

*Community College League of California*

# **It Begins With Us: The Case for Student Equity**



**League's CCCT & CEOCCC Board Meetings  
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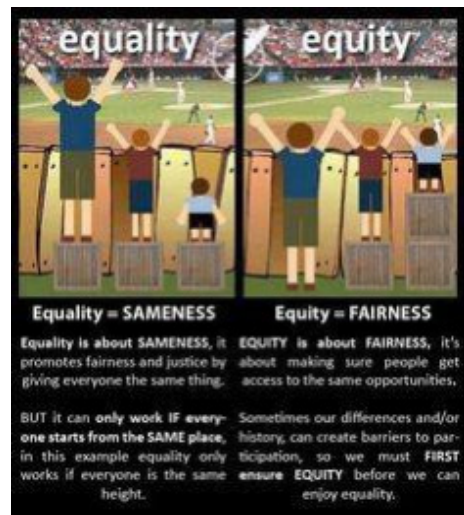
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# Section I—Purpose

January 2014, Governor Jerry Brown announced in his budget proposal an unprecedented line-item designation for student equity in community colleges. His proposal of \$100 million for student equity set the stage for the past year and a half of enhanced activities locally and statewide on student equity issues. Most prominently, the 112 community colleges updated their equity plans as required under Title 5 in order to receive the funding.

The Community College League of California (“League”) also enhanced its own activities statewide both to advocate for funding and to support the colleges in their efforts to develop and implement their student equity plans.



For 2015-16, the Legislature and Governor approved an augmentation of \$85 million, bringing the total investment specifically focused on Student Equity to \$155 million. The goal and vision is to further improve campus-level programs to enable colleges to close student achievement gaps. Colleges will have the opportunity to use these resources to reform policies and practices that can reduce inequities for underrepresented groups on campuses.

***Now is the time*** for California community colleges, with guidance from the State Chancellor’s Office and support from organizations such as the League, to fulfill our mission of ***student success for all*** – that is, ***student equity***.

One does not need to follow the news of civil unrest in many cities and towns in America to be convinced of the inequities, as those of us who are paying attention to our own colleges know and witness inequities in education with high attrition and low completion of underrepresented students. As many believe, the new civil rights issue is educational equity. It may have started with *Brown v. Board of Education* more than fifty years ago when separate but unequal was found unconstitutional, but for community colleges, the notion of unseparate but still unequal outcomes is fundamentally wrong.

As Dr. Francisco Rodriguez affirmed in his welcoming remarks at the League’s Equity2015 summit, ***“Equity is a rallying term and a moral imperative.”***

## **The Goal: Equity**

The problem that this unprecedented amount of student equity dollars is trying to solve is real. Our statewide student population is diverse – in some cases even more diverse than the general state population.

Students by Ethnicity, 2013-14 <sup>1</sup>		
	CCCs	CA Pop.
African-American	7.0%	6.6%
Native American	0.4%	1.7%
Asian	11.7%	14.1%
Filipino	3.1%	**
Hispanic	41.0%	38.4%
Pacific Islander	0.5%	0.5%
White	28.4%	39.0%
Multi-Ethnicity	3.9%	3.7%
Unknown/Nonrespondent	4.0%	—

\*CA Pop totals more than 100% due to students of multiple ethnicity.  
 \*\*Filipinos are included w/Asians in California population data.

<sup>1</sup> Community College League of California. 2015. *Fast Facts*:  
<http://www.ccleague.org/files/public/Publications/FF2015.pdf>

Despite differences in admission requirements, the diversity gap at California community colleges is just as alarming as at University of California and California State University campuses. The achievement gap for transfer students is also alarming: of all California community college students transferring to UC campuses, only 23.3% were underrepresented minorities for 2012-13 (the academic year before equity funding was introduced).

In July 2014, the Board of Governors set system-wide goals for the freshman classes entering between 2014 and 2024 for five primary areas, including equity. Following are the guidelines they set for student equity:

**Definition:** Using the same cohorts included in calculating the Scorecard Completion Rate, the percentage in the outcome subgroup divided by the percentage in the original cohort (outcome percentage/cohort percentage) is calculated. This is the equity index. A ratio of less than 1.0 indicates that the subgroup is less prevalent in the outcome than the cohort, and is considered underperforming.

**Proposed Goal:** To increase underperforming subgroups’ equity index each year until all subgroups’ indices are 0.8 or above.

**Rationale:** This metric responds to the charge by the California Community College’s Student Success Task Force that “recommends that system-wide accountability efforts include the collecting and reporting of both the outcomes and the progression measures for the system... which is disaggregated by race/ethnicity to aid the system in understanding how well it is performing in educating those historically disadvantaged populations...”

