

Assembly Select Committee on the Master Plan for Higher Education
Overview and Status of Higher Education in California
Thursday, August 31, 2017
State Capitol, Room 447
9:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.

Comments of California Community College Chancellor Eloy Oakley

- The Master Plan for Higher Education’s commitments to open access, tuition affordability and academic preparation are working well in the California Community College System.
 - The system is designed to reach all Californians, serving approximately 2.1 million students - more students than any other system of higher education in the nation.
 - 72 districts and 114 colleges – serving every community in California
 - A diverse system whose student population reflects that of our diverse state:
 - 42.5% Hispanic
 - 27.4% White
 - 6.4% African American
 - 11.6% Asian
 - 3.2% Filipino or Pacific Islander
 - 3.7% as multi-ethnic
 - Age diversity: one-third are between the ages of 20 and 24 years old, 25% between the ages of 25 to 39, and 16 % are over age 40
 - 42% of CCC students were the first in their family to attend college
 - CCC tuition has always been the lowest in the nation. Our Board of Governor’s Fee Waiver Program ensures that our low-income students pay no fees at all; about 50% of all students and 70% of full-time students receive the BOG Fee Waiver.
 - CCC provides a strong academic foundation for students. Close to a third of UC graduates and over half of CSU graduates started at a CCC. In both systems, community college transfer students persist and graduate at rates similar to those students who start out at public universities.
- The Master Plan reflected our best thinking of 1960 – at a time when only 16 percent of working age adults had a college degree.
- California’s social and economic needs have changed significantly; the Public Policy Institute of California projects that, by 2030, 38 percent of *all jobs* will require *at least* a bachelor’s degree.

- For students with only a high school diploma, today's economy is unforgiving. When adjusted for inflation, the wages for workers who have not attended college are *less* today than they were in the year 2000. High school graduates without at least some college under their belts now hold just 18 percent of the "good-paying jobs" - jobs that pay at least \$35,000 - \$45,000 per year- down from 28 percent in 1991.
- The line between the haves and the have-nots in America's new economy is a college education - and it is imperative that we adjust our higher education structures accordingly:
 - Our historical commitment to access needs to be paired with a commitment to student success.
 - We need to rethink the eligibility and pools and transfer ratios to reflect the degree production needs of today.
 - Our financial aid policies should respond to the true costs of college access and success, and take into account more than tuition costs – including textbooks, transportation, and room and board. We need to ensure a financial aid structure that supports our returning adult population.
 - The Master Plan created clear structures and segments, but we are one system of higher education and we need to think of ourselves that way. We need data systems that allow us to follow students across segments, and we need to strengthen and better align those inter-segmental pathways for our students.
 - Without adequate funding for all of our systems of higher education we will not be able to meet the educational needs of this state.
- California Community Colleges are the engines of social mobility. We proudly serve the top 100 percent of students. We have the responsibility to provide adult education, career education and workforce preparation, and to prepare students for transfer to a 4-year institution.
- Our challenge is that too few of our students make it to their desired goal, and despite a strong focus on improving equity our colleges still struggle with persistent achievement gaps.
 - Only 48% of community college students identified on a certificate or degree pathway achieved their goal of obtaining a degree, certificate, or transfer within 6-years.
 - Students who do complete their associate degree goals take a long time to do so, an average of 5.2 years, and accumulate significantly more units than are needed to graduate.
 - Older and working adults are too often left behind – we generally don't offer programming that serves adults who must balance work, childcare and household demands.

- A focus on low tuition and the call for “free tuition” has the risk of unintentionally masking the overall affordability challenges our students face.
- Serious equity gaps, particularly for low-income and students of color. Regionally, our state faces significant educational disparities – areas with the lowest college attainment of adults and the lowest median household income also have the lowest CCC enrollment per capita.
- Open access has long been a community college core value—one of our greatest strengths. It’s time to build on that strength and work towards making sure the path behind that open door is one that enables more students to succeed in college and in the workforce.
- In recent years, the Legislature has provided the Community College system funding mechanisms and statutory guidance to improve student outcomes:
 - The influx of funding to support student matriculation services under the Student Success and Support Program;
 - The focus on closing achievement gaps through Student Equity Plans and associated funding;
 - Improving remedial instruction through investments in the Basic Skills Transformation Grants and Basic Skills Program;
 - Better aligning career education to workforce needs through the Strong Workforce Program;
- These investments have moved the system to think more strategically about evaluating our performance and student outcomes:
 - We pioneered the Student Success Scorecard to measure performance indicators, and we made that information available to the public.
 - We established Salary Surfer, a public-facing website that allows prospective students and families to evaluate the earning potential of various educational programs.
 - The Chancellor’s Office Institutional Effectiveness Partnership Initiative works with colleges on goal-setting and using data indicators to evaluate programs and ensure students are learning.
- While these changes have resulted in progress, our gains have been slow and inconsistent across the state.
- The community colleges have focused on programs and services designed to improve the college readiness of our students, but we are increasingly discovering that our community colleges are not *student ready*.

- Our colleges need to make fundamental changes in the way we serve students. There are a number of promising practices underway within our system:
 - Guided Pathways Framework. In most community colleges today, open a catalog and you see an array of course options. Figuring out which pathways lead to a student’s end goal can be difficult; and even those that do usually end up taking more units than required. At best, this delays student completion. At worst, the student drops-out, frustrated and discouraged. This year, the Legislature made a strategic, one-time investment to support the Guided Pathways framework. A model that aims to provide all students with a clear course-taking pattern, in a program that leads to future success.
 - California Promise Programs: Early outreach to students and families so that they know they have a guaranteed spot at a California Community College, and continuous engagement and support to help students transition from high school to college.
 - Improving Assessment and Placement. For far too long our system has relied on assessment tests to evaluate college readiness. Tests are a relatively poor predictor of student performance. This year, my office partnered with the Assembly on AB 705, to direct colleges to use “multiple measures” in assessing students and to rely more heavily on high school performance indicators.
 - Data-driven decision-making. As a system, we collect a lot of data. But we don’t spend enough time determining if we are collecting the right data, and using the data to properly drive decisions. My office is undertaking an effort to align our data systems, and to build institutional research capacity to support data-informed decisions.