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ABSTRACT
                In 1977, the State Board of Governors adopted
legislation mandating the establishment of advisory committees for
handicapped student programs and services in California community
colleges. In fall 1980, a statewide survey was conducted to
investigate the current operational structure and activities of these
committees. Program coordinators at 106 California community colleges
were asked to provide information on their characteristics; the
characteristics of advisory committee members; the organizational
structure of the committees; present and past emphases in committee
activities; and committee problems, effectiveness, and functions.
Selected findings, based on responses from 83 colleges, include the
following: (1) respondents worked in colleges with an average
enrollment of 10,995 students serving an average of 337 handicapped
students; (2) while faculty and staff composed the largest group of
committee members, other groups were adequately represented; (3)
71.1% of the committees lacked written by-laws; (4) during 1980-81,
committee activities focused primarily on improving program
operations and curriculum and instruction; and (5) major problems
were identified as lack of a clearly defined committee role, member
apathy, and lack of attendance. Recommendations, based on these and
other findings, called for a clearer definition of committee roles,
chairpersons from outside the college staff, greater community
representation, more convenient meeting times, training sessions for
new and continuing members, and statewide guidelines. (HB)

COMMUNITY COLLEGE HANDICAPPED
STUDENT PROGRAMS AND ADVISORY
COMMITTEES

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to investigate the current operational structure and activities of mandatory citizen advisory committees for Handicapped Student Programs and Services in the public community colleges in California.

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COMMITTEES

In 1980, the most recent estimate indicated that more than a million parents and other citizens belonged to some 60,000 school advisory committees which had been formed in the last 10 years. The largest number of these committees were mandated by federal legislation aimed at special target groups such as low income, bilingual, and handicapped students (Davies, 1980). The intent of this article was to investigate advisory committees for such a target group. Specifically, advisory committees in California Community Colleges for handicapped students was explored.

In the California Community Colleges, the mandate for the establishment of advisory committees for handicapped student programs and services was initiated in 1977 by the State Board of Governors. The law they adopted stated simply that an advisory committee must be established and that the committee must be composed of representatives determined by program needs. The law did not indicate any additional requirements for the operations of advisory committees and therefore delegated any operational decisions to the program coordinator. Subsequently, there has been no operative system designed to ensure quality in the organizational structure or activities of the advisory committees.

METHOD

The purpose of this study was to investigate the current operational structure and activities of mandatory citizen advisory committees for Handi-

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capped Student Programs and Services in the public community colleges in
California. Various research questions were developed and were used to
direct this research. A statewide survey was mailed in fall, 1980, to 106
program coordinators working at the various public community colleges. Infor-
mation was received from 88 or 83.0 percent of the colleges. Multi-college
districts which operate a district-wide advisory committee were eliminated
from the sample, leaving 83 valid cases, or 78.3 percent, of the 106
California Community colleges. The following is a brief summary of the major
areas of the findings.

<div align="center">RESULTS</div>

Respondent Characteristics. Most of the respondents had the job
title of program coordinator or enabler and had worked in that position on
an average of 4.75 years, and were assigned to the Handicapped Student
Programs and Services an average of 12.10 years in education.

The respondents worked in community colleges with an average size
of 10,995 students and served an average of 337 handicapped students. The
majority of the community colleges served communities which were either
urban and suburban.

Characteristics of Advisory Committee Members. Individuals repre-
senting the college staff or faculty composed the largest group of advisory
committee membership. In rank order, other representatives included private
non-profit agencies, other educational institutions, students, state and
federal agencies, business and industry, consumer groups for the handicapped,
parents, and members of the general public. The membership of the advisory
committees represented the communities they served.

The majority of the advisory committee members were appointed by college personnel. In 7.2 percent of the committees, members were selected with advisory committee input. Generally, there were no written criteria for the selection of committee members. On the average, advisory committee members served 2.5 year terms and meeting attendance averaged 75.21 percent of the members. Most of the committee work was reported to be done by the same few members, and the members generally did not divide into different factions on most issues. Members were also untrained for their committee role.

Organizational Structure of Existing Advisory Committees. Findings indicated that there were some advisory committees organized for each disability group but the majority of the colleges operated a total program advisory committee. Very few colleges organized specific advisory committees for individual groups. The majority of the respondents disagreed with the statement that an advisory committee for each disability group should be organized at each college.

In the total sample, the average zise of each of the different types of advisory committees ranged from 11.50 to 14.88 members. Some 68.7 percent of the respondents reported that they had a written statement or purpose. Only 37.3 percent of the respondents had written reporting procedures. Some 45.8 percent of the advisory committee recommendations were submitted directly to the program coordinator. Seventy percent of the respondents indicated that the advisory committee should operate independently of the College Board of Governors.

Some 71.1 percent of the committees did not have written by-laws. There were mixed opinions about the need for written by-laws with 40.9 percent

indicating that a committee should not have by-laws, and 19.3 percent were
undecided about the issue.