This metric serves as a measure of equity, comparing how well disadvantaged populations are performing compared to the non-disadvantaged population.<sup>2</sup>

Cohort Year	Hispanic	African American	American Indian	Pacific Islander	White	Asian
2000/01	0.755	0.796	0.799	0.911	1.070	1.307
2001/02	0.749	0.804	0.779	0.920	1.081	1.301
2002/03	0.759	0.768	0.803	0.897	1.090	1.287
2003/04	0.768	0.797	0.756	0.855	1.100	1.268
2004/05	0.783	0.777	0.772	0.902	1.095	1.283
2005/06	0.789	0.783	0.813	0.889	1.096	1.279
2006/07	0.805	0.795	0.782	0.845	1.087	1.273
2007/08	0.813	0.779	0.782	0.888	1.091	1.288

*Data show that Hispanic, African American, and American Indian subgroups' indices were consistently below 0.8 for all or most of the past eight cohorts. Hispanics' index surpassed the cut-off in the most recent two cohorts. However, this group's performance needs be continuously monitored because other underperforming groups' improvement in equity index could push Hispanic's index below 0.8 again.*

### This Paper

The problem is real, yet the solutions can seem limited as the root causes may be so ingrained generationally and the legal parameters set by Proposition 209 are daunting. The purpose of this paper is not to reflect on how our students may come from broken homes or disenfranchised communities, or even how underprepared they are for college and the world of work. Instead, this paper aims to reflect on our own institutions and how we as employees and trustees of the “system” need to see our own role (intentionally or unintentionally) in perpetuating the inequities, or more importantly, in helping to achieve student equity – especially now with an unprecedented amount of funding. The goals of this policy paper are the following:

1. Make the case for continued, focused funding for student equity;
2. Provide some tools and recommendations for colleges to implement, integrate, and institutionalize their equity plans to achieve groundbreaking outcomes; and
3. Encourage a statewide, open and honest conversation about student equity.

In addition, this paper will:

- Provide a historical perspective of the circumstances in law and policy as they relate to community colleges that have led us to this point.
- Describe the League activities over the past 5 years.
- Identify some partner organizations' activities over the past year on student equity.

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.californiacommunitycolleges.cccco.edu/StudentSuccessInitiative/Goals-Accountability.aspx>

- Provide some observations made by the State Chancellor’s Office, leadership (Trustees and CEOs), our membership (colleges), and League Staff on student equity funding and activities.
- Provide some recommendations for the League and our colleges in achieving outcomes to justify the expenditure of funds.

## Section II—Where We Were: A Historical Perspective

Although student equity plans have received a growing amount of attention since Governor Jerry Brown proposed funding in January 2014, they have been required by law for more than two decades. In 1991, the California State Legislature charged all sectors of public education to prioritize equity “not only through a diverse and representative student body and faculty but also through educational environments in which each person has a reasonable chance to fully develop his or her potential.”<sup>3</sup>

In response, the California Community Colleges Board of Governors (BOG) adopted a student equity policy in 1992. The goal of the policy was to ensure that “groups historically underrepresented in higher education have an equal opportunity for access, success, and transfer” and all community college districts were asked to develop and implement a student equity plan.<sup>4</sup> Unfortunately, no resources were allocated for this purpose; consequently, the mandate was largely ignored. Four years later, in 1996, the BOG amended its policy to require the submission and implementation of a student equity plan for receipt of state funding, and in 2002, Title 5 regulations were updated to include the requirement that colleges develop a student equity plan.

The Title 5 regulation begins with the following statement: “In order to promote student success for all students, regardless of race, gender, age, disability, or economic circumstances, the governing board of each community college district shall maintain a student equity plan.”<sup>5</sup> The following sections detail the plan requirements. Among these requirements are that colleges develop the plans “with the active involvement of all groups on campus as required by law, and with the involvement of appropriate people from the community.”<sup>6</sup> Finally, colleges are required, at minimum, to address the following groups in their plans: American Indians or Alaskan natives, Asians or Pacific Islanders, Blacks, Hispanics, Whites, men, women, and persons with disabilities.

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<sup>3</sup> California Education Code § 66010.2c

<sup>4</sup> California Community Colleges Chancellor’s Office. 2014. *Student equity planning: fact sheet*.

<sup>5</sup> California Education Code § 66010.2c

<sup>6</sup> California Education Code § 78220-78221

Despite the historical grounding of the student equity plans and the best intentions of legislators and college leaders alike, student equity plans have, until recently, received little attention and by most accounts led to little measurable change at the institutions. The recent economic downturn was in part responsible for this stagnation; following steep budget cuts that began in 2008-09, the Legislature “instituted categorical program flexibility that suspended many regulatory requirements related to student equity and other initiatives.”<sup>7</sup> Student equity was once again considered by the Legislature in 2011, when the BOG created the Student Success Task Force; the recommendations published a year later eventually were integrated into the Student Success Act of 2012 (SB 1456, Chapter 624/2012). In response, the Student Equity Workgroup was convened by the Chancellor’s Office in 2013; this group was responsible for reviewing and updating the student equity planning process, and provided campuses with a template to be used for this purpose. Now, for the second year in a row, the Legislature has approved funding for the maintenance and implementation of student equity plans.

## Section III—The League’s Commitment to Student Equity

Over the past few years the League has led several activities related to student equity. In 2010, the League’s Commission on the Future set a general goal related to equity along with student access and success. More recently, the League specifically advocated for student equity funding and organized two statewide student equity summits – in 2014 and 2015.

### Commission on the Future

Since its existence, the League has embarked on various policy studies through its Commission on the Future. In 2010, the League’s Commission on the Future was charged with studying effective policy and practice changes that, if incorporated, could be reasonably implemented by 2020 and would enable the system to increase the number of students who have access to, and are able to complete, high-quality degrees, certificates, and transfer pathways in our community colleges. The Commission was composed of 33 members including CEOs, trustees, faculty, staff, and student members. The Commission’s vision statement for 2020 is that “In California, all residents have the opportunity to complete a quality postsecondary education in a timely manner.” Specifically, the Commission’s vision and goals on equity are:

**Goal:** California’s community colleges will eliminate the achievement gap.

**Vision:** Access and success should regularly be monitored (by ethnicity and social class) and interventions to close achievement gaps between groups should be a campus priority.

