

December 6, 2011

Dear Student Success Task Force Members:

Shared governance groups at De Anza College, including Academic Senate, Classified Senate, Student Services Planning and Budget Team, College Council, DARE (Developmental and Readiness Education) Task Force, De Anza Associated Student Body (DASB), and divisions and departments have been engaged in discussion and analysis of the potential impact of the Student Success Task Force (SSTF) recommendations. Assembling responses from campus leadership and the discussions and analyses I have heard campuswide, I have composed the following response:

We endorse the California Community College Independents (CCCI) response to the SSTF recommendations (found at fa.fhda.edu/images/fa-current-events/CCCI-Response.pdf)

We expect that our shared desire for increased student success means that extensive consultation and collaboration between the Chancellor's Office and faculty, staff, administrators, and students of our California Community Colleges will be conducted prior to any system-wide implementation of task force recommendations.

Without significant new financial investment in California public education, including the community colleges, we cannot provide adequate services to our students, let alone enact fundamental reform. Rather than implementing fundamental changes in our student support structures, including matriculation or the "Student Support Initiative," as proposed in the Student Success Task force recommendations, we strongly call for reinstating adequate funding of current student support services, including matriculation, which have suffered crippling funding cutbacks. Years of data from our successful student success cohort programs demonstrate that when students have access to adequate assessment, orientation, counseling and advising, and educational planning, there is a strong correlation between matriculation and student success. Existing matriculation structures, legislation and components have the potential to produce outcomes identified in the Student Success Task Force recommendations, but the budget allocation for matriculation services has been systematically and drastically reduced in the last several years. We urge you to do whatever you can to help adequately fund current matriculation services.

We also strongly oppose, as a general principle, basing any community college funding, including Basic Skills Initiative funding, on performance based criteria as a means to "incentivize" student success. Such a model of funding has proven to be highly detrimental to achieving student success for underrepresented students and underfunded schools in the K-12 No Child Left Behind policy.

In addition, we wish to convey to you what our college sees will be the detrimental impacts of some of the most current (December 1, 2011) SSTF recommendations on the very student success that these recommendations intend to support. In particular, we are concerned about the following recommendations:

2.5 Encourage students to declare a program of study upon admission, intervene if a declaration is not made by the end of their second term, and require declaration by the end of their third term in order to maintain enrollment priority.

The premise that all students who have not declared a program of study within two terms are "wandering aimlessly" and squandering college resources is an extremely shortsighted view that emphasizes college as a career training ground than as a place of discovering academic interest. Many students are drawn to community colleges in order to discover their major out of high school. Forcing students to declare a program of study through the use of enrollment priority in an environment where student demand is much higher than class availability is not in the best interest of the student. In a quarter system, if a student enrolls in two terms/quarters consecutively, then s/he has to declare a program of study within 7 months of enrolling in college, whereas two consecutive terms in a semester system means a few academic year. As an equity issue between semester and quarter system colleges, we feel that basing policy on "terms" is too confusing. We prefer that students be allowed to complete up to 45 units of degree-applicable credit coursework before being required to declare a program of study.

3.2 Require students receiving Board of Governors (BOG) Fee Waivers to meet various conditions and requirements.

First of all, the unit cap on BOG fee waivers needs to be made clear for students in quarter system schools. Requiring students receiving a BOG fee waiver to meet "satisfactory progress standards" such as a minimal GPA, and also limiting the number of units covered under a BOG fee waiver to 110 units will make a college education significantly more out of reach for our neediest students, undermining their success. The unit cap limitation on the BOG fee waiver also penalizes students who want to change their major after taking general education classes which expose students to various academic disciplines. De Anza Student Trustee and Statewide Student Trustee President Emily Kinner has noted that Recommendations 2.5 and 3.2 together are "a vicious circle and a contradiction." To be eligible for financial aid outside of the BOG fee waiver, students already currently need to declare an educational plan. Unit caps on financial aid in and of themselves are a penalizing measure, and recommending unit caps without also recommending funding more student success support interventions would handicap low-income students who also often have other issues that are barriers to passing classes. We urge the SSTF and Chancellor's office to make sure that any unit caps do not apply to non-credit or basic skills classes and to also consider the impact of this recommendation on students whose goals are career retraining.

7.3 Implement a student success scorecard

7.4 The state of California should develop and support a longitudinal student record system to monitor student progress from elementary through postsecondary education and into the workplace

We support accountability and have an excellent institutional research office that collects and tracks student data, but if these recommendations intend to create new bureaucratic reporting structures and regulations that would further burden college resources, we do not support that. Having just implemented the Banner online enrollment management system, our admissions and records office is well aware that many reporting requirements are often not part of the "baseline" capabilities and require staff resources for customization, testing, and roll out.

We also would like more clarification on the funding recommendation on this part of this recommendation 7.3, since the current Recommendation 8.1 makes no mention of score cards as a condition of receiving funding:

“Amend Title 5 to require local boards to discuss the scorecard at a public hearing and certify its content. Colleges would then publicly post their scorecard on websites and at physical locations and the Chancellor’s Office would make results for all colleges readily available for public view. Implementation of the scorecard process would be required as a condition of receiving funding under the Student Support Initiative (see Recommendation 8.1.)”

We do support the SSTF’s amendment of some recommendations, in particular:

- 1) Eliminate the recommendation to consolidate categorical program funding in 8.1
- 2) Relax limits on non-credit classes to only those identified as Career Development or College Preparation. Since our college is a founding member of The Democracy Commitment: <http://www.deanza.edu/communityengagement/democracycommitment>, we believe that non-credit classes such as citizenship classes that serve our most societally marginalized students to help them prepare to participate productively in our democratic processes is a high priority.
- 2) Remove the proposal to charge students the full cost of instruction for any courses not included in their program of study. Creating tiered systems of fees that would again impose hardship on a majority of our underrepresented students is a destructive blow to our CCC Mission and our tradition of open access.

We appreciate your acknowledgement of our concerns and incorporating our feedback on the final SSTF recommendations presented to the CCC Chancellor, Board of Governors, and the California state legislature.

Sincerely,

Karen Chow, Academic Senate President & De Anza Academic Senate