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AUTHOR Callan, Patrick M.; Finney, Joni E.
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ABSTRACT

The state of California faces trends which will significantly shape higher education in the coming century and which require public debate and decision in the near future. The trends are enrollment growth coupled with continued slow economic growth with consequent low appropriations for education. A study by the National Center for Higher Education Management Systems (NCHEMS) found that California would not be able to meet expected increased demand for postsecondary education without significantly altering the relationship between the state and its institutions of higher education. The cost of maintaining the current system will require either an increased proportion of state revenues for higher education or increased student fees. Faculty, students, administrators and others gathered for four informal meetings specifically to generate policy options that might guide future debate. Participants developed a list of areas for debate: the aims of higher education, paying for higher education, flexibility and responsibility, and quality. The state can either begin asking and tackling broader and more fundamental policy questions in an effort to design a new approach to the future or stay with the current fragmented, short-term, by-default approach. Appendixes list report contributors and participants in the four policy meetings. (JB)

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BY DESIGN OR DEFAULT?

Patrick M. Callan and Joni E. Finney

June 1993

INTRODUCTION

California public higher education as historically and currently organized, delivered and financed will be unable to accommodate projected enrollment demand over the next 15 years. If our state officials and university administrators continue to ignore this problem by focusing almost solely on budgetary issues, the future of educational opportunity for the citizenry of California is likely to be one of slow erosion.

To understand the consequences of California's budgetary problems on higher education, we must move beyond questions about line items and revenue enhancement. Instead, we must ask the kind of question that Robert Reich, in *The Power of Public Ideas*, calls the "salient public question," one that "subsumes the value judgments that declare something to be a problem, focuses public attention on the issue, and frames the ensuing debate."¹ In relation to California's colleges and universities, we need to broaden and deepen the debate by asking: How should California accommodate the needs of its people for higher education over the next 15 years?

It is a broad question and there are no certain answers, for we cannot predict California's needs into the 21st century. California is in the early stages of secular change that will fundamentally transform higher education as it transforms the state from an economy based on industry and agriculture to one based on knowledge, and from a state in a national marketplace to a state in a global one. But even though we cannot accurately forecast technological and economic change, we can project the number of probable students and, with less certainty, the approximate costs of higher education enrollment and a range of state revenues. From these projections we know with reasonable assurance that state dollars combined with student fees will no longer be sufficient to support projected enrollments.

Since these projections are based on having our colleges and universities continue to deliver the same services in the same way to an increasing number of students, it follows that either the delivery of services must change, or the number of students served must be scaled back. Either choice, however, raises fundamental public policy questions that cannot be resolved through budgetary strategies. We must ask, for instance, whether the state should continue to educate as large a proportion of its population as it has in the past. We must question the relationships among the University of California, the California State University, and the California Community College. We must ask whether the productivity of colleges and universities can be enhanced. Undoubtedly, there are other difficult and unpopular questions that must be asked.

The present state budget crisis is the occasion, not the reason, for asking these questions. But it is reason for urgency. During the past three years, annual state revenue shortfalls have been the context for decisions that have raised student fees, frozen and deferred faculty salaries, terminated part-

¹ Robert Reich, *The Power of Public Ideas* (Cambridge, MA: Ballinger Publishing Co., 1988), p. 5.

time employees and reduced enrollments. These decisions, painful no doubt for those effecting them as well as those affected by them, have been implemented in default of a coherent set of policies while underlying public interest and state goals have been ignored. Only by happenstance could these fragmented, *ad hoc* decisions fit California's long-term needs for higher education. Yet only by design can California's colleges and universities best serve the people of California and maintain the state's national and world preeminence in higher education.

The California Higher Education Policy Center welcomes the reactions of readers to this report.

Patrick M. Callan
Executive Director

Joni E. Finney
Associate Director

BY DESIGN OR DEFAULT?

Over the next 15 years California's colleges and universities will continue to face profound revenue shortfalls that the state will not be able to overcome through financial means alone. Either the state of California and its colleges and universities must begin planning and developing a broad range of strategies to increase productivity and effectiveness, or the next generations of California's citizens will face significantly reduced educational opportunities.

