



November 7, 2011

Dr. Jack Scott, Chancellor
California Community Colleges
1102 Q Street
Sacramento, CA 95814

Re: Response to Recommendations of Student Success Task Force

Dear Chancellor Scott,

The California EDGE Campaign is a coalition of diverse groups – including business, labor, education, workforce and community-based organizations – whose goal is to persuade the governor, legislature, and other policymakers to implement a coherent and well-integrated workforce investment strategy that addresses the skill needs of employers and provides opportunities for all California residents. As such, we applaud the California Community Colleges Task Force on Student Success for shining a light on the need to improve student outcomes and support its call for greater transparency and accountability; implementation of new evidence-based pedagogies that accelerate students' achievement of their academic and career goals; enhanced supports for students, including more extensive access to counseling; and reform of basic skills education, including a greater blending of services with the California Department of Education's Adult Education program.

Given our focus on workforce education and our commitment to a future of shared prosperity, we also offer the following suggestions to strengthen the plan offered by the Task Force. In each case, we briefly detail our concern and then suggest language to amend the plan. One additional overarching concern is whether there are sufficient resources to support the issues the plan attempts to address. We agree with the Task Force that the questions of resource adequacy must be addressed.

ISSUE: EQUITY

Concern: The Task Force on Student Success recommendations note in several parts of the plan the importance of ensuring that educational opportunity in the California Community College (CCC) system is distributed equitably among Californians from different demographic and socioeconomic groups. The plan's commitment to equity could be

considerably strengthened by clearly defining “success” to include and even highlight this goal.

Proposed language changes

- Page 7, end of first full paragraph, add new paragraph: *This plan recommits the community colleges to the goal of equitable access and underlines the importance of ensuring that all students achieve success. We define success as increasing the share of students from all demographic and socioeconomic groups who achieve a certificate, degree, or transfer to a four year college or university. As such, a central goal of this plan is elimination of both the participation and achievement gaps among demographic and socioeconomic groups. To achieve this objective, the CCCs will develop a set of concrete and ambitious student persistence and outcome goals – disaggregated by demographic and socioeconomic groups – to be achieved over the next five years. Doing so is, in the view of the Task Force, essential if we are to meet the skills needs of California businesses and ensure a future shared prosperity.*

ISSUE: CTE AND BASIC SKILLS EDUCATION

Concern: The Task Force on Student Success suggests in the introduction to its recommendations that the CCCs have three core missions: “transfer to a four-year college or university; the award of workforce –oriented certificates and degrees; and the basic skills development that supports both of these pathways”. However, the Task Force on Student Success’ plan addresses only the first of these missions. The failure to directly address the questions of how to improve the success of workforce/career technical education, and of basic skills education threatens to undermine the central mission of the Task Force on Student Success, which is to improve the success of students who enter the CCC system. Currently approximately 56% of students in the CCCs are enrolled in workforce/career technical programs and at least 60 percent (other estimates are considerably higher) of assessed CCC students test as needing basic skills remediation. The Task Force also fails to address the challenge of funding high cost workforce/ career technical education programs that are critical to the California economy.

Proposed Language

- Page 10, paragraph under “Scope of the Task Force Work”, rewrite 4th sentence to read: *Workforce/career technical education, a critical topic to the future of the community colleges, was not directly addressed by the Task Force. However, the implementation document developed by the Chancellor’s Office (see p. 12) will be directed to specifically detail the implications of the Task Force’s recommendations for workforce/career technical education and make additional recommendations based on this analysis. Delete rest of paragraph.*
- Pages 12-13, add a sentence following “There will be implementation groups composed of the relevant internal and external stakeholders”: *This includes stakeholders from business and industry and stakeholders with expertise in workforce/career technical education and basic skills education, given the*

need to detail the implications of the Task Force's recommendations for both workforce/career technical and basic skills education.

- Page 20, change the third sentence in the last paragraph to read: *However, some students will still need the face-to-face interactions provided by advisors and counselors. And, immediately following, add: This may include workforce/career technical students, whose educational pathway is often less clear than the pathway for traditional transfer students, and underprepared students who need help charting an efficient and effective way of reaching their educational and career goals.*
- Page 26, add a bullet point under "Requirements for Implementation" that reads: *Colleges shall develop coherent career pathways programs that enable students to declare a program of study. These pathway programs shall provide options for students to accomplish specific milestones, provide multiple entry and exit points that allow students to step-in and step-out while making progress over time to acquire credentials and skills that are stackable and embedded within degree or transfer structures.*
- Page 27, add a bullet in the last paragraph on the page under "Highest enrollment priority should be provided for" that reads: *Incumbent workers who enroll in a course that develops skills required to retain their current job or advance in their career.*
- Page 33, add a bullet point under "Requirements for Implementation" that reads: *Colleges would need to expand the remedial options available to students, particularly emphasizing those that research suggests are most effective in supporting students to achieve a certificate, degree, or transfer in a timely manner.*
- Page 39, second full paragraph, eliminate paragraph and add: *The magnitude of the basic skills need among our students and the high failure rates among basic skills students make basic skills reform a majority priority.*
- Page 40, under "Basic Skills is a Shared Responsibility with K-12", change the first sentence to read: *Addressing Californian's basic skills needs is a shared responsibility between the K-12 and the community colleges, including the Adult Education program of the California Department of Education and the non-credit divisions of the CCCs. Then add: The lack of alignment and coordination between these two systems is a serious problem which importantly contributes to students' high rates of failure.*
- Page 40, under "Balancing Needs of the CCC System", after second sentence add: *The limits on our resources heighten the urgency of coordinating the resources of the community college and Adult Education systems. Delete rest of paragraph.*
- Page 41, under "Requirements for Implementation", second bullet, first sub-bullet, change to read: *Target a fixed portion of the money to specifically incentivize faculty redesign of curriculum and support innovations in basic skills instruction, including contextualization and other methods demonstrated by research to be effective in reducing the time students spend in remediation and improving the share who achieve certificates, degrees, and transfer.*
- Page 43, change Recommendation 5.2 to read: *The state should develop a comprehensive strategy for addressing basic skills education in California that has as its goal improving the share of basic skills students who enter and succeed in postsecondary education and/or a family-supporting job.*
- Page 43, under "Improve Coordination of K-12 and Community College Basic Skills Programs", add the bullets below and delete current final bullet:

- *Identification of the principal groups of students served across all three segments of California's current basic skills system – the Adult Education program, non-credit community college divisions, and credit community college divisions. Development of strategies to ensure that an increasing share of basic skills students enter community college (or other postsecondary) credit programs and achieve a certificate, degree, or transfer.*
- *Building effective practices and better leveraging the resources of both the Adult Education and community college systems to move students as quickly as possible toward their career goals. This can include joint offerings, dual enrollment, and integrated support services.*
- *Development of common and/or articulated assessments and curricula that prevent wasted duplication of effort by basic skills students.*
- *Development of common goals and common or linked metrics for measuring student outcomes and for evaluating program success.*

Sincerely,

Barbara Baran

For the Executive Committee of the California EDGE Campaign