CALIFORNIA COMMUNITY COLLEGES

STUDENT
SUCCESS
T A S K   F O R C E

Advancing Student Success in
California Community Colleges

The Vision

For 2.6 million students, the California Community Colleges system is the gateway to a better life. In addition to the personal fulfillment that a college education brings, students who earn a community college degree or certificate nearly double their earnings within three years. Whatever the academic skill-level at the time of enrollment, all students should be given the tools and guidance to successfully complete their educational goals. The recommendations of the California Community Colleges Student Success Task Force lay out reforms that will increase transfer, degree and certificate attainment and help close the achievement gap for historically underrepresented students.

The Challenge

Years of severe budget reductions have put tremendous strain on the colleges' ability to serve students. At a period when demand is at an all-time high, budget cuts have forced colleges to slash course offerings and turn away hundreds of thousands of students. In 2009-10 alone, 133,000 first- time students were unable to register for a single course due to a lack of space. Student support services have also been dramatically cut to roughly half of pre-recession levels. These services are the lifeboat for underprepared students. Unfortunately, only about half of degree-seeking students achieve their educational goal – for Latinos and African-Americans the rate is even lower. Bold changes are needed to improve completion rates, narrow the achievement gap and keep pace with an economy that is increasingly demanding more college-educated workers.

The Opportunity

Last year, the California Community Colleges Board of Governors established the Student Success Task Force to find new and better ways to increase student outcomes. After a year of study and research, the task force issued a report with 22 recommendations that will greatly enhance the opportunity for students to succeed in completing their certificates, degrees and educational goals. The report takes the unprecedented step of identifying core priorities – basic math and English instruction, transfer preparation, career technical training and degree attainment – and refocusing policies and future investments to support these priorities.

Never before have California community colleges engaged in such a comprehensive examination of how to systemically improve student success. The student-focused recommendations create new efficiencies from which savings will be reinvested in student success.

The Recommendations

- *Give students the tools they need to succeed.*   All students will be required to participate in a diagnostic assessment, attend an orientation, and develop an education plan to guide them toward completion of their educational goals. Without these services students face an uphill battle to navigate the system with success.

- *Prioritize student enrollment.* Currently, registration priority is given to students with the most units, thus rewarding unit accumulation rather than progress in their program of study. This is a disservice to first-time students who are the most likely to be turned away due to a lack of space.

The new policy will give priority to returning and first-time students who have taken a diagnostic assessment, participated in orientation and have developed an educational plan. All students will need to identify a program of study within three semesters or they will lose their priority.

- *Increase transparency and close the achievement gap.* The recommendations direct the Chancellor's Office to work with community college districts to establish state and local student success goals. Each campus will be required to post a score card highlighting a select number of metrics that show student progress in meeting goals. The score card will also be disaggregated by race and ethnicity to assess the progress of students by subgroup and determine the degree to which the achievement gap is being closed.

- *Improve basic skills education.* More than 70 percent of community college students who enter the system are under prepared to do college-level work with the majority being first generation college students, low-income and/or minority. Changes will support faculty in developing new and innovative approaches to teaching basic skills courses and by providing more quality professional development opportunities for teaching basic skills.

- *Use technology to help students and create greater efficiency.* Student-friendly technology will be leveraged to better support student needs. Technology applications will generate efficiencies, and help students navigate the college system more effectively.   For instance, all students will have access to common online assessment tools for English, mathematics and ESL and to pre-testing programs that help improve assessment outcomes. They also will be able to take the results of their tests to any community college in the state. In addition, students will be able to develop education plans online and regularly monitor their progress in completing courses necessary to finish their programs of study, thus reducing their dependence on face-to-face meetings with counselors. This will free up counselors duties so they can spend more time working with students with more complex issues.

Key Supporters

The Campaign for College Opportunity, Alliance for a Better Community, Accrediting Commission for Community and Junior Colleges, Bay Area Council, Chandler Farms, Californians for Justice, California EDGE Campaign, California Hospital Association, California State Student Association, USC Rossier School of Education, Antonio R. Villaraigosa, Mayor, City of Los Angeles, The Education Trust-West, Excelencia in Education, Families in Schools, Girls Inc. of Orange County, Hispanic Foundation of Silicon Valley, Hispanas Organized for Political Equality, Institute for Higher Education Policy, Los Angeles Area Chamber of Commerce, Silicon Valley Leadership Group, Mexican American Legal Defense and Educational Fund (MALDEF), Progressive Christians Uniting, Parent Institute for Quality Education(PIQE), Project GRAD Los Angeles, Greater Sacramento Urban League, Southern California College Access Network, The Institute for College Access & Success (TICAS), Women's Foundation of California, Youth Policy Institute.

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California Community Colleges STUDENT **SUCCESS** TASK FORCE