

# Chancellor’s Task Force on Student Success

## Summary of Community Comments | November 2, 2011

### Data Sources

IdeaScale	Email
<p>167 Ideas, 320 Comments, 4,740 votes</p> <p><i>1,063 registered users</i></p> <p>Faculty: 27%</p> <p>Administrators: 7%</p> <p>Staff: 9%</p> <p>Students: 28%</p> <p>Community members: 29%</p> <p>Most usage has been since October 5</p>	<p>93 messages</p> <p>Acquired Brain Injury Program topic: 70%</p> <p>Other topics: 30%</p> <p>Four were formal letters from organizations or interest groups.</p>

### Summary

The recommendation to consolidate categorical funding received the highest number of comments. Several communities—namely those supporting CalWORKs, Acquired Brain Injury programs, and foster parent training—rallied scores of supporters to submit hundreds of emails, personal narratives, policy analyses, and votes on IdeaScale. Proponents argue that these programs are tied to government funding sources and play critical roles in large public health and social welfare programs. Eliminating them could both unravel safety nets and cost millions of dollars in fines and lost funding.

Many commenters expressed confusion over which programs would be consolidated and how they were chosen. They requested that this information be clarified in the next draft of the recommendations. Other consolidated funding concerns addressed negative impacts on financial aid staffing, elimination of child care centers that are part of childhood development programs, and dismantling of apprenticeship programs.

There was also considerable comment on eliminating non-credit and continuing education from the core community college mission. Seniors and people who have taken citizenship classes were the most vocal constituencies, but many others expressed concern about narrowing colleges’ priorities. Another thread in the comments was how we define success—whether personal growth was being eliminated as a measure or if we will limit the time horizon in which we measure success. One recommendation was to gather employment data, as this may capture positive benefits for students who do not complete programs or courses.

An important clarification was submitted by the ESL community, who were concerned that credit ESL classes were lumped in with developmental courses or with personal enrichment options in the recommendations, which risks eliminating highly successful programs serving students who are simultaneously pursuing degrees/certificates and fluency in English.

The area that seemed to draw the most nuanced critique regarded how we can strengthen support for entering students. Themes included:

- Questioning whether students' fluency with cell phones would translate into the ability to use online educational planning tools
- How students can select a program of study without career advising
- How well the recommendations address students' needs to build life skills and college knowledge
- Whether there are sufficient funds for counselors or to train paraprofessionals
- How educational plans can be revised over time

There were two areas that drew praise: increasing alignment with K-12 and making students more accountable through enrollment priorities, putting conditions on financial aid, and charging differential fees. However, many expressed concern that charging differential fees would eliminate low-income students' abilities to explore areas of interest.

Two groups asked to be able to shape implementation planning: CalWORKs and financial aid professionals.

## **Comments on Specific Recommendations**

### **Chapter 1: Increase College and Career Readiness**

*1.1. Collaborate with K-12 to jointly develop common core standards for college and career readiness.*

A comment supporting this alignment generated 21 positive votes. Another poster argued the problem needs to be addressed in K-8 first, with 13 people agreeing.

### **Chapter 2: Strengthen Support for Entering Students**

*2.1. Develop and implement common centralized diagnostic assessments.*

One poster had numerous implementation questions, largely concerned about how we would afford to implement more tests.

Another poster argued that colleges should use the progress of ESL students to validate placement testing and that assessment scores should be centrally kept so students don't have to be retested. This idea got 8 positive votes.

A third poster worried that common assessment would not address local needs and could eliminate the matriculation act.

A student posted that this is a bad idea—unnecessary for returning students going to community colleges for career advancement purposes. 4 people agreed.

*2.2. Require students to participate in diagnostic assessment, orientation and the development of an educational plan.*

Two posts highlighted the importance of qualified counselors to this recommendation, with 46 positive votes. Comments showed that many posters felt that some issues can be handled by those with less training, but particularly for mental health issues, a professional counselor is vital.

