



California Community College Association for Occupational Education

Meeting the education and training needs of California's workforce

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 (SSTF)

Dear Chancellor Scott:

Thank you for this important opportunity to respond to the recommendations of the Student Success Task Force. This very important process, implemented by the passage of SB 1143 [(Liu) of 2010], has triggered significant conversation throughout the state on the future of our system.

As professionals in the delivery of Career Technical Education (CTE) and Economic and Workforce Development (EWD), we believe it is vital to develop ways to increase the number of students receiving degrees and certificates. The Task Force has been an instrumental part of being proactive in this regard. We nonetheless have comments, concerns and suggestions about the report which we hope will be incorporated into the discussion as we move forward.

The document states up front: *"workforce/career technical education, while critical topics to the future of the community colleges, were unable to be discussed due to time and schedule constraints. (p. 11)."* This is problematic as the report is designed for the community college system as a whole, and not for a particular class of student. As such, CTE students are highly impacted by the contemplated direction of the system while their needs are not clearly considered in the report's development. Career pathways are a critical component for the students we serve. The SSTF document focuses on transfer as a goal as opposed to a mechanism to achieve a career through a career pathway.

CCCAOE views the delivery of CTE programs in the community colleges as directly tied to the provision of workforce/career readiness. Exposure to service learning, internships and career counseling, leads students on a pathway toward stackable credentials and job preparation. Unfortunately, the report lacks a comprehensive understanding of the complexity of our student population who seek our programs and services for a multitude of reasons.

CCCAOE stands ready to assist the Task Force and the legislature in ensuring that stakeholders with expertise in workforce/CTE/EWD will be included in the implementation of the Task Force recommendations going forward. Colleges across the state have been working to develop effective career pathways --which incorporate both basic and technical skills as well as stackable certificates linked to continuing certificate and degree options—in order to enable students to reach both their educational and career goals. We would like the Task Force to recognize the importance of this work and to ensure that subsequent recommendations and implementation build on successful models and are responsive to the needs of students enrolling in CTE offerings.

While the availability of increased academic counseling is certainly warranted, particularly through enhanced Matriculation services, it may not be the most necessary concern of those seeking to train or retrain for specific workforce skills. This is but one example of the numerous ambiguities that we found in the report. In the desire to increase the completion rate of students entering our programs, we do not want to reduce the students to a one-size-fits-all description.

Basic Skills and Professional Development

CTE professionals do not want to segregate a discussion of basic skills from workforce preparation, but rather seek ways to enhance opportunities for contextualized learning of basic skills in CTE course offerings. Further, while we recognize and support the need for academic planning, we are deeply troubled by the prospect that students might exceed a state-supported cap, precluding opportunities for career exploration or job retraining.

While professional development is not only important, but absolutely fundamental, to the faculty and staff in our CTE programs, the report's focus on professional development primarily directed at basic skills is misplaced. Offerings should not be guided by the Chancellor's Office, but left to the local or regional level to keep pace with the demands of changing course offerings. We must look at structural changes based on regional needs for our colleges and programs to be more responsive.

Implementation

Like other statewide community college organizations, our leadership is perplexed at how the changes in the report would be funded. Funding cuts and workload reductions have reduced our system from 2.9 million to 2.4 million students, accompanied by extreme cutbacks in course offerings. We recognize the funds needed to implement the task force recommendations could be substantial and we question whether this redirection of resources, at a time of extreme economic distress, represents the best investment for our system or our state.

It is important to note that the decategorization of important programs within student services or CTE, as envisioned by the report, will not produce greater efficiencies or cost savings, but may short-change students who rely on the current integrity of these programs for their own academic success. Clustering SB 70, EWD, nursing and apprenticeship leaves open many questions – namely, how can grant-funded programs be redirected at the local level and combined with

directed state dollars – while failing to address the more fundamental question about how we stabilize the offerings of CTE courses which are more expensive than traditional academic offerings. Current funding levels and cutbacks are definitely impacting the CTE mission in disproportionate ways – and currently imperil our ability to meet this core mission of the colleges. The Task Force has not chosen to address this issue, but it is urgent that the system consider how that will be addressed.

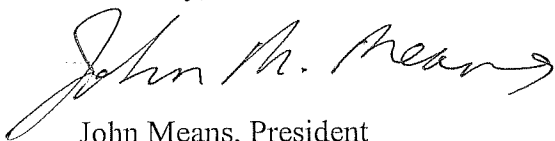
CCCAOE welcomes the opportunity to discuss the integration of CTE into the implementing action plan of the final report. However, we do not believe the results could, or should, be attempted to be implemented in the time frame discussed by the system. We respectfully request that the system take more time to vet and refine the recommendations, and that CTE/workforce professionals and stakeholders are explicitly included in further deliberation.

CCCAOE offers to volunteer our services through participating in future Task Force deliberations, implementation of recommendations, and our semi-annual conferences for system training on academic counseling for career readiness as well as effective career pathway design. We are prepared to partner with the Chancellor's Office and other stakeholders to make this part of the conversation moving forward.

We all recognize and applaud the reason for the conversation on student success, along with the need to allow our colleges to maximize their potential of being a driving economic engine for the state. Attention to early assessment of high school students, greater bridge partnering with the K-12 system, alignment of curriculum from K-12 to community colleges through university, clear pathways, expanded dual credit, contextualized learning, career counseling and service learning are all among the many recommendations that CCCAOE can support and are willing to lead as we move forward with the vetting process on the report.

We hope these observations are valuable to you as the system moves forward in this process. Please do not hesitate to contact me should you have any questions.

Sincerely,



John Means, President
California Community College Association
for Occupational Education and
Associate Chancellor, Economic and Workforce
Development, Kern Community College District

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