Almost all advisory committees had meeting agendas and 69.9 percent
of the agendas were prepared by either the program coordinator or by the
program staff and coordinator. Only 19.2 percent of the agenda preparation
involved advisory committee members. In 84.4 percent of the committees, the
recordkeeping activities were performed by college personnel. In 4.8 per-
cent of the committees, the recordkeeping activities were performed by
college personnel. In 4.8 percent of the committees, the recordkeeping
activities were performed by a committee member.

Respondents were asked to indicate which person had the most power
or influence in the committee. The program coordinator had the most power-
influence with the committee chairperson being the next most influential
person in the group. Respondents were asked to indicate which person per-
formed the activities of committee chairperson, and in 63.9 percent of the
committees, the program coordinator acted as the committee chairperson. In
24.1 percent of the committees, the chairperson was chosen from the committee
members. Some 22.9 percent of the advisory committee chairpersons were
elected, 19.3 percent volunteered for the job, and 41.0 percent were appointed.
Some 64.7 percent of the appointed chairpersons were self-appointed, and 11.8
percent were appointed by the superintendent/president. Interestingly, when
asked if the advisory committee should be controlled by the program coordi-
nator, 27.7 percent agreed with the statement, 40.9 percent disagreed with
the statement, and 21.7 percent were undecided.

When looking at committee decisions, 50.6 percent of the respondents

felt that advisory committee members should not enforce all committee decisions, and 84 percent felt that reports from dissenting members should be allowed. When making committee decisions, 60.2 percent of the committees used a simple majority vote.

Actual Operations of the Advisory Committees. Some 21.7 percent of the responding colleges did not hold an advisory committee meeting during the 1979-80 point school year. The remaining colleges held 2.23 meetings per year. Sixty-two point seven percent of the colleges which operated a committee held from one to three meetings per year lasting on an average of 2.14 hours in length. The majority of the meetings were held in the early and late afternoon with 24.1 percent being held in the mornings or at noon. Only 4.8 percent of the committees held meetings at night. Almost all of the committees met on campus. Only 28.9 percent of the colleges operated subcommittees.

Respondents were asked their opinions as to whether advisory committees should meet more often. Twenty point five percent felt the committees should meet more often. Thirty-seven point three percent felt that they should not meet more often and 30.5 percent were undecided. Six percent of the respondents felt that advisory committees should not continue to operate with the majority of the remaining respondents favoring the continuation of advisory committees.

Issues and Activities of Advisory Committees. Fifty-eight percent of the respondents felt that the advisory committees should deal with short range specific purpose issues, and that new items not on the agenda should be open to discussion by the committee. The majority of the agenda items dealt with during the 1979-80 school year centered around program improvement

in·such areas as student services, program operations, curriculum content and instruction, and architectural barriers. Other issues dealt with the community public relations, community public relations, community resource coordination, committee organization, legal issues, program evaluation, and student activities. Interestingly, very few committees dealt with their own committee operations or organizations. Issues anticipated for the 1980-81 school year showed a slight shift of emphasis away from items dealing with student services and architectural barriers to a shift toward more items dealing with program operations and curriculum and instruction.

Respondents indicated that advisory committees took enough time to complete tasks well and usually met deadlines. Responsents also felt that reasonable deadlines were assigned to committees.

Some 69.9 percent of the colleges did not have a formal training program for advisory committee members, however, 47:0 percent of the respondents felt that there should be formal training programs. Interestingly, 85.6 percent of the respondents felt that advisory committee members should be aware of the college financial situation.

Problems of Advisory Committees. The major problems reported by the respondents were members' role definition, member apathy, members' attendance at scheduled meetings, members' communications, members' powerless feelings, members dividing into factions of control, members' lack of specific program knowledge, and members feeling too much time was required. Thirty-six percent of the respondents did not list any problems in their advisory committees.

Effectiveness of Advisory Committees. Some 48.2 percent of the respondents indicated that advisory committees were given little respect or power, but almost all of the respondents felt that advisory committees im-

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prove school and community relations. Respondents reported that members
should not always expect school officials to accept all of their recommen-
dations, however, 78.3 percent of the respondents indicated that school
officials usually or always accepted advisory committee recommendations.
Respondents had mixed opinions as to whether advisory committee recommenda-
tions should be implemented by school officials, some 44.4 percent indicated
that school officials should implement committee recommendations, 21.7 per-
cent indicated they should not implement committee recommendations, and
21.7 percent were undecided on the issue.

The advisory committees had the most influence on the handicapped
program staff, and next, on the special education teaching faculty. They
had little influence on the College Board of Governors.

Opinions of Respondents. The strongest opinion expressed by the
respondents concerned the statements that (1) advisory committee members
should be aware of the college's financial situation, (2) meetings should be
open to discussion about new issues not included on the agenda, (3) reports
from dissenting members should be permitted, (4) committees should operate
independently of the Board of Governors, and (5) committees should continue
to operate. The majority of the respondents agreed or strongly agreed with
these statements.

Respondents were most divided on the following statements that (1)
advisory committees should deal with short range specific purpose issues,
(2) committee recommendations should be implemented by school officials,
(3) committees should have a formal training program for members, and (4)
committees should have written by-laws. The majority of the members agreed
or were undecided about the statements.