A counselor emailed saying that there if we cannot provide more qualified counselors, the recommendations need to address how we will handle training paraprofessionals. A poster shared a similar sentiment, and several posts alluded to the barrier created by the 50% law in hiring sufficient numbers of counselors. Another poster worried that the de-categorization of funding would make it even harder to fulfill counseling needs, with 11 supportive votes, and an email raised concerns about insufficient funding to support this recommendation.

*2.3. Develop and use technology applications to better guide students in educational process.*

Three posts noted that the recommendation assumes that students are digital natives, but questioned this reality (with 8 positive votes). In particular, they questioned whether using technology for entertainment means that students will be able to use it for educational planning, particularly for students with poor understanding of English or grade school reading levels. One poster recommended that training on how to use educational planning technology be included in the mandatory student success courses. This idea generated 18 supportive votes.

Two posters expressed skepticism that this type of support could be provided via technology, especially for students that don't have a clear sense of what they want. This idea garnered 21 supportive votes. Three posts and an email further clarified this issue by noting that educational plans require more than determining required courses. A key component to counseling is building life skills and college knowledge—something that technology may not be able to replicate, particularly for students coming from poverty (19 positive votes). One counselor recommended looking at student athlete programs as a model for comprehensive support that generates strong outcomes.

*2.4. Require students showing a lack of college readiness to participate in support resources.*

One poster recommended that these support resources should include health-related support. Eight people supported this idea.

### *2.5. Require students to declare a program of study early in their academic careers*

Two posters argued that before students can determine a program of study, they need career information—particularly as K-12 offers little career counseling (8 supportive votes). One of the posters also noted that this type of advice works best when aligned with clear programs of study within the college. Nine people supported this concept.

## **Chapter 3: Incentivize Successful Student Behaviors**

Most positive comments about the recommendations were directed to this section. Four comments and an email supported the creation of enrollment priorities and applying conditions to financial aid, which garnered 10 supportive votes. A similar post on the site encouraged students to take responsibility for their education, which garnered 21 supportive votes. Several people had ideas for ways to extend student responsibility such as instituting a fee for dropping a class or basing registration priority on GPA.

However, there was significant concern about eliminating non-credit and continuing education as priority areas. Two posters were concerned that the recommendations are only defining success based on graduation, transfer, and certificates. They argued non-credit courses such as DSPS, older adult, and parenting classes should still be considered core to the CCC mission. These comments received 268 positive votes. A poster who made repeated comments that teaching crafts or hobbies was a poor use of state funds got 94 negative votes. One email expressed concern that CTE programs were not sufficiently addressed in the recommendations.

### *3.1. Adopt system-wide enrollment priorities reflecting core mission of community colleges.*

The County Welfare Directors Association of California sent a letter opposing consolidation of categorical funding for CalWORKs and Foster Care (see below). They also singled out this section and requested to serve on the implementation group to address how to prioritize CalWORKs student enrollment (particularly since these students are on a 12 month clock). They felt that their concerns were also relevant to sections 2 and 4. The Western Center on Law and Poverty sent a similar letter, which was also posted to IdeaScale (with 65 positive votes).

An email from a faculty member worried that limiting repeatability would mean that classes that gradually build skills—such as speech—would not have sufficient enrollments to continue. A counselor expressed concern that the 100 unit cap would discriminate against re-entry students such as those who already have a bachelor's degree.

An email from another faculty member indicated that students may take a decade to complete and was concerned that the recommendations would make it harder to support people who don't follow a straight path through college.

### *3.2. Require students receiving Board of Governors fee waivers to meet various conditions and requirements.*

A poster requested that financial aid professionals be included in the shaping of any legislation in this arena, given that there are many complex federal and state regulations that must be taken into account. Five people supported this idea.

Another poster offered a detailed critique that assessed how federal requirements could be tailored to the context of BOG fee waivers, including calling into question the use of satisfactory academic progress as a measure, due to considerations about completing courses (as opposed to grades).

### *3.3. Provide students the opportunity to consider attending full time.*

One poster worried that this would make it harder for low-income and part-time students to attend.

### *3.4. Require students to begin addressing Basic Skills deficiencies in their first year.*

A few posters made reference to this being a good idea in general, as part of larger statements.

