

DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 337 224

JC 910 461

AUTHOR Walters, Judy; Fetler, Mark E.
 TITLE Commitment to Quality: Educational Accountability for California Community Colleges.
 INSTITUTION California Community Colleges, Sacramento. Office of the Chancellor.
 PUB DATE Nov 91
 NOTE 29p.; Discussed as Agenda Item 6 at a meeting of the Board of Governors of the California Community Colleges (Sacramento, CA, November 14-15, 1991).
 PUB TYPE Legal/Legislative/Regulatory Materials (090) -- Reports - Descriptive (141)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.
 DESCRIPTORS Academic Achievement; *Accountability; College Role; Community Colleges; Cost Effectiveness; Educational Finance; *Educational Improvement; Educational Legislation; Outcomes of Education; Pilot Projects; Program Effectiveness; *Program Implementation; *School Effectiveness; *Statewide Planning; Two Year Colleges
 IDENTIFIERS *California Community Colleges

ABSTRACT

Assembly Bill (AB) 1725 mandates that the Board of Governors of the California Community Colleges (CCC) shall develop and implement a comprehensive Community College educational and fiscal accountability system in order to improve student and institutional performance. The system is to be implemented over a 3-year period beginning not later than 1991-92 and is to produce a published report of CCC accountability. In November 1990, a task force was established to provide consultation on the conduct of a pilot accountability program, and in January 1991 grants were awarded to four Community College Districts for an 18-month project to develop pilot local and state accountability programs and prototype accountability reports. Three reports emerged from the pilot accountability program: a technical assistance guide for designing local pilot accountability programs; a study of state and local accountability implementation costs; and a draft plan for a statewide accountability program. Aspects of the proposed state accountability system would include basic data collection and reporting by the CCC Chancellor's Office; annual long-range accountability studies; improved data collection and dissemination efforts; and establishment of a clearinghouse of exemplary accountability models. The five proposed statewide indicators include student access, student success, student satisfaction, staff composition, and fiscal condition. Appendixes provide task force members, a summary of components of the technical assistance guide, and a detailed listing and description of proposed accountability indicators for statewide reporting. (JMC)

 * Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
 * from the original document. *



ED337224

Board of Governors
California Community Colleges
November 14 15, 1991

**COMMITMENT TO QUALITY:
EDUCATIONAL ACCOUNTABILITY FOR
CALIFORNIA COMMUNITY COLLEGES**

6

A Report .

Judy Walters
Mark E. Fetler

PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS
MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

T. Smith

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES
INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

U S DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION
CENTER (ERIC)

This document has been reproduced as
received from the person or organization
originating it.

Minor changes have been made to improve
reproduction quality.

Points of view or opinions stated in this docu-
ment do not necessarily represent official
OERI position or policy.

JC910461

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

**COMMITMENT TO QUALITY:
EDUCATIONAL ACCOUNTABILITY FOR
CALIFORNIA COMMUNITY COLLEGES**

6

A Report

Background

Assembly Bill 1725 (Chapter 973, Statutes of 1988) mandates that "... the Board of Governors shall develop and implement a comprehensive Community College educational and fiscal accountability system" [Education Code Section 71020.5], in order to improve the quality of student and institutional performance. The system is to be implemented over a three-year period beginning not later than 1991-92 and is to produce a published report of California Community College accountability.

Analysis

The Board of Governors adopted a report in July 1990 that discussed some facets of the Community College accountability system. This adoption cleared the way for a pilot program. A task force was formed in November, 1990 to provide consultation on the conduct of the pilot program. (See Appendix A for a list of current task force members.) Grants were awarded in January 1991 to four Community College Districts for an eighteen-month effort to develop local and state accountability programs.

To date, three reports have been issued including a technical assistance guide for designing local accountability programs, a study of state and local accountability implementation costs, and a draft plan for a statewide accountability program. The three reports were written in a coordinated fashion over the first six months of the pilot program in consultation with the task force. Additional feedback was received from the Northern California Community College Research Group (NORCAL), the Southern California Community College Institutional Research Association (SCCCIRA), and the Community College League of California Research and Planning Advisory Committee. Comments were also received at presentations of work in progress during meetings of various Community College professional associations and from interested Colleges and Districts. The Department of Finance and the

California Postsecondary Education Commission were consulted during the development of the cost study and the draft plan for a statewide program.

Technical Assistance Guide

The technical assistance guide, *Improving It: Accountability by Design*, offers suggestions for Community College educators who wish to design accountability systems to increase institutional productivity and effectiveness. Users are encouraged to view accountability as an opportunity to prove to themselves and others what their institution is accomplishing and to design ways to monitor and ensure continued success. The guide does not prescribe the requirements for accountability; rather, it raises issues about the design of accountability systems which Community College staff will need to decide for themselves. Appendix B Contains a summary of the guide's recommendations.