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<sup>7</sup> California Community Colleges Chancellor’s Office. 2014. Student equity planning: fact sheet.



## Equity2014 Summit

In anticipation of equity funding from the state and as an effort to advocate for its full budgeting, last year the League organized a statewide, one-day equity summit in Oakland, California. Colleges were specifically invited to send three representatives to the summit. Over 160 college CEOs, faculty, staff, trustees, and special guests attended the event.

The message at the summit was that “California’s community colleges are leading the nation in data and attention to the issue of equity.” As Walter Bumphus, President of AACC noted, “California has the ‘best scorecard in the country’”.

CCC Chancellor Brice Harris and League President and CEO Scott Lay, among others, welcomed the attendees and set out the purpose and charge for the summit. Oakland’s Assembly representative, Rob Bonta, provided welcoming remarks.

The then-Chancellor’s Office (CO) Dean of Research, Analysis and Accountability Alice VanOmmeren presented the Scorecard data, while then-Vice Chancellor of Student Services, California Community Colleges Linda Michalowski provided information on the equity plan template that the colleges would need to use to submit their equity plans to the Chancellor’s Office by January 2015.

The summit also included a presentation by Thuy Thi Nguyen (General Counsel, Peralta Community College District) and Nitasha Sawhney (Partner, Garcia, Hernández, Sawhney & Bermudez, LLP) on diversity hiring with a slide that was tweeted several times titled “Don’t Let Prop 209 Get In The Way.”



Another powerful panel included representatives from outside organizations providing external perspectives: Estela Bensimon, USC Center for Urban Education; Ruben Lizardo, PolicyLink; Jessie Ryan, Campaign for College Opportunity; and Robert Shireman, California Competes. Dr. Manuel Pastor, Director of the Center on Environmental and Regional Equity, University of Southern California, delivered an inspiring luncheon speech, explaining with data why equity is not only the right thing to do, but also essential for a strong economy.

The day culminated with a group discussion on college commitments to further student equity. Comments included: merging a college's equity plan with its education master plan, reviving a college's faculty diversity hiring program, and initiating campus-wide conversations on equity.

### **Equity2015 Summit**

The League organized the second student equity summit in Los Angeles in May 2015. The two-day summit had over 210 attendees with the following theme:

***Equity2015 = I3***  
***Implement, Integrate, & Institutionalize Student Equity***

Each college was invited to send a team of three:

1. CEO (or designee);
2. Student equity plan coordinator; and
3. An individual who is best to help integrate and institutionalize student equity at your college. *This person could be a classified professional, faculty, student, administrator, or community member.*

Special invitations were also extended to members of the CCCT board, and leaders from the State Classified Senate, State Student Trustees, EOPS, Puente, Umoja, and the ethnic caucuses.

Opening speaker Michael Treviño (Director of Undergraduate Admissions for the University of California) shared his experience as a transfer student from Gavilan College to U.C. Berkeley. Mr. Treviño reminded us that although we should be proud of the success of our overall transfers, only 26% of the UC transfers are Underrepresented Minorities (URMs) and some CCCs enroll 2/3 URMs while their UC transfer percentages are the opposite. One of the panels was a “best-practices” presentation by three colleges that transfer a greater percentage of URM students than their percentage within each college's student population.

Vice Chancellor Denise Noldon and her team provided feedback on the equity plans to a standing-room-only audience, and Vice Chancellor Pam Walker joined Dr. Noldon in a later panel on the importance of integrating the Student Services and Instruction divisions within colleges.

Presenter Kimberly Papillon presented extensive studies of the brain that prove the prevalence of racial and gender bias in our country, and that such bias could even alter the DNA of victims for up to four generations. The session on the neuroscience of bias left some deeply moved at the revelation of such deep-seated bias; yet Ms. Papillon concluded on an optimistic note: There are ways to train our brains to reverse the bias, and community colleges can be instrumental in beginning this work at the local level.



Another session by Rod Fong focused on “stereotype threat” and “growth mindset” which explains how we can close the achievement gap by rethinking our approach to our students.

Drs. Ed Bush and Dyrell Foster from A<sup>2</sup>MEND conducted a session on how to have difficult campus conversations on race, and Dr. Truc HaMai (national winner of the dissertation-of-the-year award) presented her research on the isolation experienced by many minority women faculty members at several southern California community colleges. Premier constitutional rights scholar and UC Irvine Law School Dean, Erwin Chemerinsky, closed the summit with a speech on educational equity as the new civil right of our time.

The event also included what moderator Thuy Thi Nguyen (League Interim President and CEO) referred to as a “family conversation” with attendees. Details are summarized in a later section. The summit was planned for the first time in collaboration with many other statewide organizations: The Academic Senate for California Community Colleges offered two panels on the importance of faculty diversity and a focus on basic skills, and the Association of Chief Human Resource Officers facilitated a discussion on diversity hiring practices. Drs. Frank Harris III and J. Luke Wood of the Minority Male Community College Collaborative (M2C3) discussed ways to enhance access, achievement, and success among minority male students; and Santa Ana College, Chabot College’s Striving Black Brothers, and the Marcus Foster Education Fund presented on partnerships with non-profits and other educational entities.