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Respondents were also more divided on the following statements that,
(1) advisory committees should be controlled by the program coordinator,
(2) committees should meet more often, (3) committee members should endorse
all committee decisions, (4) committees for each disability group served
should be organized at each college, and (5) advisory committee members
should expect school officials to accept all of their recommendations. The
majority of the respondents disagreed or were undecided with these statements.

DISCUSSION

The majority of the committees were total program advisory committees
with very little written organizational structure. The program coordinators
appeared to completely control the committees and were responsible for pre-
paring meeting agendas, selecting members, recordkeeping activities, and
chairing committee meetings. The lack of specific state guidelines may
have encouraged this type of organizational structure.

The fact that 21.7 percent of the respondents did not operate an
advisory committee during the 1979-80 school year indicated a lack of interest
in advisory committees by those respondents. The average size of the
committees was similar to findings of other studies. Since the committees
were controlled by the program coordinator, day-time meetings during working
hours and only two meetings held per year were the results.

Most of the committees operated without written membership criteria
and most of the members were chosen by the program coordinator or college
staff. Consequently, the-largest single group represented on the committee
was the college staff and faculty. However, adequate representation of
other groups and individuals did exist in the committee, which confirms that
program coordinators were following the state guidelines on suggested

committee membership.

The two major problems of the advisory committee centered around the members' role definition and member apathy. Finding a suitable meeting time was another problem reported by the respondents along with the problem of members' communication, members' feeling powerless, members' dividing into factions of control, members' lacking of knowledge, and members' feeling that too much time was required.

Advisory committees appeared to be relatively effective at the respective community college campuses since it was reported that committee recommendations were usually accepted by school officials. Advisory committees also appeared to impact the handicapped program staff and the special education faculty more than other groups on campus. Beyond this direct program impact, advisory committees had little effect on the rest of the campus as a whole and almost no impact on the college Board of Governors.

The issues which advisory committees dealt with during 1979-80 centered around services provided to the student. The shift in 1980-81 was toward improving program operations and the curriculum and instruction. Programs and services for the handicapped have seen a steady rise in the amount of services and sophistication of programs since the early days of the handicapped programs. Similarly, the shifts in advisory committee agenda items have demonstrated this change. For example, once architectural barriers were identified and eliminated, for further discussion was needed. In 1979-80, 9.2 percent of the agenda items dealt with architectural barriers and only 7.6 percent of those agenda items were anticipated for 1980-81. Similarly, items dealing with the delivery of student services went from 28.5 percent of the agenda items in 1979-80 to 25.6 percent of the antici-

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pated agenda items for 1980-81. To repeat, once services were implemented less discussion was needed.

On the other hand, items which dealt with program operations went from 20.9 percent of the agenda items in 1979-80 to 25.2 percent of the anticipated agenda items for 1980-81 and items which dealt with curriculum and instruction went from 19.7 percent of the agenda items in 1979-80 to 23.1 percent of the anticipated items for 1980-81. These shifts indicated that programs now provide basic services and the emphasis of advisory committees has moved toward improving the quality and sophistication of the services and the academic programs.

Respondents generally favored the continuation of advisory committees, separate from the formal Board, organized on an informal basis which allowed for the discussion of new issues not on agenda, and which dealt with short range specific purpose, issues. Respondents did not desire more advisory committee meetings and did not want separate committees for each disability group. Respondents indicated that the program coordinator should not control the advisory committee. Interestingly, the majority of the committees were controlled by the program coordinator.

On the issue of committee recommendations, the respondents expressed the opinion that recommendations should be implemented by school officials but indicated that committee members should not expect school officials to accept all of their recommendations. The respondents also indicated that committee members should not endorse all committee decisions, and that reports from dissenting members should be permitted.

Based upon the above findings, the authors would like to make the following recommendations. We believe the instituting of these ideas will

lead to successful functioning of advisory committees involved with community college handicapped programs and services.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1.) Advisory committees for Handicapped Student Programs and Services should be better organized with more written directives such as a statement of purpose, by-laws, membership criteria, and reporting procedures. This study found that advisory committees lacked written directives.

2.) Advisory committees for Handicapped Student Programs and Services should have chairpersons chosen from outside the college staff. A more effective model of advisory committees structure involved a committee chairperson chosen from the community. The type and quality of advice produced by an advisory committee reflected the community which the college was serving when the chairperson was chosen from the community.

3.) Individuals responsible for membership selecting should attempt to have a better balance of members representing the community. The finding this study found that the largest groups of representatives were from the community. Larger percentages of community representations could produce a more community responsive committee.

4.) Holding meetings during evening hours, and holding luncheon meetings at the college expense should also be explored as a means of increasing attendance. This study found that meetings were held at the educators' convenience and not at the convenience of community members.

5.) Training sessions for new and continuing advisory committee members should be developed. Very few existing committees operated formal training programs. Many of the coordinators expressed that they would like their members to be aware of the college financial situation and to make

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appropriate recommendations, however, they fail to train their members.
Topics could include members' responsibilities, reporting procedures, and
college and program operations.

6.) The California Association of Post-Secondary Educators of the
Disabled (CAPED) should establish advisory committee standards which could
be used as guidance to members working with advisory commitees.

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