State and Local Costs

The cost study, *California Community College Accountability: State and Local Implementation Costs*, was designed to provide recommendations for the Chancellor's Office 1992-93 Budget Change Proposal (BCP) requesting additional funds for the implementation of a statewide accountability program. Earlier BCPs had requested substantial new funds for the start-up and operation of local accountability programs. The findings of the cost study suggested that a study of implementation costs is premature at this time. The reasons cited for a delay include:

1. Considerable differences exist in utilization of Management Information Systems;
2. Community Colleges have vastly different levels of institutional research capability;
3. There is considerable variation in progress toward implementing a comprehensive accountability system; and
4. Many districts are currently ill-prepared to engage effectively in a statewide accountability system.

Although many Colleges are not now ready to implement accountability, there are others which, with the appropriate assistance, are willing and able to implement accountability programs.

The cost study recommended that the focus of the 1992-93 BCP shift to building state and local institutional capacity for accountability, and that the Chancellor's accountability program include the following five components with appropriate state level

budgetary support: refining basic data collection and reporting mechanisms, developing in-depth accountability studies, developing statewide surveys of student satisfaction and long term success, eliminating unnecessary or redundant data collection, and organizing a technical assistance information depository/ clearinghouse.

Draft Statewide Accountability Program

The objective of the draft statewide accountability program is to discuss state level accountability needs. Local needs are discussed in the design guide, *Improving It: Accountability by Design*. Although any state-produced accountability report will be shared with Colleges, it is not a substitute for local programs which fall under the authority of local boards. Of course, a strategy to coordinate state and local programs is essential. This strategy will require Chancellor's Office leadership for an integrated program of state and local reporting, and technical assistance to districts.

The selection of performance indicators is an essential part of an accountability program. An indicator is defined as a measurable characteristic of the condition of the Community Colleges. There are many indicators that would be nice to collect and report, but restrictions on the number of indicators are dictated by the burden associated with the processing and use of information. Indicators should be selected to best represent the characteristics of Colleges that are related to desired student outcomes as outlined in the *Basic Agenda* and AB 1725. Appendix C contains a list of the indicators proposed for statewide reporting. Colleges are encouraged to augment the list of indicators proposed for statewide reporting in order to provide more meaningful and useful descriptions of local conditions.

Staff Presentation *Judy Walters, Vice Chancellor*
Policy Analysis

Mark E. Fetter, Program Director
Planning and Performance Outcomes Unit

Commitment to Quality

Educational Accountability for California Community Colleges

I. Background

Assembly Bill 1725 (Chapter 973, Statutes of 1988) mandates that ". . . the Board of Governors shall develop and implement a comprehensive Community College educational and fiscal accountability system . . ." [Education Code Section 71020.5] in order to improve the quality of student and institutional performance. The system is to be implemented over a three-year period, beginning not later than 1991-92, and is to produce a published report of California Community College accountability.

A task force report, *AB 1725 Model Accountability System*, was adopted by the Board of Governors in July 1990. The report described roles for Colleges, Districts, and the Chancellor's Office. The five recommended areas of Community College performance to be addressed include student access, student success, student satisfaction, staff composition, and fiscal condition. The purposes of a state level report include systemwide planning, policy, and budget formulation. Although primary audiences for a state-level report are the Legislature and Governor, the information will be available locally. Colleges will report to the Board of Governors and the Chancellor via existing information sources. Local accountability programs should relate to local planning, policy, and budget needs.

An eighteen-month long accountability pilot program began in January 1991 with \$375,000 in grants awarded to four Districts (San Joaquin Delta, San Jose-Evergreen, Mt. San Antonio, and Santa Barbara) in order to produce prototype accountability reports and strategies for improving the quality of student outcomes. A task force has been charged to provide consultation in the development of prototype accountability reports for Colleges, a guide for implementing local accountability programs, and a systemwide accountability program. (See Appendix A for a list of current task force members.)

II. Local Accountability Program Design Guide

The guide, developed under contract with Far West Laboratory, *Improving It: Accountability by Design*, was published in June 1991. It offers suggestions for Community College educators who wish to design accountability systems to increase institutional productivity and effectiveness. Users are encouraged to

view accountability as an opportunity to prove to themselves and others what their institution is accomplishing and to design ways to monitor and ensure continued success. The guide does not prescribe the requirements for accountability; rather, it raises issues about the design of accountability systems which Community College staff will need to decide for themselves.

The guide stipulates that a basic aspect of designing an accountability system is recognizing that the system should serve the information needs of both the state and the institution. The state needs information to assess whether the systemwide mission of the Community Colleges is being achieved. The institution needs information to determine where and how to improve teaching, learning, and support services.

An accountability system provides information about the extent to which College policies and practices are achieving their intended objectives. The information from an accountability system should assist College staff in strengthening the institution. The indicators should be based on agreed standards of achievement, should be specific and focused to enable College personnel to better manage the institution, and should be integrated into the existing decision-making mechanisms of the College.

One of the most politically sensitive decisions that the state and the Colleges can make is how to make use of accountability data. How will Colleges be compared? How will accountability data affect the allocation of funds? Ultimately, deciding how statewide accountability data will be used by policymakers needs to be agreed to by the Colleges, the Chancellor's Office, and various state agencies.

