

AFA report to Board of Trustees, 5/11/21, Sean Martin, AFA President

President Battenfeld, Trustees, President Chong, Colleagues and other members of the community,

- AFA leaders are pleased to learn that the district is prepared to significantly expand in-person instruction and services in the fall. We are grateful to our counterparts on the district's negotiation team for working with us to ensure as many courses and services as possible are available for in-person participation. AFA continues to advocate for greater expansion of in-person instruction and services as conditions allow (e.g. as CDC and Cal/OSHA criteria evolve).
- AFA continues to support our colleagues and students who are calling for action on numerous fronts related to Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion. To this end, AFA will entertain two resolutions at our Executive Council meeting tomorrow. The first calls on the district to immediately move forward in the formation of an Ethnic Studies department, prioritizing the hire of new, qualified and diverse faculty, and support to faculty developing curriculum for this department. The second calls on the district to adopt Cesar Chavez day as an observed holiday, along with the proposal that we explore the option of locally renaming those holiday's that are mandated by the Chancellor's office, but which run contrary to the values expressed in our college mission statement.
- Finally, I wish to report that AFA attended the biannual CCCI conference. We had the pleasure of meeting with Senator John Laird, an ally of community college stakeholders. Among the topics discussed at length was a concerning trend at the state level, in Consultation Council, the Board of Governors, and at the Chancellor's Office, to devalue and exclude faculty and other stakeholders from decisions that impact the system as a whole, and our college in particular.

- We received an excellent presentation from Debbie Klein, President of FACCC, on the outsized influence of so-called “reform” agents such as philanthro-capitalist foundations like Lumina, Gates, and even the Foundation for CCC. These groups are working in concert with the Koch brothers’ American Legislative Exchange Council to the detriment of democratic processes that ensure stakeholder participation. The overriding theme of the presentation was that Disruption is Not Reform, and that the movement as a whole is intended to derail public education, demonize faculty, lower taxes and government spending, and demolish education as a public good while redirecting education to the interest of corporate disruptors.
- This reform agenda, beginning in 2010 with SB1440 “transfer pathway reform” and in 2012 with SB1456 “the Student Success Act” and continuing through the Chancellor’s Vision for Success along with associated measures such as performance-based funding, cynically named the “Student Centered Funding Formula,” are all couched in a common premise of austerity. In short, Colleges are expected to produce more outcome metrics with fewer resources. What is lost in this vision is the role of learning, understanding, mastery of skills and civic responsibility.
- California “reform”-driven advocacy organizations such as The Campaign for College Opportunity, California Competes, and the California Acceleration Project (to name but a few) are all manifestations of this “reform” agenda that, often by their own admission, aim to dismantle shared governance, along with the autonomy of local Boards of Trustees, in order to implement policies that are more befitting industrial production rather than an institution of higher learning. They have replaced a vision of education as a public good, available to all who may benefit, to a system of employee training with a “get in, get out” degree and certificate factory.

- Perhaps most alarming is the ideological capture by these “reform” agents of the very language of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion. The effect of this carefully crafted PR narrative has been that support for these universal values is equated with support for the programs these “reform” agents are promoting. Those who critique the “reform” agenda are labeled anti-equity, anti-diversity, exclusive or even racist. The austerity conditions imposed by law and policy by these groups are designed to cause division and strife between constituents who, by any rational measure, should be natural allies in support of our college mission. We end up fighting over the crumbs rather than organizing to impact the genuine source of structural inequity, our inadequate funding.
- At this point, AFA does not wish to persuade you that our analysis of the “reform” agenda and its agents are correct. All we ask is that you appreciate the complexity of the issues involved and resist calls to mis-characterize critique of this agenda as hostility toward the ends of diversity, equity, and anti-racism.