



January 31, 2012

Dear Trustees:

Yesterday our District opened its doors for the start of the Spring semester. What should have been a joyous occasion for students, faculty and staff soon turned into an exercise of frustration and, in some cases, despair as classes filled and closed with hundreds of students unable to “meet their educational needs.” As a trustee, this experience was truly disheartening and it reaffirmed for me that access is a precursor to success. Sadly, following the work of the Student Success Task Force our energies and our vision seems to be redirected into a path that seems to have all the right words but a most dire ending for Californians and for students of color in particular.

Student success is the outcome we all desire. All the more reason why we must engage in the critical debate about the far reaching recommendations of the Student Success Task Force (SB 1143) appointed by the State Chancellor now moving on to the State Legislature for action. The State Chancellor’s Office has scheduled a legislative hearing on tomorrow, February 1, before the Senate Oversight Committee on Education. It is urgent that we inform the members of this Committee (see attached list) of our position on these recommendations as soon as possible.

The most critical outcome resulting from these recommendations is the dismantling of educational access and opportunities provided to many students who today are an integral part of our community college mission! The title of the report, namely, “Student Success” is deceptive. These words imply help for all community college students when, in fact, many of the recommendations exclude the sector most in need of our system’s resources!

I urge you to study carefully the recommendations of the SSTF and take a position. It is very disconcerting to note that we were given a mere six weeks for review and comment on their recommendations--recommendations which propose to change California’s Community College system as defined in the Educational Master Plan we know today, thereby impacting millions of California residents in the future. This makes our speedy response critical and imperative.

On November 29, 2011, the SJECCD Board of Trustees adopted a resolution stating our position on the SSTF recommendations. Our resolution identified specific problem areas with regard to the negative impact of these recommendations on students and urges the Board of Governors to withhold adoption of the recommendations and defer these until further dialogue, research and evidence is completed. In addition, the resolution recommends six months for further review and the involvement of community college professors and representatives of the communities that they serve to ensure a comprehensive, inclusive result that is in the best interest of the California community colleges and California residents. As we know now, our request was not considered. The Board of Governors approved the task force recommendations, and the State Chancellor is now moving with deliberate speed to place the report before the legislature.



Please review the attached documents and contact the members of the Senate Oversight Committee on Education as soon as possible. Whatever your stance, this rapid pace on a matter that will have significant long term effects on our system requires careful consideration. Attached you will find several resource documents, If any of these materials are useful to you, please use any and all of them as your needs require.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Maria Fuentes". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Maria Fuentes, President  
Board of Trustees