Not all of the Community Colleges are equally ready to implement an advanced accountability system. They may differ considerably in vision or staff commitment to accountability, information-gathering capability, available resources, technology, or coordination between institutional review and planning processes.

An accountability system can be a powerful tool. It can provide data, particularly outcome measures, which influence the thinking of faculty, administrators, and the community. Like any powerful tool, an accountability system is only as good as its design and implementation. The most effective systems are periodically revised to reflect changes in technology and the political context. By continually working to link accountability systems to institutional assessment, planning, and improvement, the Community Colleges will ensure assessment and planning that reflect the richness and diversity of their institutions.

The guide makes a number of recommendations regarding accountability design principles, key decisions, criteria for selecting indicators, the need for a

vision of accountability, the uses of information, technology and infrastructure needs, and linkages with planning. These recommendations are summarized in Appendix B.

III. State and Local Implementation Costs

In March 1991, the Chancellor's Office contracted with Strategic Planning Associates (SPA) to undertake a study of AB 1725 implementation efforts in the four Community Colleges designated as accountability pilots. A major purpose was to develop appropriate cost information which could serve as the rationale for Budget Change Proposals (BCPs) the Chancellor's Office might wish to pursue regarding both state and local accountability implementation. The initial intent was to focus on costs and funding required for successful implementation. The report ended up focusing as well on a more critical issue, the system's readiness for implementation.

To examine these issues, the study relied upon the following analytic procedures: 1) review of documents provided by the Chancellor's Office, 2) interviews with key state and local officials, 3) attendance at two full-day meetings with the Chancellor's Accountability Pilot Task Force, and 4) site visits to 14 Community Colleges, including each of the pilot Colleges.

The decision to visit fourteen campuses represented a modification of the workplan. Originally, it was hoped that site visits to the four pilot projects would be sufficient to generate the cost requirements associated with AB 1725 accountability. This turned out not to be possible since Districts had only begun their projects and had not collected appropriate cost data. The study was altered to include a broader array of Colleges and shifted focus to examining College "readiness" for accountability.

Four principal findings formed the basis for subsequent recommendations:

1. considerable differences exist in utilization of Management Information Systems;
2. Community Colleges have vastly different levels of institutional research capability;
3. there is considerable variation in progress toward implementing a comprehensive accountability system; and
4. many Districts are currently ill-prepared to engage effectively in a statewide accountability system.

Although many Colleges were not ready for the adoption of accountability measures, there are many others which, with the appropriate assistance, are willing and could be able to adopt effective accountability systems.

The next phase of the investigation identified characteristics of Colleges that had successfully implemented accountability procedures. Each of these institutions had a: 1) strong vision of the role of accountability, 2) relatively advanced technical ability, and 3) commitment to provide sufficient resources.

The study concluded, despite the utility of some of the cost information, that attempts to build sophisticated cost models are premature. It is recommended that the focus shift instead to building state and local institutional capacity for accountability, and that the Chancellor's accountability system include the following five components with appropriate state-level budgetary support:

1. **Basic Data Collection and Reporting.** The Chancellor's Office would annually compile information contained in MIS tapes and other statewide data routinely collected by the Chancellor's Office. The items, to be compiled and formatted for this portion of the report to the Legislature, would be determined by the Chancellor, after consultation with the Chancellor's Statewide Accountability Pilot Task Force.
2. **In-depth Accountability Studies.** In addition to the basic data report, the Chancellor's Office would prepare a long-range plan to cover in-depth, each year one of the five accountability areas stipulated in the Board of Governors accountability program: student access, student success, student satisfaction, faculty diversity, and fiscal condition.
3. **Statewide Surveys.** The Chancellor's Office periodically would conduct a statewide survey to assess long-range program effectiveness and student satisfaction.
4. **More Effective Data Collection and Dissemination Efforts.** The Chancellor's Office would develop a long range plan to reduce the response burden placed on Districts by multiple information demands.
5. **Depository/Clearinghouse.** The Chancellor's Office would also serve as a depository for exemplary accountability models and provide technical assistance to local Districts as they embark on establishing their own local accountability models.

To fund this activity, the cost study recommended that the Chancellor's Office budget be augmented by approximately \$550,000. This relatively modest investment in improving the capacity at both the state and local level to respond to the demands for accountability represents an infinitesimal percentage of the over \$2.5 billion currently invested by California's citizens in Community Colleges.

IV. Proposed Chancellor's Accountability Program

A. Introduction

The proposed state-level program is intended to serve primarily the needs of state policymakers and the public. This intent suggests several design requirements. Any reported information must be: quantifiable, intelligible to the lay public, focused on core features, and sufficiently stable to document trends. Commitment to improved quality requires a system that goes beyond the mere collection and reporting of data. If the benefits of accountability are to justify the costs and the system is to work, there must be a mechanism to use this information in order for the State and Colleges to set improvement goals, form plans, guide implementation, and to understand outcomes. Discussed below are some of the reasons why existing management information system (MIS), accreditation, program review, and compliance activities will not fully meet the needs of this state-level accountability program.