Program and presentation materials: <http://www.ccleague.org/equity>

### **The League’s Survey on Equity**

Subsequent to the Equity2015 Summit, the League conducted an online survey that generated ninety responses from community college staff, faculty, administrators, and trustees on the topic of student equity. These comments are summarized in Section V on page 15.

## **The League’s Work on Veterans & Foster Students**

The League has always recognized that community colleges are the gateway to higher education for foster youth and veterans. Our institutions are a place where non-traditional students are able to obtain a ticket to the middle class. Through our strong support of increasing access to classes, providing counseling and support services, increasing the amount of financial aid these populations can receive and our focus on student success, thousands of foster youth and veterans have been able to obtain their college degree.

One example of the League’s advocacy is the Annual Legislative Conference, which provides a unique opportunity to connect with other advocates and learn the latest news on higher education in California. This year attendees had the opportunity to learn about the unique needs of veteran students, from receiving their GI Bill benefits to health issues stemming from their service and the challenges inherent in re-entering civilian life. Panelists Amy Utt, a Veterans Certification Specialist at Solano Community College, and Daniel Avegalio, a Veteran Services staff member at American River College, provided a snapshot of this population of students and discussed how their campuses are designing programs to help veterans succeed.

The League helped launch the Veteran’s Caucus of trustees and CEOs at its 2015 Annual Trustee Conference in Monterey.

## **The League’s Work in Connecting Equity with Legislation: Assembly Bill 288 Dual/Concurrent Enrollment**

The League consistently sets equity as a priority through its advocacy at the state level. Equity is one of the main lenses through which the League evaluates proposed legislation and sponsors bills.

For example, one of the major initiatives this year that the League sponsored is dual/concurrent enrollment through AB 288. While it may appear to be unrelated – on the assumption that concurrent enrollment is primarily for high-achieving students – a growing number of studies have singled out concurrent enrollment as having significant positive effects on increasing the numbers of students from underrepresented and low-socioeconomic backgrounds who receive either a BA or an AA degree. A 2012 report by the Community College Research Center evaluated the success of the Concurrent Course Initiative and found that “the participating students — those facing serious barriers to education and advancement — had better high school and college outcomes than comparison students”<sup>8</sup>. The League recognized that California’s concurrent enrollment laws present many unnecessary barriers to access, especially for minority students. By focusing on removing the statutory barriers that limit many students’ access to this effective program, we can provide more equitable opportunities to all students so that they can begin college course work early, save money, and build their “academic self-esteem” as they see themselves as actual college students.

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<sup>8</sup> Broadening the Benefits of Dual Enrollment (Community College Research Center [CCRC], Columbia University Teachers College, 2012)

Further, a 2007 report described as “one of the most comprehensive to date” examined concurrent enrollment programs in Florida and New York City. This study found that students – especially male students, students from low-income families, and those who struggled academically in high school – benefit the most from concurrent enrollment. The findings from this report and several other major studies<sup>9</sup> indicate that, when they have access to concurrent enrollment classes, these students are:

- More likely to graduate from high school
- More likely to meet college readiness benchmarks
- More likely to transition to a four-year college (rather than a two-year college) and to do so shortly after high school graduation
- Less likely to take basic skills courses in college
- More likely to persist in postsecondary education
- More likely to accumulate more college credits than comparison students.

By approaching legislative advocacy through an equity lens, we can enact policies for community colleges that provide a fair and just distribution of resources and opportunities for individuals, social systems that are sustainable and that support all people, and make a bold and courageous long-term commitment to addressing barriers to equity in and between individuals, institutions and systems.

## Section IV—Stakeholder Organizations’ Commitment to Student Equity

The Community College League has not been alone in its work to promote student equity; indeed, the compounded efforts of many community college advocates have led to the advances made in the past few years. Below is a snapshot of other equity-focused events that have occurred over the past year.

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<sup>9</sup> *Increasing Student Access and Success in Dual Enrollment Programs: 13 Model State-Level Policy Components*. Jennifer Dounay Zinth. Education Commission of the States. February 2014.  
*Broadening the Benefits of Dual Enrollment: Reaching Underachieving and Underrepresented Students with Career-Focused Programs*. Hughes, Katherine L., et al. Community College Research Center, Teachers College Columbia. 2012.  
*Ramp-Up to college in California: A Statewide Strategy to Improve College Readiness and Comprehensive Dual Enrollment*. Michael Kirst et al. WestEd, March 2009.  
*The Postsecondary Achievement of Participants in Dual Enrollment: An analysis of Student Outcomes in Two States*. Melinda Mechur Karp et al. National Research Center for Career and Technical Education, University of Minnesota. October 2007.



## **Academic Senate**

The Academic Senate hosts an annual conference focused on a different issue or trend affecting community colleges and the students they serve. This year's Academic Academy, titled "Subverting Silos: Collaboration for Student Success and Equity," engaged faculty and administrators in conversations around student support and equity interventions and programs. Highlights included an institutional researcher panel, comments from the California Community Colleges Chancellor's Office, and breakout session topics which ranged from the meaning of cultural competency to strategies for a student voice in equity initiatives. The conference was very well received and had record attendance.

