

**Assembly Select Committee on the Master Plan for Higher Education in California
Meeting the Needs of Faculty and Staff to Support Students**

Marc Berman, Chair

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Good morning Mr. Chair and Members,

Thank you for the opportunity to speak to you today. I serve as the president of the Academic Senate for California Community Colleges, the organization entrusted by California law to be the voice of faculty in academic and professional policy matters. We represent all 58,000 full and part-time faculty in the California Community College system.

I will focus my comments today on the professional development faculty need to support our students as they reach for their academic and career goals even as they grow to become active and engaged community members and citizens.

Essential Professional Development for Faculty

Faculty need access to professional development for three very specific reasons: to maintain currency in their disciplines, to develop and implement strategies for effective teaching and learning, and to fulfill their roles and responsibilities in college governance and service.

When the Legislature signed into law the great reform bill for community colleges, AB 1725 of 1988, it moved our system away from its K-12 roots toward a greater consistency with other segments of higher education, like CSU and UC. One effect of those changes was the elimination of the community college credential, which was something like what we have today for the K-12. Essentially, AB 1725 focused our hiring on competency in a discipline; additional training in pedagogy would be left to professional development. At the time, the Legislature discussed requiring a certain percentage of community college funding to be spent on professional development (for all staff, not just faculty), similar to what corporations spend on training their workers, a figure of roughly five percent. That approach was rejected in favor of a distinct categorical line item for professional development, which, unfortunately, was eliminated in the early 2000s.

Professional Development offerings in the California Community Colleges

Much of the professional development currently provided by the state is only designed to train faculty on implementing such state-directed initiatives such as the Student Success and Support Program, Student Equity, the Strong Workforce Program, and the Guided Pathways Award Program.

Unfortunately, there is no consistent support for faculty to maintain currency in their area of expertise or to improve in teaching and learning.

Of course, all colleges support professional development in concept, but few provide the resources necessary for faculty to attend professional development events since the money would need to come from base apportionment. As a result, faculty - particularly part time faculty - are frequently left to bear the cost of attending professional development activities within their disciplines.

Teaching is a full time job, but when we add on the college service responsibilities, office hours, and other job requirements, fitting professional development into already tight schedules becomes difficult at best. Compounded with the additional cost and a lack of sufficient college support, such as providing substitute teachers when faculty attend professional training, it is quite challenging for full time faculty to attend and almost impossible for part time faculty to participate. To add context, our system employs more than 18,000 full-time faculty and over 40,000 part-time faculty.

Although statewide organizations such as the Academic Senate play a critical role in ensuring that all faculty – full and part time - have access to high quality, low cost professional development to support them in fulfilling their roles and responsibilities to their students and colleges, faculty need support from their colleges to attend these events, both in the cost of attendance and backfill in their job duties.

We pride ourselves on providing high quality instruction, low cost access to over 2 million students annually—and in the process, create miracles for our students. However, we fail to prioritize the most basic aspect of teaching and learning, which is knowledge currency for our teachers, otherwise called professional development. Although professional development on specific initiatives may be valuable to our institutions, it is insufficient for what is needed for our faculty—and by extension, for our students.

How the State can Best Support Faculty Today

The State can ensure the health and vitality of higher education by investing in our most important resource, the individuals working at our colleges.

One action that would not require additional funding would be to designate that a percentage of our base funding be allocated to professional development.

Another action that does require new funding would be to fund the professional development categorical.

Faculty should have access to the training they need to remain experts in their disciplines, improve pedagogy, and develop the skills needed to be faculty leaders in governance and in service to their college. All college personnel should have the resources and the time away from their jobs that they need to learn, grow, and improve in their positions and careers.

Ensuring the growth and development of all college personnel will improve every aspect of our colleges and help us to be ready to meet the needs of our students.

The Critical Role of Faculty Diversity

I'd like to turn our attention now to the issue of faculty diversity. The Academic Senate has long been in support of increasing the diversity of faculty to reflect the diversity of our student population. Doing so will improve teaching and learning and is critical to improving the educational experience of all our students.

In support of this goal, the statewide Equal Employment Opportunity and Diversity Advisory Committee developed a handbook on best practices for promoting diversity by improving recruiting and hiring practices at our colleges. Subsequently, the Academic Senate partnered with the Chancellor's Office to provide professional development workshops on implementing the best practices outlined in the handbook. The workshops were well attended and resulted in significant changes to the employment practices at most of our colleges. These changes were put into practice when colleges hired full time faculty using a one-time allocation of \$62.3 million dollars a couple of years ago, which resulted in a significant increase in underrepresented minorities in first time, full time hires as reported by the Chancellor's Office.

However, we will never achieve the results we desire if we continue to rely on an intermittent approach when we hire a good number of faculty one year but in other years, even when the state budget is strong, rely on part time faculty and, perhaps, replace retirements. This is insufficient. We need a sustained effort and the resources necessary to make real progress.

Further, AB 1725 set a goal of 75% of credit instruction taught by full time faculty. Currently, our system hovers around an average of 55%. This low percentage of full time faculty has some very real consequences for our students and our colleges. Hiring full time faculty every year would allow us to make progress on the 75% goal, improve the diversity of the academy, and provide the critical support our students need from faculty of all backgrounds to achieve their educational goals.

And when we hire part time faculty, we need to honor them as professionals by ensuring that they have the support necessary to teach our diverse body of students. Support for any faculty member should include office space to meet with students, adequate compensation to teach the standard load of classes and support students, access to health benefits, and professional development opportunities to maintain discipline and pedagogical currency.

Importantly, we need to recruit our own students to come back and teach at our colleges. This means that there must be a path from the community colleges to the CSU and UC as well as mentoring and paid internship opportunities for graduate students and working discipline professionals. A critical component in such a pathway is some assurance that a teaching position, or assistance in obtaining a position, is available at the end of the path.

Many of our students have aspirations of returning to community colleges to teach, but their vision remains a leap of faith without institutional support.

Taken together these three efforts – dedicated funding to hire full time faculty, parity for part time faculty, and a pathway to teaching in the community colleges – will ultimately provide a sustainable strategy for improving the diversity of our faculty to the benefit of our students and our colleges.

Teaching is an interpersonal endeavor. Fundamental to its success is the connection between faculty and student. Faculty are reminded daily of the power of this connection in our learning spaces and we are deeply cognizant of the necessity of sustained interaction between faculty and students as the most meaningful factor that contributes to student success.

Supporting professional development for all faculty while improving the diversity and number of full time faculty at our colleges will ensure a vibrant and engaging college community where students will enjoy a rich academic life while pursuing their educational goals.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide a perspective, and I welcome your questions.