An efficient, high quality, MIS is only one, albeit very important, part of an accountability program. Major accountability activities that typically are not addressed by the MIS include the systematic use of information to: set quality improvement goals, plan strategically, and implement policies effectively.

Voluntary, nongovernmental, institutional accreditation is widely recognized as a means of establishing minimum standards of quality for Colleges and of fostering educational excellence. Currently, accreditation relies primarily on qualitative data, works with a sample of Colleges each year, and operates on a five-year cycle. Accreditation visits are oriented to the needs of individual Colleges and not to the system as a whole. An effective statewide accountability program requires that qualitative results be supported with objective quantifiable results, that all institutions be examined at the same time, and that the improvement needs of the entire system be addressed.

At the State level, compliance and program review activities tend to be framed in terms of minimum standards for funding and levels of service for particular programs. The purpose of compliance and program review is to check whether standards are met, with an eye to corrective action. While minimum standards help assure provision of recommended levels of service, an effective accountability program must look beyond minimum standards to define areas for ongoing improvement and must encompass the entire institution, not just particular programs.

Despite these limitations, accountability activities must be coordinated with MIS, accreditation, compliance, and program review activities in

order to build upon existing structure and to avoid conflicting or redundant requirements. One goal of accountability is the efficient collection of information by the Chancellor's Office. However, state level indicators do not replace accreditation, research, program evaluation, or compliance programs. By analogy, a general practitioner M.D. begins to diagnose a patient's condition by observing general indicators of health. More detailed testing may be done by specialists.

B. A Draft State Program

The five proposed components of a State accountability program are described by Strategic Planning Associates in their report of state and local implementation costs.

"What is needed is a new paradigm for California Community Colleges Accountability. Such a reconfiguration would respond to the often competing state and local interests and would emphasize state leadership and technical assistance in achieving a meaningful, effective, and useful accountability system. . . .

Basic Data Collection and Reporting

The Chancellor's Office would annually compile information contained in MIS tapes and other statewide data routinely collected by the Chancellor's Office. The items, to be compiled and formatted for this portion of the report to the Legislature, would be determined by the Chancellor, after consultation with the Chancellor's Statewide Accountability Pilot Task Force, and would be consistent with the provisions of Assembly Bill 1725, the Board of Governors Basic Agenda, and the AB 1725 Model Accountability System. The objective is to be responsive to the statutory requirements without being overly burdensome on Districts. As new phases are added to the MIS, this portion of the reporting requirement can be enhanced, but to the extent possible, these data elements should remain stable so that judgments about system progress over extended periods of time can be made. For this portion of the report, Colleges would not be required to submit any information not already collected. All of the compiling, editing, and formatting would be done from existing data tapes in the Chancellor's Office. Simultaneously, with the release of the information to the legislature, Community College district officials would receive a copy of the statewide report, along with a disaggregated report on the performance of their College(s) on

the selected measures. These basic data elements could then be augmented by local information to form the basis for local accountability reports tailored to each community.

This basic report would be directly responsive to the needs of state officials to retrieve usable information from the MIS for which the state provided at least partial funding. At the same time, by limiting data elements to those required by MIS, this aspect of the plan is responsive to local concerns about data burden. No information, not already collected, would be required.

In-depth Accountability Studies

In addition to the basic data report, the Chancellor's Office would also prepare a long-range plan to cover in-depth each year one of the five accountability areas stipulated in the Board of Governor's accountability program: student access, student success, student satisfaction, faculty diversity, and fiscal condition. These in-depth studies would be contracted by the Chancellor's office through an RFP process and would involve topics to be determined by the Chancellor, after consultation with the Chancellor's Accountability Pilot Task Force, the California Postsecondary Education Commission, the Department of Finance, and the Office of the Legislative Analyst. Research would be focused on topics designed to produce information which would lead to program improvement.

As an example, in addition to the annual report on the number of high school graduates who enroll in Community Colleges directly out of high school, research could be conducted to identify exemplary Community College programs which had proven success on this dimension. As another example, while the basic data will contain information about the numbers of students currently being served in various categorical aid programs, in-depth studies would be needed to ascertain the numbers of students needing services, but not currently being served. In the area of faculty diversity, an appropriate research topic could be to analyze the current status of faculty diversity and to identify and disseminate exemplary practices of Districts which operate successful programs in enhancing faculty diversity.

Statewide Surveys

The Chancellor's Office would periodically conduct statewide surveys to assess student satisfaction and long-range program effectiveness. These surveys could be designed to assess current Community College students as well as the general public. Student surveys similar to those conducted for the Chancellor's Office by Mervyn Field in the early 1980s could generate important state-level information that would be highly useful for both state and local policy makers. Since most Californians have attended a California Community College, general public opinion surveys could be designed to effectively yield longitudinal information on the effectiveness of Community College programs and public perceptions of Community Colleges. The Chancellor's Office would contract through an RFP process for surveys to be conducted on a regular (perhaps every three years) basis. These surveys would provide meaningful statewide information about student satisfaction (this information could be drawn from the periodic student surveys), longitudinal impact of the Community College program on student outcomes (this information could be generated from public opinion surveys). At the same time, test designers would be required to provide local Community College Districts with useful item banks which could then be used for similar kinds of local surveys. These surveys are often prohibitively expensive for local Districts to undertake, but for the state's overall accountability purposes and utilizing sophisticated sampling techniques, they can yield very useful information for relatively little cost.

