



**Assembly Select Committee on the Master Plan for Higher Education in California
Marc Berman, Chair**

**March 1, 2018
Fresno, California**

Testimony of Michele Siqueiros, President of the Campaign for College Opportunity

Good morning Chair Berman and members of the committee. Thank you for inviting me to participate in today's hearing and, more importantly, for your work on such an important undertaking for our students and for the future of California. My name is Michele Siqueiros and I am President of the Campaign for College Opportunity. The Campaign for College Opportunity is a non-profit coalition of education, civil rights, and business leaders seeking to expand college access and student success in California through our research, coalition building, and policy advocacy. We were founded in 2004 by two visionary baby boomers and lifelong education champions concerned that the Master Plan that served their generation so effectively was no longer able to meet the needs of today's students and was breaking the promise of the Master Plan – that every eligible Californian would have a spot in college. Even 14 years ago, it was already clear to those watching trends in the economy and education that we would need more college graduates at just the same time that our community colleges and universities would be forced to turn away thousands of eligible students because of inadequate state funding and insufficient attention by our college leaders to aggressively improve time to degree, align course requirements, and support student success. Much has changed since 2004 and we have made progress in expanding college access, but it has not been enough to close the projected shortfall of 1.7 million college graduates to meet workforce needs in 2025, nor enough to keep that promise from the Master Plan.

California's high school graduates have never been more academically successful or more ethnically diverse than today. Each year, an increasing number of students complete the A-G requirements that determine eligibility for the University of California (UC) and California State University (CSU). In 2015, 185,179 California high school graduates completed this curriculum to establish their "college-readiness," a record 43.4% of their graduating class, compared to 34.9% of students from the graduating class of 1995. Inequities in access to A-G courses continues to disproportionately impact students of color; in that same graduating class of 2015, 49.7% of white students completed A-G curriculum compared to 34.6% of Latinx students and 32.7% of Black students.

The enrollment caps set by the Master Plan compound the opportunity gap faced by students of color in admissions to four-year universities. In the years between 2009 and 2014, the CSU was turned away nearly 140,000 eligible students. At the UC, surges in qualified applicants and slow growth in admissions has heightened selectivity. From 1996 to 2015, the proportion of California high school graduates applying to the UC has risen from 17% to 21%, but the proportion enrolled by the UC (8%) remained flat. A comparison across all 50 states shows a strong, positive correlation between the number of students aged 18-29 admitted as freshman to a four-year university with the rate of bachelor's degree completion. While this finding is perhaps unsurprising, more striking is how low California ranks in the

share of its students enrolled in four-year universities: California ranks last, with fewer than three in 10 of our college students attending a four-year institution. It is an economic and moral imperative for California to lift enrollment caps at the CSU and UC in order to serve 40% of each graduating class. It should not be harder for our kids to get into college than it was for us, especially since this economy practically requires a college education.

The limitations of the Master Plan enrollment caps and inadequate funding for CSU and UC enrollment growth force many students to attend community college first with the hopes of transferring to complete a bachelor's degree. Unfortunately, the route from community colleges to four-year institutions is much more a maze than a straight forward pathway. Although a majority of community college students enroll with the goal of transferring, only 4% do so within two years and only 38% after six years. Transfer students will also take 6.4 years to secure a bachelor's at the UC and 7 years at the CSU, which results in an additional \$36,000 to \$38,000 in expenses for transfer students compared to freshman admits. The transfer process is broken in California due to the lack of coordination between our segments of higher education and the array of program and transfer options at the colleges. California is unique in its lack of a statewide official or entity that ensures our various segments of higher education act as a seamless system. Such an entity must have the responsibility, authority, and capacity (staff and financial) to be effective in advancing a change agenda that the California Postsecondary Education Commission was not. To increase college attainment rates, improve transfer, and close equity gaps, we need an entity that keeps the interests of students and California at the center of any discussion between the segments.

The CSU and UC offer their own versions of admission guarantees and two different sets of lower-division, general education requirements for transfer students. In 2010, the Campaign sponsored legislation to establish the Associate Degrees for Transfer (ADT), which offers seamless 120 unit paths to bachelor's degrees. Students earning an ADT are guaranteed admission to the CSU with junior standing and a bachelor's degree after completing no more than 60 additional units. There are now ADTs in 32 majors, with colleges still developing more programs after starting to see their impact. Students with ADTs obtain bachelor's degrees within two years at the CSU at a higher rate (48%) than peers on the traditional transfer route (27%). As students move through more quickly, we open seats in impacted courses and funding to serve the next cohort of students. Private institutions are voluntarily seeking to admit ADT students, as seen in agreements with Western Governors University and over 20 historically black colleges and universities. We can help position students to successfully transfer by streamlining general education requirements to provide better clarity and strengthening the ADT so it is established as the preferred transfer pathway to both the CSU and UC.