More information can be found at: <http://www.asccc.org/events/2015-03-13-070000-2015-03-14-070000/2015-academic-academy>

## **Faculty Association of California Community Colleges (FACCC)**

The Faculty Association of California Community Colleges' annual Advocacy & Policy Conference took place this year on March 1-2. Dr. Tyrone Howard, Professor of Education at UCLA, delivered the keynote address titled *The Struggle for Equity in California Community Colleges*. One notable panel addressed the following question: What is the Future of Student Services in the Era of Student Equity? Attendees benefited from the experience of Fabio Gonzalez with CCCEOPSA, Dr. Cynthia Mosqueda from El Camino College, Scott Hamilton from Disability Support Programs and Services, and Denise Noldon from the California Community Colleges Chancellor's Office.

## **Minority Male Community College Collaborative**

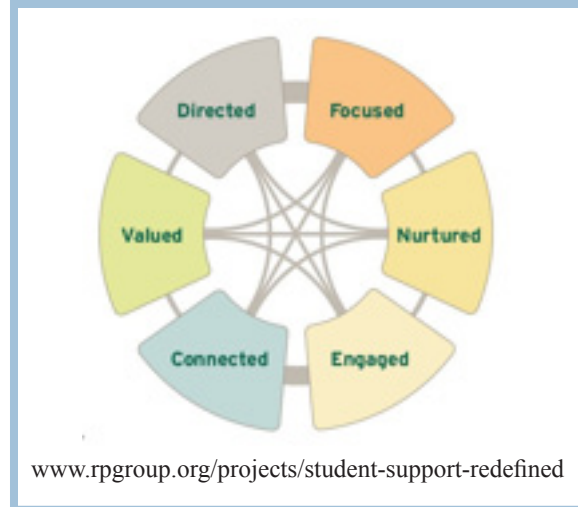
In February of 2015 the Minority Male Community College Collaborative invited the League to participate as an affiliate partner in the national consortium on college men of color. The purpose of the consortium is to provide capacity-building support to colleges to advance outcomes for historically underrepresented and underserved men. To this end, consortium partners have the opportunity to:

- Access webinars on men of color
- Participate in information-sharing sessions
- Take part in the consortium discussion board
- Attend the working group meeting

## **The Research and Planning Group for California Community Colleges**

The Research and Planning (RP) Group provides research, evaluation, professional development, and technical assistance services that support evidence-based decision-making and inquiry. From 2011 to 2014 the RP group conducted a study titled *Student Support (Re)defined*, the goal of which was to understand how community colleges can deliver support to improve outcomes for all students. The following six factors were identified as effective support practices:

1. Directed: Students have a goal and know how to achieve it
2. Focused: Students stay on track
3. Nurtured: Students feel somebody wants and helps them to succeed
4. Engaged: Students actively participate in class and extracurricular activities
5. Connected: Students feel like they are part of the college community
6. Valued: Students' skills, talents, abilities, and experiences are recognized



In addition to these six effective practices, the RP Group cited five distinct themes, with particular emphasis on providing “comprehensive support to historically-underserved student to prevent the equity gap from growing. Comprehensive support is more likely to address the multiple academic, financial, social, and personal needs identified by African-American, Latino, and first-generation participants in this study. Colleges must continue to provide comprehensive support to these student groups – at scale.”

## A<sup>2</sup>MEND

The African American Male Education Network and Development (A<sup>2</sup>MEND) held its annual conference on March 5-6 in Los Angeles with more than 500 students, classified professionals, faculty, and administrators. Founded by an inspiring group of African American male administrators, A<sup>2</sup>MEND’s mission is to “amend” the inequities faced by African American male students in higher education. Our dedicated League staff assisted with conference logistics, and League’s Interim President/CEO Thuy Nguyen gave the welcoming remarks.

## Section V—Observations in the Past Year

People are tired of talking; they want to see action and results. People also expressed concerns whether the funding would be continuous. These have been the most consistent observation in the past year around student equity.

### Chancellor’s Office

As the system-level oversight board of the California Community Colleges, the Chancellor’s Office was charged by the California Legislature to review all Student Equity Plans and identify colleges that are excelling in their work, as well as colleges that need more guidance. Denise Noldon, Debra Sheldon, and Pam Walker presented some of the promising practices that emerged from careful review of the plans.

- 1. Institution-Wide Initiatives:** Some of the most promising plans intentionally incorporated equity across all sectors of the institution, beginning with the Education Master Plan. Other strategies include conducting a campus climate survey, updating the college website to emphasize goal completion, providing faculty and staff development, integrating equity planning into district resource allocation, and improving data collection and research for foster youth, veterans, and low-income students.
- 2. Access:** Many colleges identified the following interventions as ways to support access: increasing applications and use of financial aid for target groups and collecting qualitative data from affected students on the barriers they face and what has helped them to succeed, then disseminating the results campus-wide. A couple of examples of more innovative strategies included: revising outreach materials and websites into target group languages and reaching out to faith-based communities frequented by target groups to better understand student barriers and possible solutions.
- 3. Course Completion & ESL:** In order to increase course completion it is necessary to integrate student equity planning with basic skills. The following three interventions were identified as strategies to that end: publicizing bachelor's degree pathways and economic benefits to high school and community college students, increasing tutoring and supplemental instruction, and providing acceleration in math, English, and ESL programs. Additional resources could also be directed to better preparation for placement tests and conducting research on early alert and revision processes.
- 4. Degrees & Certificates:** Completion of a degree or certificate is a strong measure of student success. It is therefore imperative that colleges ensure that opportunities and outcomes are equitable across student populations. The following activities were highlighted in the session: promoting scheduling practices to eliminate gaps in pathways to facilitate completion of academic goals, scheduling more evening courses if institutional research indicates it will improve outcomes among target groups, develop student communication management systems to notify them of deadlines, and target counseling activities to students who lack a comprehensive education plan. Additionally, implementing year-end celebrations may improve the campus climate regarding degree completion.
- 5. Transfer:** One of the fundamental missions of California Community Colleges is to prepare students to transfer to one of the four-year sectors of higher education in the state with the goal of increasing bachelor's degree attainment. The following proposed activities have the potential to create more equitable outcomes for transfer: improving messaging to students about the benefits of transfer, promoting Associate Degrees for Transfer to targeted student groups, and promoting collaboration among instructional and counseling groups.