There are two additional purposes served by such a strategy. First, by making item banks available to local Districts, the state can provide useful assistance in the improvement of local student satisfaction and public opinion surveys. Second, by funding a statewide model, the state can encourage the development of local instruments which would be more closely linked to the state surveys, and hence insure greater comparability.

More Effective Data Collection and Dissemination Efforts

One of the most frequently cited complaints in site interviews focused on the issue of irrelevant or redundant information requests. In response to these concerns, SPA proposes that the Chancellor's Office develop a long range plan to reduce the

response burden placed on Districts. The long term goal would be to eliminate all duplicative and redundant information requests. The Chancellor's Office would rely on the work of an advisory committee composed of both state and local officials as well as the Chancellor's Accountability Pilot Task Force to review and recommend elements to be eliminated. The underlying concept is that whatever piece of information the district is required to report should only be required once and the Chancellor's Office should bear the responsibility of coordinating data reporting. The plan itself would be submitted to a periodic accountability test. Districts could be asked on a regular basis to evaluate the Chancellor's Office efforts to reduce the reporting burden.

Sites also argued strongly for a system which linked Colleges and the Chancellor's Office electronically. If data could be transmitted electronically rather than the cumbersome tape process now being used and if a College could be able to perform edit and referential checking from the College itself, the system would be more efficient and the burden on Chancellor's Office staff for this function could be materially eased.

Another problem frequently cited is that data are reported to Districts, but often not in readily usable formats. A commonly cited example of reports needing improvement are the annual segmental reports on the performance of Community College students who transfer to the University of California and the California State University. The Chancellor's Office could work with the California Postsecondary Education Commission, the University of California, and the California State University to receive and develop systemwide transfer information that could be disaggregated on a College-by-College basis designed to be more readily usable by local policy makers. The current format, designed for ease of reporting by the other segments is often underutilized because its guiding purpose is reporting and not program improvement. As mentioned above, a common core of student satisfaction items could be developed and maintained.

Another example might be the development at the state level of a model methodology responsive to the new Perkins Act requirement for documented student follow-up. The current Perkins Act will require greater performance outcome data to evaluate the effectiveness of Vocational Education Act funds than at any time in the past. Other states utilize unemployment insurance information as one way of gaining

information about graduates of certain kinds of vocational programs. Although there are serious flaws with this technique, using it in conjunction with other accountability measures could be a great improvement on the current accountability mechanisms which are either nonexistent or woefully inadequate.

Depository/Clearinghouse

Finally, the Chancellor's Office can serve as a depository for exemplary accountability models and provide technical assistance to Districts as they embark on establishing their own local accountability models. The Chancellor's Office now serves as an effective depository for College and district policies relating to program review. That office has provided a useful document summarizing various features of the implementation of program review. A similar kind of document on the subject of accountability would have immediate utility for Community College Districts and would augment nicely the implementation guide *Improving It: Accountability by Design* prepared by Far West Laboratory. In addition, this office could provide a "broker" service by providing linkages between district personnel who need assistance with district personnel who have exemplary programs."

C. **Statewide Educational Indicator Issues**

An indicator is a measurable characteristic of the condition of the Community Colleges. There are a limitless number of indicators that would be interesting or nice to have. Finite resources for data collection and analysis restrict the number of indicators that can be produced. Educators must balance the amount of time required to digest information with the need to make decisions and get on with work. Indicators should be selected to best represent the characteristics of Colleges that are related to desired student outcomes. A draft set of indicators is displayed in Appendix C.

D. Summary

The development of the California Community Colleges accountability program required by Assembly Bill 1725 is well underway. Accomplishments to date include:

- The formation of a pilot program task force and the award of grants to Districts in order to develop accountability programs for the improvement of teaching and learning.
- A technical assistance guide, *Improving It: Accountability by Design*, for Colleges.
- A cost study with a detailed five-point plan for developing state and local accountability programs.
- A draft set of educational indicators for statewide reporting.

The pilot program ends in June 1992. At that time, a final evaluation report will be prepared for the Board of Governors, which will contain recommendations for further implementation of state and local accountability programs.

