

Things to Be Concerned About

1. The exclusionary process which called for 12 months of “virtual input” and the participation of only 1 student on a task force of 21. Also, the underlying politics, meaning a nationwide conservative educational agenda, the fear to speak openly when many key players want to be sure they will still have a place at the table after this revolution has occurred.
2. Flawed research – If you want to prove students are not succeeding base your research on a four year window and show they aren’t meeting their goals within four years. But If you want to prove they ARE succeeding, use a ten year window that takes into account that a majority attend only part time and support themselves at least in part by working their way through college. Also, there was a huge spike at our college in students who claimed their main goal was transfer or a certificate once it was explained to them that students who had those goals would qualify for financial aid. I saw those data myself. Since these goals may have been claimed for financial aid purposes anyway, we can’t say they didn’t reach these goals and therefore our colleges were not successful.
3. Lack of feasibility – Every student is to have an education plan, including noncredit students for whom we can’t even afford to restore their previous poor level of matriculation services. Course scheduling to be based on that education plan and never mind little questions such as facilities utilization or full time faculty schedules. Many such infeasible proposals, pie in the sky.
4. Distraction from main threats – This report included several completely outrageous proposals. This has distracted us all from focusing on the less obviously terrifying but equally bad ideas therein. Shifting instructional dollars that are dedicated by the fifty percent law so that they can also cover tutors or instructional technology or whatever---this is a step down the road away from the use of professional faculty. And removing power from the level of our district boards and communities and vesting that power in an expanded Sacramento bureaucracy will give us the same problems K12 has. We are not the dysfunctional ones, K12 is. Let’s not make that K14. And combining Adult Ed with noncredit? What if they don’t end up under community college? The conditions for any remaining faculty in K12 adult ed after it was practically dismantled are, and have always been, extremely inferior to our own situation in CCC.
5. Disempowering communities – This is one of the most insidious potential effects of these recommendations. By centralizing in Sacramento the power over community college decisions and taking it away from our communities and our colleges, we are in effect disempowering our communities and ensuring a constant battle to try to be listened to or to get flexibility in a lot of new one-size-fits all policies.

6. Paradigms and rhetoric in this movement– “Student behaviors” must be “incentivized.” “Vested interests,” at least those in Northern California, must be kept from weighing in until after finalization of the report has begun. “Best practices” exist and must be adopted by all. The “public will” must be guided and shaped by 1.4 billion dollars in financial aid money that is the source of Lumina’s war chest.
7. Impossibility of “taking to scale” – Wraparound student services for all. We know that works in small programs and that is the guaranteed way to maximize student success. This is being held out as a carrot on a stick or window dressing for the report when we know there is no public will to PAY FOR wraparound services for all. Also, many supposed “best practices” are tried by faculty who are highly experimental early adopters of things. Once those promising practices are adopted by all kinds of faculty, though, the improved results disappear and the results go back to what they were before the changes. The improved results were just an artifact of research design---not randomization but volunteer participation by the enthusiastic in the pilot.
8. Reprioritization of resources with \$ pie of fixed size – this is one of the most dangerous aspects of these recommendations. A much larger percentage of our resources will be drawn out of our current programs and efforts and applied to this new core mission and this so-called completion agenda. These recommendations are to be the #1 priority for any new funding the system receives, not the restoration of our lost programs and services---what we actually need.
9. The Stop-what-you’re-doing effect (outreach, equity, slo’s) –One of the challenges that education faces in making any progress is that every few years there is some big fad, some big new trend or policy, where we all have to revise everything and turn everything around. Here we are being asked to drop the efforts we are already engaged in such as outreach to underserved communities and improvement of programs through implementation of student learning outcomes. The underserved are mentioned once in the report and outreach is not mentioned at all, nor are learning outcomes. Constantly changing improvement tactics in midstream is very wasteful of resources. it is better to follow through on the plans we have made than to constantly drop half-implemented plans in favor of new directions.