## **Leadership (Trustees and CEOs)**

At their March and April 2015 board meetings, both CEOs and Trustees were asked to comment on the opportunities they have seen as a result of equity funds. One of the concerns voiced was that student equity money has strict requirements for use of the funds; broadening the availability of funds would allow colleges to make decisions based on the unique needs of their campus. Additionally, integrating equity plans with SSSP, basic skills, education master plans, and annual program reviews will create an institutional culture of student equity. The use of data was also highlighted in several different ways. The CEO board was mindful of the need to show the Legislature that their investment in student equity is producing outcomes; to this end, it will be important for colleges to track both the short- and long-term effects of their planned interventions. The CCCT board suggested monitoring the research being conducted by work groups at several UC and CSU campuses.

## **Membership (The Colleges)**

### ***Lunch Conversation***

On the second day of the 2015 Equity Summit, Interim President Thuy Thi Nguyen began a productive lunch discussion by posing two questions to participants. She began by asking about the opportunities now available to the colleges due to equity funding. The following themes emerged as volunteers offered anecdotes: increased outreach, collaboration, and institutionalization of equity. Colleges have been able to form partnerships with local high schools in order to recruit students, and one college was able to identify an intervention that would help disabled students receive the accommodations necessary to learn beginning the first day of class. Other colleges used funds to merge their campus equity plan with the institution's diversity and education master plans, thereby instituting a college-wide climate of equity.

Participants were also asked to comment on the message to the League on the role of leadership in achieving student equity. Attendees noted that equity needs to be the system's "mantra" so that it will be embedded and implemented throughout every college; the proposed "litmus test" of success would be the degree to which each individual helps to build collaboration on his/her campus.

It was suggested that boards of trustees need to look at the systemic policies with "fierceness" to align our institutions with the needs of our diverse student bodies, while CEOs should deliberately and consciously make the effort at each institution to change practices, pedagogy, and policies. It was also suggested that CEOs need training in equity issues and should be encouraged to consider evaluations and accountability at their institutions in the evaluation of employees. In doing so, they need to "think to scale" so that many students will be impacted. A faculty member who also serves as the affirmative action chair on campus urged those in administration to carve out time on every campus so that all staff can learn about equity and gain some practical knowledge about their unique role.

## *Survey*

When asked about the opportunities that were created due to equity funding, respondents were quick to point out that the funding allowed for much-needed professional development. As one individual noted, these opportunities helped to “educate the college community more about equity and diversity as well as to encourage the community to be more equity- and diversity-minded.” Other examples included: attendance at conferences, creation of staff speaking events on campus, and scaled-up faculty mentoring. Another popular response was related to faculty and staff hiring. Several respondents noted the funding allowed for the creation of a new associate dean position for a student success and equity position, and several others made hiring an institutional researcher a top priority. Equity dollars were also allocated to existing programs, particularly EOPS, Puente, and MESA. Some campuses chose to assist those not qualified for EOPS through book grants and meal vouchers. Other popular activities included expansion of Summer Bridge and First Year Experience Programs, increased tutoring opportunities, and expanded hours of operation for student services.

Summit participants were also asked to comment on the role of leadership, particularly by CEOs and trustees, in achieving student equity. The following is a summary of the most common recommendations.

- 1. Role of Instructors:** As one respondent noted, teachers are “in the trenches” with students. This relationship should be maximized by inviting instructors to serve as liaisons between administrators and students.
- 2. Common vision:** In order to improve success and equity outcomes, it is necessary to work across campuses and disciplines with the goal of developing a common vision and direction for implementation. Leadership needs to take a more active role within each district, beginning with visits to colleges to gain a sense of campus culture and speak with student and staff representatives. Additionally, the League should make an effort to elect leadership that reflects the student body.
- 3. Funding:** As was indicated by responses to the first survey question, the funding provided by the Legislature has opened opportunities for innovations surrounding student equity. In order to retain progress, the League needs to continue advocating for equity dollars. Making timelines more flexible and providing sufficient time for planning will allow colleges to make fiscally responsible decisions when considering activities and interventions. Additionally, attempts should be made to combine categorical grants in order to improve outcomes.