APPENDIX A

Accountability Pilot Task Force Members

Peter MacDougall
Chairperson
Superintendent/President
Santa Barbara
Community College District

Dorothy Bray
Vice President
Educational Services
Desert Community College District

Robert Clarke
Student Representative
Council of Student Body Governments
College of San Mateo

Margaret Dominici
Vice President
Student Personnel Services
Shasta-Tehama-Trinity Joint
Community College District

William Hamre
Assistant to the President
Santa Barbara City College

Cheryl Miller
Comptroller
Citrus Community College District

Clair Parsh
President
Community College Association

José Peralez
Assistant Director
Human Resources
Santa Monica College

John Petersen
Executive Director
Accrediting Commission for
Community and Junior Colleges

Robin Richards
Chair
CCLC Research and Planning Advisory
Committee

Director
Research and Analysis
Yosemite CCD

Bob Stuard
Senate President
Mt. San Antonio College

APPENDIX B

Improving It: Accountability by Design

Summary of Recommendations

Key Accountability System Design Principles

- **Clarify the purpose of the system and develop consensus among all stakeholders.**
- **Use accountability data for internal planning and decision-making.**
- **Develop a long-range plan to design and implement the system.**
- **Select indicators that are compatible with systemwide goals.**
- **Use as many indicators as are practical.**
- **Have an independent group monitor system performance.**
- **Make accountability data understandable to various stakeholders.**

Key Design Decisions

- **Decide the type and number of indicators to be used.**
- **Decide at what levels of the college the data will be used.**
- **Decide how the data will be aggregated and reported for internal use and for the state.**
- **Decide how to report to various stakeholders.**

Criteria for Selecting Indicators

- **Measure the core features of the institution.**
- **Measure outcomes that are actually intended.**
- **Provide information that is timely and relevant to policymakers.**

- Focus on the college site.
- Allow for fair comparisons.
- Maximize the usefulness of data.

Accountability System Implementation Issues

- Develop active leadership to design the system, from top administrators to technical personnel.
- Decide the focus of the system, i.e., management, faculty, or students, and involve constituents in its planning and operation.
- Clarify who has access to the data and how access is provided.
- Clarify the kinds of data needed for ongoing improvement.
- Clarify how data will be shared with participants in ways that respect ethical considerations and confidentiality.
- Develop qualitative measures of the dynamic aspects of college life; identify the areas where qualitative data are most needed.
- Design a "value-added" system to generate needed information and benefit participants, e.g., desktop access.
- Develop data collection processes to ensure accurate information for statewide reporting, e.g., student transfer.
- Develop statewide consensus about how data will be used, i.e., types of comparisons and access.
- Clarify the relationship between the college's system and the Chancellor's MIS; facilitate local access to statewide MIS data.
- Standardize computer hardware and software to facilitate transmitting and sharing data within the college.
- Improve access to data stored in the college's computers.
- Allow adequate resources to transform data into forms easily read and understood by nontechnical people.

- **Communicate how the demands generated by the accountability processes will add to or replace requirements already in place.**
- **Communicate how the accountability system will benefit participants and help the institution function better.**
- **Communicate how accountability will affect resource allocation, sanctions, and the development of policies and practices.**

APPENDIX C

Draft Statewide Indicators

The indicators proposed below are primarily of statewide interest. Colleges, at their discretion, may wish to augment them in order to provide more meaningful and useful descriptions of local conditions. The indicators are arranged in the five categories prescribed by the model already submitted to the Board of Governors: student access, student success, student satisfaction, faculty diversity, and fiscal condition.

Measures of student outcomes are difficult to interpret without appropriate background information. Student outcomes are affected by context, inputs, and processes as described below. Definitions note the role of each indicator as context, input, process, or outcome and also note which of the measures proposed by AB 1725 (A through K) are addressed.

- Context relates to the environment in which Community Colleges operate. These factors are not easily manipulated. For example, demography, business needs, or community needs.
- Input refers primarily to the fiscal resources available to Colleges. Decision makers have some control over inputs. For example, funding, and federal, state, or local policies.
- Processes include the plans and activities intended to meet student needs. For example, curriculum, instructional services, student services, administration, management, training, or communications.
- Outcomes encompass student goals. For example, jobs, transfer, degrees, certificates, or student satisfaction.

Proposed Indicators

1. *Student Access*

1.1 General Participation

Definition: Number of students enrolling. Context measure. AB 1725 A, B.

Format: Display by gender, ethnic category, high school graduation status (recent graduate or not), age group, and fall versus spring.

Justification: The number of students enrolling in the Community Colleges is a basic measure of access. It also has implications for the amount of resources needed to provide adequate levels of service.

Availability: MIS

1.2 Transition from High School

Definition: Percent of high school graduates enrolling within two years following graduation. Context measure. AB 1725 A, B.

Format: Display by term, gender, and ethnic category.

Justification: High schools are one important source of Community College students. The flow of students from high schools to Community Colleges is useful information for the planners of articulation programs. Most high school graduates who enroll in a Community College do so immediately after graduation. The percent of recent high school graduates who enroll in the fall immediately following graduation is a leading indicator of the eventual total number enrolling. Free flow may affect the usefulness of this information locally, but not statewide.

Availability: MIS. Statewide graduation counts must be obtained from California Department of Education.

1.3 Financial Aid

Definition: Number of recipients and aid per recipient in constant dollars. Input/process measure. AB 1725 A, K.

Format: Display by source (federal, state, local) and type (grant, loan).