There are other means through which we have failed to design colleges for student success. It is often lamented that many students are not "college-ready" when stepping onto campus, but we must also be frank in asking if colleges consistently prove themselves to be "student-ready?" Coincidentally, this may be clearest in how we assess and serve students "underprepared" for college-level work and placed into remedial education, non-credit bearing math or English courses. On average, 80% of community college students in California are placed into remediation, though only 16% eventually earn an Associate degree or certificate and 24% transfer. Disproportionate numbers of Latinos (87%), African-Americans (87%) and Pell or Promise Grant recipients (86%) are placed into remediation. Many colleges continue to conduct assessment based on a single standardized test, often given to students without sufficient

information about how critical these tests are and without any preparation, all the while dramatically impacting their academic prospects. Just as concerning is the reality that scores on these tests are not strong indicators for whether students can succeed in college-level courses. When colleges use multiple measures of assessment to place students, with factors like Grade Point Average, more students are placed into college-level classes with course success rates holding constant or improving. Last year, the Campaign sponsored AB 705, which was enacted to call on colleges to utilize multiple measures when assessing students and maximize placement into college-level coursework. When students might benefit from additional support, we can offer co-requisite courses that incorporate additional academic support by design or contextualized curriculum that frames math or English in more practical uses tied to subject areas. The CSU has announced its plan to phase out non-credit courses and instead develop a co-requisite model of supporting students that may have previously been assessed as requiring remediation. We are fully supportive of these changes. A new vision for California higher education should establish the goal that the vast majority of students be placed into college-level curriculum; in the meanwhile, the legislature should hold college and CSU campuses accountable to faithful implementation of AB 705 and the CSU Executive Order by requiring annual campus updates on progress.

The implementation of Guided Pathways offers another important means to shape college practices to foster more equitable and successful student outcomes. As mentioned previously, just the number of transfer pathways can be confusing to students, particularly the 42% of college students that are the first in their families to attend. When you also consider the dizzying number of options available in most college course catalogs, it becomes easy to understand why 48% of students are unable to secure any credential or transfer after six years. Though off-campus factors and financial needs play a role in hindering student advancement, they cannot justify maintaining a status quo in which most students do not reach any defined educational goal. Under Guided Pathways, each element of a student's college experience is oriented towards better outcomes by making success the default. A few examples of practices under Guided Pathways include presenting students with more structured academic roadmaps, orienting them early about those options, and monitoring if students fall behind in order to coordinate timely academic interventions and offer supports available. Shifting from the "cafeteria model" of registration in which students select a few courses each semester and towards a "menu" that presents choices that fit into program guidelines also allows colleges to identify bottlenecks, inform next semester's course offerings based on real-time enrollment patterns, and schedule classes in a manner that makes sense for students. Last year, the Campaign actively supported inclusion of a \$150 million budget allocation to fund colleges interested in adopting Guided Pathways. Implementing Guided Pathways and closing racial equity gaps should be top priorities at every campus and the state should continue to provide resources, technical expertise, and accountability for guided pathways implementation and the closing of racial equity gaps. It is called Guided Pathways, but it's simply common sense. Students should arrive in college and not have to guess how they might pull off transfer or earning a degree.

On March 5th, we will release *Left Out: How Exclusion in California's Colleges and Universities Hurts Our Values, Our Students, and Our Economy*, a report analyzing the leadership, faculty and academic senate diversity by race and gender of our community colleges and universities. While Latinx students now compose 43% and Black students another 6% of enrollment in California public postsecondary systems, only 12% of faculty members are Latinx and 5% are Black. Leadership roles are still highly

exclusive, with whites comprising 60% of senior leadership roles, more than 60% of faculty, over 70% of campus Academic Senates, and over 80% of system Academic Senates across our community colleges and universities. As leaders who care about improving student outcomes and closing racial gaps and inequality in our state, let me share that there is no way to do that without ensuring greater inclusivity in our campuses. 69% of our undergraduate students are students of color, they need to see that their campuses hire faculty and leadership that look like them. All students benefit from being exposed to the diversity that has made California strong. As policymakers, I urge you to require community colleges and universities to collect and report data by race and gender on college leaders, faculty and academic senators and put forward action plans to ensure greater inclusivity on their campuses that reflect the diversity of our state. We are also urging the Governor (and Senate Rules Committee) to appoint UC Regents, CSU Trustees, and Community College Board of Governors that are reflective of the population diversity of California and that include at least 50% women. It's 2018 – this is not a revolutionary request.

It goes without saying how much California has changed since 1960. The Master Plan was a visionary, bold, and courageous strategy that helped create our incredible system of higher education where we built first class research universities, excellent teaching and workforce preparation colleges, and valued affordability and access that earned us the envy of the world. A new bold and visionary strategy that would require courageous leadership on your part is what we need today – for a 21st Century workforce and one that ensures equity and opportunity for a diverse and heterogenous society. Students in our schools today deserve a vision for higher education that matches their talent. Let's begin with having our Governor and legislative leaders – all of you – communicate clear goals for increasing the number of Californians who go to college and graduate. Clear goals and expectations that our campuses will close the racial gaps that persist. Many of us require GPS navigation when we land in a new place and aren't quite sure of where we are going. I challenge each of you to provide the GPS by setting a goal that 60% of working age adults obtain a college credential, targeting specific goals for our community colleges, CSU and UC campuses, and aligning the state budget and policies to help meet them. If California were to reach this goal of 60% postsecondary attainment, we would close the projected gap of 1.7 million college graduates, maintain our standing as the sixth largest economy in the world, while also eliminating racial and regional equity gaps.

The California Dream is premised on the idea that any of us can imagine and create a brighter future. We will only continue to honor that Dream by ensuring our children can partake in the same opportunities provided to past generations by our vibrant colleges and universities. We stand ready to support you in imagining and creating that brighter future for our students.