## Section VI—Recommendations

The League’s work on equity, especially since the introduction of equity funding by the Governor in January 2014, compels us as staff to make the following ten recommendations. These recommendations, by all means, are not an exhaustive list, and our goal is not to be prescriptive in their implementation. They are based on our observations of statewide activities, conversations with our boards and membership, lessons learned from the League’s two equity summits, and discussions with legislators and legislative staff. We offer these recommendations not to suggest that it is strictly the responsibility of the League, but instead a collective responsibility for our system to consider and implement the recommendations that are useful on each campus or in each organization.

### **Implicit Bias**

We urge every college to educate their staffs about “implicit bias” – the process by which our brains “activate” or respond to others unconsciously – and its importance in making judgments when we are unaware of it.

Neuroscience shows that our brains are complex with some portions capable of making better judgments than others. We all make assumptions (or implicit judgements) about others without a conscious process and those assumptions/biases color our decisions about individuals based on their race, gender, sexual orientation, and/or other characteristics that we may find more or less positive. Once we are aware of these important mechanisms, we can begin to change our reactions by becoming more rigorous and methodical about our decisions. Then, we can find objective factors for making judgments if we care enough to activate the “correct” portions of our brains. Implicit bias is insidious, but it can be overcome with effort.

### **Financial Aid**

Community college students have been consistently underserved by the state’s Cal Grant system, and as a result, their ability to be successful has been impaired. Despite the population at community colleges being the most socio-economically needy in the state and comprising over two-thirds of the student population, they receive only six percent of the resources awarded via the state’s Cal Grant system. Financial aid is crucial to helping college students work fewer hours and therefore focus on their classes, attend full time, and ultimately be more academically successful. To reform Cal Grants to fit the needs of community college students, the League recommends three items. The following items all focus on either increasing the number or value of the competitive Cal Grant Access award, the only portion of the Cal Grant system that is available to community college students:

1. Increase the access grant of Cal Grant B. Designed to help students pay for living expenses, the current award level of \$1,648 is too low. If the access award had kept up with inflation since it was originally implemented in the early 1970s, it would be worth over \$6,000 today.
2. Increase the number of competitive Cal Grants – Competitive Cal Grants are awarded to very needy students who do not meet the criteria for entitlement Cal Grants. With over 300,000 qualified applicants for 22,500 awards, it is currently significantly harder to receive an award than to gain admission to UC Berkeley.
3. Extend the window of eligibility for entitlement Cal Grants. Currently, students only have one year after graduating from high school to apply for the entitlement Cal Grant. Increasingly, community college students are non-traditional students who enter the workforce before attending college. This artificial window reduces the ability of community college students who would otherwise qualify for financial aid to receive much needed resources.

## **Faculty Hiring**

Dr. Robert Fairlie, Professor and Chair of Economics at UC Santa Cruz, conducted a recent study looking at the overall performance of minority students taught by minority instructors at De Anza Community College District and excluded “recreational” classes. Dr. Fairlie reported that minority students that are taught by a minority instructor are less likely to drop a class, more likely to pass, and more likely to pass with a B or higher. He and his team of researchers also found that the the long-run benefits of minority students being taught by minority instructors include taking subsequent courses in the same subject, choosing a major, improving retention, and increasing the number of degrees attained. Performance gap drop by at least 20% when a minority student has a minority instructor.<sup>10</sup>

As a front-line employee, a quality professor is central to the ability of a student to achieve his or her academic goals. In the early 1980s, the community college system set a goal of having 75% of the hours of credit instruction taught by full-time faculty, on the assumption that the colleges would receive significantly more resources to hire those faculty. For several years the state made investments in faculty, but stopped during the recession of the early 1990s. As a result, the system has made little progress towards meeting its goal.

This has changed with the 2015-16-budget year, with the state investing over \$60 million in faculty. Colleges should use these new resources to hire qualified, diverse professors who can make an impact on their students. In return, the state should continue to recognize the importance of faculty and continue to invest in them.

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<sup>10</sup> Fairlie, R. W., Hoffman, F., Oreopoulos, P. (2014). *A Community College Instructor Like Me: Race and Ethnicity Interactions in the Classroom*. *American Economic Review*, 104(8): 2567-2591

Faculty stakeholders share in the commitment for increased diversity among faculty ranks. Yet, State Academic Senate President David Morse stated that there is now an expectation that colleges need to go beyond talk and instead implement concrete programs to diversify the faculty ranks. Partnerships with UCs and CSUs teaching programs have been presented. Another possibility is a “growing our own” program that would have community colleges train our already diverse student population and classified professionals to become community college teachers similar to the 2+2+3 Community College Law Pathway initiative to diversify the legal profession.

## **Enrollment Policies**

There are many steps students have to complete to enroll in community college classes — such as taking a placement test or even finding the course catalog — that are often overlooked in efforts to increase enrollment and persistence. Many of these steps can be particularly large barriers for underrepresented and lower-income students. Indeed, developing a more effective suite of enrollment policies must begin with the observation that each step in the process represents a site for policy intervention— interventions that, if properly crafted, can help students along the path to completion. Such interventions may include frequency of enrollment, ease of enrollment for disabled or English-language learners, or even equitable access to online registration tools. The easier it is for students to enroll, plan and match their college schedule to their education plan, the greater the chance that a student will complete his/her education.