Justification: Low income and disadvantaged students frequently require financial assistance in order to attend College. It is believed that not all students who actually need financial aid also apply for it. One problem is the lack of a commonly accepted, objective definition of "need." The number of fee waivers granted would be useful background information.

Availability: MIS. More detailed information on student need could be obtained through a statewide survey.

1.4 Categorical Programs

Definition: Number of students served and average expenditure per student. Process measure. AB 1725 A, I.

Format: Display by sex, ethnic group, and program, including EOPS, DSP&S, Matriculation, and CARE.

Justification: Categorical programs are designed to assist economically or academically disadvantaged students who face obstacles in effectively accessing education. A problem is the lack of an objectively quantifiable definition of need for these services and a measure of the amount of unmet need.

Availability: MIS. This information is scheduled for a later phase of the MIS. It should be possible to obtain partial results from existing reports supplied to the Chancellor's Office. More detailed information could be obtained through the longitudinal survey.

1.5 Basic Skills and ESL Enrollment

Definition: Number of students enrolled each year in basic skills and ESL courses. Context/process measure. AB 1725 H.

Format: Display by sex, ethnic group, and course.

Justification: Student success in academic or vocational education depends on the mastery of certain basic skills and of English. The overall level of student skills at a campus also affects the quality and nature of instruction that can be provided.

Adequacy of basic skills and ESL programs can be framed in terms of student need and subsequent student success. While the determination of adequacy is important, it is also quite subjective.

A limitation of this indicator is lack of information about the amount of remedial work needed prior to College level. Although difficult to collect, the average time in remedial required before entry into College-level English or mathematics would be of interest.

Availability: MIS. Some data may be available from existing Chancellor's Office reports.

2. Student Success

2.1 Persistence

Definition: Number of students who are enrolled for two consecutive terms. Outcome measure. AB 1725 D.

Format: Display by sex, ethnic category, full versus part-time, and high school graduation status.

Justification: Persistence in meeting specified requirements is a necessary condition for obtaining a certificate, degree, or transfer.

One cannot reasonably expect that all enrolled students should persist for a full year. Some students enroll in Community College programs or courses that require one year or less to satisfy their training or information needs. While not all student goals will require a full year, the completion of a degree, obtaining of some certificates, or satisfaction of transfer requirements will take a longer period of time.

The definition of a suitable persistence rate would require the identification of a subgroup of students that can be reasonably expected to persist for a full year, e.g., those with the matriculation goal of a degree or transfer, who have satisfactorily completed English 1A (Baccalaureate-required, first-term composition). Satisfactory completion of English 1A can be determined via the proposed Subject Matter Taxonomy Codes which MIS anticipates will be adopted. TOP codes may not permit this level of discrimination. A new system of classifying programs, the "Classification of Instructional Programs" (CIP) code, sponsored federally, is under consideration at this time and may supplant the TOP codes.

Availability: MIS. Numbers of persisting students should be obtainable from MIS.

2.2 Completion

Definition: Number of students each year who complete an associate degree, certificate, or vocational award within two, three, four, or more years of initial enrollment. Outcome measure. AB 1725 D, E, F.

Format: Display sex, ethnic category, and high school graduation status. For certificates distinguish two-year, one-year, and less than 1 year.

Justification: Attainment of a degree or certificate is an important result of Community College education, depending both on access and persistence of students.

Student transfer is a type of completion that is not measured by this particular indicator. Some students who transfer do not complete their degrees.

Availability: MIS has the number of awarded degrees. The numbers of transfers should be available from CPEC, or directly from UC and CSU.

2.3 Transfer

Definition: Number of students who transfer to the University of California or the California State University within two, three, four, or more years. Outcome measure. AB 1725 C, D.

Format: Display by sex, ethnic category, and years needed.

Justification: Community Colleges provide students with the opportunity to transfer to a four-year college.

Consensus on the definition of a transfer rate has proven to be elusive, not only for reasons of data quality but also because of disagreement over basic concepts. The available transfer data are subject to a number of criticisms. Much of the available data has been collected in accordance with institution specific, or segment specific, definitions which are not generalizable statewide. Most data collection systems only count transfers to public four-year institutions and are likely to undercount the actual number of transfers. Finally, the usual statistical analyses are frequently based on single-year data cross-sections which do not track individual students longitudinally over years. These data problems not only attack the validity of many computed transfer rates, they also undermine the capacity to investigate causes of trends and factors influencing transfer.

A conceptual barrier to achieving consensus on a transfer rate definition is the disagreement on defining the pool of transfer candidates which can serve as a denominator for the rate. A number of possible transfer candidate pools have been proposed. Another issue is that the size of the numerator, the number of actual transfers, is limited by the number of slots available at four-year public institutions. Some of the more prominent alternatives are sketched below.