## **Chapter 4: Align Course Offering to Meet Student Needs**

### *4.1. Focus course offerings and schedules on needs of students.*

A poster worried that students would not be allowed to explore if they have to pay extra for courses that are not in their educational plan. One commenter noted that, under this structure, affluent students could afford to explore and poor students would not. Similar emails came from three people and 34 people voted that they shared this concern. One counselor emailed that there does not appear to be the opportunity to revise educational plans along the way and noted that the recommendations do not address how the process of updating plans would be facilitated.

Many people wrote in to discourage the elimination of funding for specific non-credit courses that are not associated with career development and college participation, including:

#### *Courses for Seniors*

One person posted repeatedly to argue that California can no longer afford to provide this type of education for seniors and accused faculty of leading a campaign to protect their jobs. Numerous people—both students and faculty—replied on both the site (three comments with 260 positive votes) and via email (3 messages) with arguments that:

- Seniors pay taxes, are the ones who vote for the bonds to improve community colleges, and deserve to be served

- Opportunities to educate seniors on health issues and to stimulate brain function are essential to keeping our growing senior population healthy
- Non-credit courses are inexpensive to offer because community organizations partner with colleges to host these classes

A community college trustee countered that continuing education classes should be fee-based so that credit programs can be sustained.

### *Acquired Brain Injury (ABI) Programs*

It is clear that students in acquired brain injury programs were given instructions on how to access the site and post comments (we received 80 comments and 665 votes in favor of saving ABI categorical funding), plus 65 emails were sent directly on this topic (roughly 50% from ABI-related service providers, 25% from ABI students/families, 10% from college representatives, and 15% unidentified). While many used a form letter, others wrote movingly about their personal experiences. Writers noted that community college-based programs are critical for people with brain injuries (particularly veterans) to get into college or the workforce, and that without these programs, people are more likely to have medical and social problems that are expensive to the state and devastating to those affected.

### *Citizenship classes*

One post with 48 supportive votes and two emails made the case for the importance of citizenship classes.

## **Chapter 5: Improve the Education of Basic Skills Students**

### *5.1. Support the development of alternatives to traditional basic skills curriculum*

There were no comments on this recommendation.

### *5.2. Develop a comprehensive strategy for addressing basic skill education in California.*

The Los Rios CCD ESL faculty submitted a letter that spells out concerns including regarding lumping credit ESL programs with remedial education including: research studies on basic skills that shaped this recommendations are not based on ESL credit courses; there is a difference between remediation and teaching a language as part of a credential-directed program; given that the needs of various language speakers vary, a uniform statewide program does not make sense; and ESL programs are highly successful and managed by highly qualified faculty. There were repeated posts that reiterated this idea on the site. 152 people voted to support this idea.

One faculty member emailed, expressing concern that K-12 was not taking enough responsibility for graduating students who are not ready for college.

Another poster felt that the recommendations were pushing us away from students who are not academically prepared and asserted that the recommendations put all of the responsibility on students rather than educators. Three people agreed.

## **Chapter 6: Revitalize and Re-Envision Professional Development**

There was only one comment on this topic: a poster wrote that no other profession pays for professional development and so this should not be covered by the state. 31 people disagreed.

*6.1. Create a continuum of mandatory professional development opportunities.*

*6.2. Direct professional development resources toward improving basic skills instruction and support services.*

## **Chapter 7: Enable Efficient Statewide Leadership & Increase Coordination Among Colleges**

*7.1. Develop and support a strong community college system office.*

One poster expressed concerns that the CCCO doesn't understand local contexts sufficiently and will have more power than local governance. In particular, the poster was concerned that non-credit programs would be decimated. Two people disagreed.

*7.2. Set local student success goals consistent with statewide goals.*

There were no comments on this recommendation.

*7.3. Implement a student success score card.*

A comment urged us to include getting a job as a success measure as a way to capture students who gain benefits from taking only a few courses (or even partial courses). An email from a CTE department coordinator suggested that colleges require a culminating learning portfolio.

*7.4. Develop and support a longitudinal student record system.*

There were no comments on this recommendation.

