

**Select Committee on the Master Plan for
Higher Education in California**
Meeting the Needs of Faculty and Staff to Support Students
Bill Rawlings Testimony
May 4, 2018

Good morning Mr. Chairman and members.

My name is Bill Rawlings. I am a member of the California Community Colleges Board of Governors, and I have been a classified employee at Mt. San Antonio College for almost 20 years.

I am here representing the California School Employees Association (CSEA). CSEA represents over 240,000 classified employees in our public schools and colleges, and I am the Chair of the CSEA Community College Committee.

Thank you for the opportunity to share our thoughts and perspective on how to make our higher education system better.

Specifically, I was asked to focus on the needs of classified staff in three areas:

1. What do we need to better support students?

Classified employees are the extraordinary workers who do the essential work to keep our colleges and universities clean, safe and functional. We make sure that every student, faculty, administrator and visitor have an enjoyable and effective learning environment to pursue their academic, career and life goals.

a) Increased Staffing for Increased Services to Students

Like any profession, better pay helps to recruit and retain better professionals; and more staffing will ensure that additional vital services can be provided adequately to meet the needs of students.

From the moment that a student first ventures onto campus to the day that they graduate, classified employees are involved in all aspects of their higher education journey.

In colleges and universities, students need many services to succeed. Having more classified school employees on campus means being able to deliver more services to students, including: more financial aid services, residential services, counseling, tutoring, health care, information technology support, campus safety and job placement services- just to name a few.

b) On-Going Professional Development

The number one issue that our members repeatedly ask for is to get more training and on-going professional development.

In this ever-changing world, we want and need training and professional development to continuously upgrade our skills and learn best practices to meet the changing needs of students and faculty.

Technological innovations, increases in social media and communication, curriculum reforms, as well as other risks and danger require us to update our skills and keep up with the changing times.

For example, the implementation of multiple measures for assessment will require many of our academic support staff to adapt to support the increase in transfer-level students.

Without on-going professional development, we may not have the latest information and skills to adequately address the needs of our students and to support their success.

2. What are the challenges and barriers classified staff face in meeting the needs of students and how are these being addressed?

a) Reliance on Temporary and Short-Term Employees

We need to find a way to stop or minimize the **repeated use** of short-term and temporary employees, who are often minimally trained and skilled, as a way to avoid providing health and retirement benefits to employees.

Many colleges hire non-permanent classified employees, such as student workers, short-term workers, extended substitutes, and professional experts, in lieu of hiring permanent classified employees.

Certain conditions may exist to warrant the use of these temporary and short-term employees to fulfill a limited, temporary need. However, the need should truly be limited, and they should not outnumber the permanent classified employees.

We have seen an unfortunate pattern where some districts have developed the practice of hiring short-term employees for 194 days, laying them off, then re-hiring them in the next fiscal year.

This practice is repeated year after year circumventing the 195 days rule, thereby denying these employees health benefits, leaves, holidays and all other rights of classified employees.

b) Full-Time Versus Part-Time Classified Positions

Some colleges hire multiple part-time classified employees instead of fewer full-time classified employees to avoid paying health insurance benefits and contributing to CalPERS, our public employee retirement system.

Some positions may be suitable as part-time positions because of the nature of the work. However, when the work can be done by one person in a full-time position, we would prefer that to happen versus splitting the work between two part-time positions to avoid paying additional benefits.

We believe full-time positions encourage classified employees to be more committed to their job, more invested in the outcomes they help produce, and more engaged in the campus culture, thereby promoting a consistent workforce instead of constant turnover.

High turnover and multiple vacancies can also contribute to increased workload on the remaining staff, which sometimes results in decreased access and services to students and decreased employee morale.

Protecting employee rights and benefits continue to be a potential key barrier and challenge for some of our members.

3. How should the Master Plan meet the needs of staff? What is one action the state can take that would not require funding, and one action the state can take that would require funding?

There are studies that show that collaboration between labor and management at a K-12 campus leads to better student achievement.

Our current State Superintendent of Public Instruction, Tom Torlakson, has done a lot of work in this area, through his Labor Management Initiative. It brings together the school board, the faculty and classified unions, and the administration to address budget issues and campus issues.

The discussions are not always amicable, but through respect and communication, the results and impact on students are clear – their grades improve.

In some ways it's almost common sense that when all educators are coordinated in their mission, students benefit.

It is this notion of shared governance that I believe will make our colleges and universities better for our students to succeed.

In the community colleges, the idea of participatory governance permeates from the state level with the Consultation Council down to the local level in budget committees.

I would urge the committee to consider building into the future Master Plan a call for shared governance between board members, administrators, faculty, and classified staff.

It would be important to specifically have the exclusive representative for the workers as a member and participant in the shared governance process. We may all have different viewpoints, but our common goal is the success of our students.

Also, including us in the shared governance process has minimal to no financial implications.

What can we do if we had more funding?

I would suggest that we go back to look at more full-time staffing, as well as improved pay, benefits, and professional development to retain our hardworking employees. Having dedicated and engaged employees is a necessary investment in our colleges and universities for the direct impact on student success.

Thank you.