- a. **Berman and Weiler.** The denominator for the transfer rate is the exiting cohort of students in a term – that is, those students who were enrolled for credit in one term and but did not re-enroll in the subsequent term. These students are called leavers. The transfer rate is the number of transfers divided by the number of leavers.
- b. **Traditional Approach.** One commonly used denominator is the total credit enrollment. The rate is the the number of transfers in a term divided by the total credit enrollment, regardless of whether all enrolled students are in fact able to transfer in that semester. A

refinement is to look at the total credit enrollment some time prior, e.g., two years, to the date of transfer.

- c. **Cohen/Center for the Study of Community Colleges.** Credit attainment is examined in order to understand the student's intent to reach his/her educational goal. Two percentages are computed. One is the percentage of students from a first-time entering cohort who earned 12 or more credits during a four-year period (C/E). The other is the percentage of students obtaining 12 or more credits who transfer to a senior institution during a four-year period (T/C). Together both percentages represent the outcomes of the transfer process taking place within the institution.
- d. **ICC Transfer and Articulation Committee.** The transfer candidate pool consists of those students who complete 12 or more UC/CSU transferable credits in their first academic year. The percent of transfers from this cohort is computed every year thereafter until the annual number of transfers becomes negligible. A variation of this approach is to more narrowly define the transfer candidate pool to include only those students with a stated intent to transfer in addition to earning at least twelve credits in their first year. (Please note that the ICC proposal is subject to modification at this time.)
- e. **Other.** Various other criteria for identifying student intent to transfer have been proposed, including completion of specific courses, for example English 1A, or completion of all credit requirements for transfer. Various transfer candidate pools can be defined in terms of those students who meet these criteria.

Transfer is a very complex phenomenon. Successful transfer depends on a number of factors, including services provided by Community Colleges, student commitment, services provided by four-year institutions, and agreed upon intersegmental policies. This complexity suggests that multiple indicators be used to track transfer performance. Assuming that data quality issues can be resolved, it will be necessary to evaluate empirically the reliability of the transfer indicators and to verify that they in fact provide useful information about the performance they purport to describe.

Availability: MIS, statewide survey, or Berman and Weiler database.

2.5 Job Placement

Definition: Number of students placed in jobs within six months of degree or certificate. Outcome measure. AB 1725 G.

Format: Display by gender, ethnic category, and major field. Include student self-assessment of relevance of training.

Justification: Community Colleges provide occupational preparation for students.

The assessment of relevance to training can be highly subjective. Obtaining some jobs may not require a degree or certificate, but only completion of particular courses.

Availability: Employment Development Department database. The Statewide Student Follow-up System (SSFS), funded by the Vocational and Occupational Programs Division of the Chancellor's Office may be a potential source of this information. Currently, the SSFS is implemented on a voluntary pilot basis at a number of Colleges.

3. *Student Satisfaction*

3.1-3.5 **Student Expectations and Satisfaction With Community College Experience**

Definition: Expectations and satisfaction before, during and after attendance with

- (1) access,
- (2) instruction,
- (3) instructional services,
- (4) student services, and
- (5) facilities.

Outcome measure. AB 1725 E, I.

Format: Display by gender and ethnic category.

Justification: Students are the primary clients of the Community Colleges and their satisfaction is an essential measure of success. Quality can be assessed by comparing expectations with subsequent satisfaction.

Measurement of satisfaction is a complicated matter and will depend on an appropriate survey. The benefits of such information must be weighed against the costs of gathering it. A carefully designed self-report questionnaire as one part of a student survey is recommended as an economical approach.

Availability: Statewide survey.

4. *Staff Composition*

4.1 **Staff Diversity**

Definition: Number and percentage of staff by gender, ethnic, and age group, the date of hire, Equal Employment Opportunity job category. Process measure. AB 1725 J.

Format: Display by age, gender, ethnic category, and Equal Employment Opportunity category. Compare to available workforce statistics.

Justification: Staff composition affects campus climate, particularly for underrepresented students. This indicator is supportive of the equal employment opportunity policies and affirmative action programs that firmly are ingrained in the federal and state approaches to education.

Availability: MIS

4.2 **Faculty Time Assignment**

Definition: Number and percentage of faculty working full-time or part-time. Process measure. AB 1725 J.

Format: Display by gender and ethnic category.

Justification: The use of full-time faculty provides for a more stable instructional climate and increased professionalism. This measure also supports Equal Employment Opportunity policies.

Full-time faculty are more likely to keep regular office hours and serve on committees.

Availability: MIS.

5. *Fiscal Condition*

5.1 **Community College Funding**

Definition: Overall level of funding in constant dollars for state and local operations. Input variable. AB 1725 K.

Format: Display funding adjusted for inflation by source (state, federal, local) both as a total and by ADA/FTES. Input measure.

Justification: Funding is a core indicator of the support and commitment of government to the Community Colleges.

Availability: MIS, Fiscal Services Unit, or Legislative analyst.

5.2 Fiscal Stability

Definition: Number of Districts rated as at fiscal risk. Input variable. AB 1725 K.

Format: Display by fiscal quarter the number of Districts at high, medium, or low fiscal risk.

Justification: Districts have a fiduciary trust in the handling of public money.

Availability: Existing Chancellor's Office Fiscal Services Unit surveys of district fiscal status.