## **Chapter 8: Align Resources with Student Success Recommendations**

In addition to comments regarding protecting specific programs detailed below, there seemed to be confusion about which programs would be affected by consolidating categorical programs. In particular five posts had questions about DSPPS and EOPS and the rationale for selecting specific programs (all of these expressed support for categorical programs, with 131

affirmative votes). One poster questioned whether this recommendation would really generate a cost savings.

### *8.1. Consolidate select categorical programs.*

#### ***CalWORKs***

As noted above, the County Welfare Directors Association of California (CWDA) sent a letter opposing consolidation of categorical funding for CalWORKs and foster care. They argued that this action would impact the state's ability to meet the federal work participation rate for CalWORKs, thus creating federal penalties and putting families at risk of losing welfare benefits.

A letter from the Western Center on Law and Poverty (WCLP)'s letter provided more background on the likelihood of penalties and the way that community college-based classes have been used as a linchpin in the state's Welfare to Work programs. They noted the irony of the Task Force raising concern about how consolidated funding in the K-12 system has pushed students from adult education into the community colleges, and worried that this recommendation would push people out of the system altogether.

Twenty-five posts, ranging from policy analyses to passionate testimonials from single mothers, about the importance of saving CalWORKs generated 958 supportive votes and many comments. We also received two emails from CalWORKs coordinators describing their successes and an email from a county social services department echoing CWDA's letter.

#### ***Foster Care***

The Sonoma County Human Services Department emailed to oppose making foster care funding flexible, noting that the state could lose \$5 million in federal matching funds and that the state relies on community colleges to provide mandatory training to foster parents.

The 62 Foster and Kinship Care Education (FKCE) programs in the CCCs wrote a similar letter to urge that this program not be eliminated, with many specific details on the programs structure, cost-effectiveness, and federal funding and requirements status.

Thirteen posts and two emails about the importance of saving foster care training yielded 37 comments on the value of the program and generated 951 supportive votes. A foster care trainer emailed with alternative funding ideas including making these classes be part of child development programs as a credit course or redirecting funding to nonprofits to provide training.

#### ***Financial Aid***



Two posts (with 9 supportive votes) and an email raised that concern that flexible funding would allow colleges to redirect BFAP funding from financial aid staffing to other issues. Given the high rate of students on financial aid, they were concerned that this would make it harder for low income students to enroll.

### ***Apprenticeships***

The general counsel for the California Apprenticeship Coordinators Association filed a letter opposing the consolidation of funding for apprenticeship programs (Montoya Funding), explaining that it is cost-effective, essential for economic growth, and provides a vital link with employers (particularly in construction). An email from a CTE faculty member cautioned that combining funding could have unintended consequences on RSI funding for apprenticeship programs and encouraged the Chancellor's Office to examine how these funds might be affected.

### ***Campus Child Care Centers***

Two posts with 46 positive votes noted that money is currently allocated to laboratory schools for early childhood education programs, which could be lost as part of consolidating funding.

#### ***8.2. Invest in the new Student Support Initiative.***

There were no comments on this recommendation.

#### ***8.3. Promote flexibility and innovation in basic skills through alternative funding mechanism.***

There were no comments on this recommendation.

#### ***8.4. Do not implement outcome-based funding at this time.***

There were no comments on this recommendation.

### **Other Comments**

Two people emailed, concerned that there was no evidence to back up the recommendations such as footnotes or examples of where these concepts have been successfully applied.

Two posters wondered why so much of the plan focuses on student services and the front door and so little on instruction.

There were a handful of posts expressing anti-union sentiments, concerns that faculty get pay and benefits that are too generous, frustration that faculty only have to work a limited number of hours, and arguments that colleges have excessive administrative overhead. One poster recommended that faculty salaries be determined by their success rates. Other posts advocated that the mission of the colleges be scaled back to transfer-related functions and to emphasize

workforce-specific skills over the arts and humanities. These comments were met with many negative votes.

There were several posts and votes on the quality of part-time faculty, the impact of freeway flyers on college costs, and differential treatment that part-timers may receive. These exchanges revealed strong feelings both in support of part-timers and questioning the ability of adjunct faculty to support student success.