

CoFO

Council of Faculty Organizations

ASCCC

*Academic Senate for California
Community Colleges*
Michelle Pilati, President

CCA/CTA

*Community College Association/
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Carl Friedlander, President

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*California Community College
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Rich Hansen, President

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*Faculty Association of California
Community Colleges*
Dennis Frisch, President

January 5, 2012

California Community College Board of Governors

Subject: SSTF -- Faculty Recommendations on the Board of Governors' Adoption Process

Dear CCC Board of Governors:

On behalf of the Council of Faculty Organizations (CoFO), representing the unified leadership of California Community College faculty, including the Academic Senate, CCA/CTA, CCC/CFT, CCCI, and FACCC, we recognize that you will be asked at your meeting on January 9, 2012, to accept the Report of the Student Success Task Force. While the conceptual framework for improving student success presented in the Report may merit your support, we urge you to heed the warnings of students and faculty that several proposals have the potential to result in discriminatory practices and risk undermining our ability to serve students. All of our organizations have sent detailed letters reflecting specific concerns, many of which, unfortunately, have not been adequately addressed by the Task Force. You have a responsibility to review those letters in depth and to reject any proposal that would reduce equity in access or would do more to harm students than to help. We ask also that you explicitly insist that implementation of all budgetary, regulatory, statutory and administrative proposals be subject to our participatory governance process through the Consultation Council. Moreover, we urge you to send a clear signal that the Report is meant to supplement, not supplant, existing system priorities.

We are glad that the Task Force process has initiated a focused dialog on student success by interested parties, and we strongly support the increased focus on student services. New funding for counselors and support services could make dramatic improvements in student success, as could reforms to our enrollment processes and initial assessments.

We ask the Board to consider, however, that responses from students and faculty to the Task Force document as a whole have been overwhelmingly negative. This is perhaps the inevitable result of a broad conceptual framework having been presented to stakeholders as a bullet-pointed list of specific recommendations. As a framework, the Report may serve well as a first step. But in accepting the recommendations, the Board of Governors should be clear that the next steps will be crucial to making sure that changes serve educational and not simply political ends. Many of the recommendations in the report could as easily inhibit student success as enhance it (and it is this risk to which students and faculty have responded).

Positive changes in education require a deep understanding of both student needs and system capacities, which is why administrators, staff, and faculty must work collaboratively to implement reforms. Because the Task Force Report is *not* a consensus document, and because the recommendations have *not* won unqualified support from *any* college constituency group, it becomes especially crucial, if the Board of Governors accepts the Report and advances the recommendations towards implementation, that the next steps include broad participation from all college stakeholders.

The Task Force recommendations appear to reduce or limit the community college mission. These aspects of the Report should be the subject of public dialog and debate. No task force should fundamentally change the California Master Plan for Higher Education; Master Plan changes should be debated publicly.

System changes should be discussed in detail at the Consultation Council. That is the prime function of consultation, after all: to bring stakeholders together to discuss improvements to our system. As noted on the Chancellor's Office website, the purpose of the consultation process is to strengthen a system of communications, policy development, and review to ensure the quality and effectiveness of college operations and programs. The Board of Governors should condition any support for the framework of the Task Force Report on future steps being taken only in consultation and collaboration with faculty and other stakeholders.

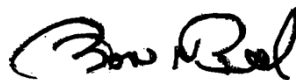
Changes to the delivery of education itself, such as education plans for students, course offerings, and course sequencing, must be the primary purview of local faculties and the Academic Senate. Reforms should set goals and empower faculty; neither the Board of Governors nor the Legislature should accept anything less than faculty support and consensus among stakeholders before sweeping educational reforms are endorsed.

Faculty are not defenders of the status quo. But we are wary of permanently downgrading our colleges in response to a budget crisis that may not be permanent. Access and success are not, in fact, mutually exclusive, and priorities emerging from the economic crisis should not be limited to what is in the Report. Other fundamental needs must be acknowledged. The Task Force recommendations are only a slice of the whole picture, and the Board of Governors should acknowledge this. Please review the detailed letters our constituent groups have submitted, and condition your support for the general framework on a plan for future steps that will allow for more dialog, necessary adjustments, a broader discussion of priorities, and a collaborative process for building consensus on implementation.

Sincerely,



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