussion of how best to educate students in California. Now, as always, any efforts to improve education in California must include a fully-funded and supported EOPS program.

Will Bruce, CCCEOPSA President