## **Basic Skills Reform: Common Assessment/Accelerated Placement**

The number of high school students who enroll in college after graduation is on the rise. Many students, however, are surprised to discover they have failed placement tests and must enroll in basic skills, or remedial, courses. This detour from college-level courses can be costly in terms of both time and money. We encourage an in-depth review of college-level policies and practices in basic skills to ensure that colleges are not unknowingly placing and keeping greater proportions of underrepresented and low-socioeconomic students in basic skills courses. Recent investments in basic skills research indicate that acceleration can lead to increased skill mastery and completion

Large research studies inside and outside California have established that the more levels of developmental courses a student must take, the less likely the student is to ever complete college courses in English and Math. The California Acceleration Project’s (CAP) research indicates that this is more attributable to our curricular sequences than to students’ low skills or low motivation. The CAT research also shows significant decreases in achievement gaps with accelerated placement for underrepresented students. Therefore, we urge colleges to reform basic skills classes by reducing the length of English and Math sequences as well as the exit points in which students are lost by not passing, or not enrolling in, courses in the pipeline.

We urge the support of the Common Assessment Initiative, as it will develop a Common Assessment System for all California Community Colleges and their students. The Common Assessment System will include test preparation, test delivery, test administration, data collection,

and course placement guidance, and will use centralized and integrated technology solutions to support assessment and placement. The initiative includes a Multiple Measures Assessment Project whereby 15 MMAP colleges/districts will be piloting the multiple measures model in Spring 2014 and Fall 2015. Preliminary results showed a reduction in the number of students being placed in all developmental levels and an increase in the number of students being placed in transfer-level English and math, with remarkable improvements for underrepresented students.<sup>11</sup>

### **College/Career Pipelines**

The experience of the last decade tells us that serious improvement in equity must consider not only the classroom but also the entire system within which education takes place. Colleges have the opportunity to reduce inequity in access by developing seamless college and career pathways and providing all willing students the opportunity to participate in them. Key partners in this effort are high schools (the source of most of our students) and four-year universities (the destination of many of our students). A major focus should be to eliminate barriers that restrict access to college pathway programs for students from ethnic, racial, and socioeconomic groups that have been traditionally underserved. Our goal should be to provide all students with access to academically challenging coursework that can increase both their time-to-completion and their workforce competitiveness.

### **Dual/Concurrent Enrollment**

Research shows that students who participate in dual enrollment programs have higher high school graduation rates, take fewer remedial courses upon entering college, and are more likely to attend and persist in college than their peers. According to Rog air Purnell, Senior Researcher for the Research and Planning Group, “Dual enrollment has become a viable and effective method to prepare any student – even those who may have struggled academically and who may have had no initial interest in pursuing a postsecondary degree or credential – to complete high school and enter college.”<sup>12</sup> With the hopeful passage of Assembly Bill 288, we believe eliminating barriers such as the 11-unit cap would promote more student success data. The League therefore recommends that stakeholders advocate for launching or expanding dual enrollment programs for underrepresented minority (URM) populations.

### **Integration with Student Success Center & Development of a Database and List of Trainers on Equity**

We urge development of a database on equity and its integration with the Student Success Center’s database within the Chancellor’s Office. In addition, we believe that a strong group of “trainers,” similar to those participating in the Institutional Effectiveness Partnership Initiative

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<sup>11</sup> <http://cccassess.org/>

<sup>12</sup> Purnell, R. (2014). *A guide to launching and expanding dual enrollment programs for historically underserved students in California*. Berkeley, CA: Research and Planning Group for California Community Colleges in collaboration with the California Community Colleges Chancellor’s Office and the San Joaquin Delta Community College District, Stockton, CA.

(IEPI), should be developed so that individual colleges can request assistance in determining additional efforts that would lead to greater equity on those campuses.

### **College-level, Institutional Collaboration**

A common concern voiced by League membership is that unless the appropriate people are brought to the table while the equity plans are being developed, nothing will change at the campus. In fact, some colleges have gone so far as to directly address this *within* their equity plans by requiring certain representatives to be part of the writing process. The following groups have been highlighted as especially important:

- **Students:** In order to serve students effectively it is necessary to first understand them. Having at least one student representative at the table will help ensure that interventions are both actionable and prioritized correctly.
- **Instructional Faculty:** All too often the system relies on Student Services staff to craft institutional policy. However, given that the majority of a student's time is spent in the classroom, both part- and full-time faculty provide critical insight into the needs of their students and the realities of inequities that exist within learning environments.
- **Diverse Faculty and Staff:** Data shows that colleges in which faculty diversity mirrors the diversity on campus produce better outcomes for students. Prioritizing participation from these faculty members will help produce effective interventions within the classroom.
- **Student Interest Group Representatives:** Student interest groups represent a space where minority and underserved students have the opportunity to voice the challenges they face and work within a community toward solutions. Colleges would be wise to leverage these conversations already occurring on their campus.

### **System-wide, Evidence-based “Courageous” Conversations**

One of the primary goals of this paper is to begin system-wide discussions about the challenges facing our colleges and the opportunities for ongoing change. In order to be effective, these conversations need to occur not just once; instead, equity needs to drive every conversation and student success needs to be the goal. The funding tied to student equity and the existence of a robust Scorecard program have ushered in a new era of data-driven accountability. It is therefore our responsibility as a system to utilize this evidence to test our assumptions and move from broad-stroke actions to targeted interventions.

What makes these conversations sometimes challenging is that they require us to reflect on *our own shortcomings* and the dynamic that race, ethnicity, and gender may play in our policies and practices.