These findings concerning higher education's long-term prospects are the outcome of two closely related Center projects. The first is a formal, quantitative analysis of California enrollment and revenue trends. The technical paper resulting from this analysis, commissioned by the Center and prepared by The National Center for Higher Education Management Systems (NCHEMS), will be available in June 1993.² The second project was a series of consultations with "policy panels"—some 40 faculty members, students, administrators, and others—that gave us insights into the less quantifiable aspects the problem.

The technical paper, the consultations, and this report deliberately focus on two major trends which higher education in California will face as it enters the next century:

- ◆ *Enrollment Growth.* The projections of college-age students estimate some additional 450,000 students by the year 2006.
- ◆ *The California Economy.* Current economic conditions in California's economy make it unlikely that state revenues will grow sufficiently over the next 10 or 15 years to support "business as usual" for state services.

Based on these findings, California will

soon decide—by design or by default—whether it will maintain, increase or lower the educational level of its citizens. Although many state commitments regarding higher education are in danger, California's commitment to ensuring broad access to its colleges and universities is particularly threatened. Should the state maintain historic—but rapidly eroding—policies that seek to ensure educational opportunities beyond high school? Or should it reduce opportunity at a time of dramatic population growth, economic transformation and major demographic shifts?

There are few, if any, open advocates of reduced opportunity for California's swelling numbers, but this course of action has been

... there has been little discussion and less serious planning of alternatives to the *status quo* by state and educational leaders.

pursued indirectly by the state and its institutions of higher education in response to fiscal crisis. Budget cutbacks and increased student fees have resulted in significant enrollment declines at the California State University and the California Community College, despite overall population growth.

If California chooses to extend historic policies regarding educational opportunity, it is highly improbable that they can be maintained solely by increasing state funding and student fees. Yet there has been little discussion and less serious planning of alternatives to the *status quo* by state and educational leaders. They have directed almost all their efforts to date at replacing lost state revenue through charging students more, and, failing

² The technical analysis was guided by a Center-appointed advisory committee. The names of committee members are found in Appendix A.

that, through reducing student enrollments.

If our public officials and educational administrators continue to ignore the fact that new revenues will not alone solve the financial problems facing California's institutions of higher education, then our state seems destined to renege on its commitment to access and quality higher education.

I. The NCHEMS Study: A Problematic Tomorrow

Three years of revenue difficulties are straining past policies concerning higher education—almost to the breaking point. Administrators have focused almost entirely on short-term solutions to budgetary shortfalls: salary freezes and deferrals for faculty and staff; lay-offs for part-time employees; higher fees; fewer classes for students; and enrollment reductions. Individual students, parents and others who bear the burden of these short-term solutions are justified in their concerns for the present and immediate future. It is difficult, however, to justify the refusal of most, although not all, political and educational leaders to look beyond the current budget year.

Demographers predict substantial population growth in California and economists predict slow economic growth. The question of whether the state will be able to afford higher education for more students seems obvious. In essence, this is the question that the Center asked NCHEMS to address:

Will California be able to meet expected increased demands for post-secondary education without significantly altering the basic assumptions and policies that have historically guided the relationships between the state of California and its institutions of higher education?

The technical analysis projected enrollment growth, educational costs, state revenues, and the share of these revenues appropriated for higher educational instruction, and it then asked whether. . .

. . . the economy will grow fast enough or . . . higher education's share of the state budget will increase rapidly enough to meet the fiscal requirements engendered by expanding enrollments?

The results of the analysis answered, "clearly 'NO.'" This negative response raises the most basic question for the future of California higher education: How can the state maintain the quality of and access to its colleges and universities for the coming generation of students?

Conservative Assumptions about Enrollment; Generous Assumptions about Revenues

The technical paper uses 1990-91 as the base year, and in projecting enrollment growth and educational costs, it employs "conservative" assumptions—that is, those based on recent trends, not on speculation about future changes. In relation to state revenues, however, the paper seeks to avoid projecting the future from the depths of the recession and, somewhat optimistically, assumes an eventual return to pre-recession conditions with respect to state and student shares of costs and higher education's share of state general fund appropriations. The intent is not to predict the future but to create a plausible scenario based on what is now known. At our request, the major assumptions guiding the analysis reflected the recent past and the *status quo*:

- ◆ College-going rates of both high school graduates and young adults will remain constant until 2006.
- ◆ The distribution of full-time and part-time students across the University of California, the California State University, the California Community College, and private colleges will remain constant.
- ◆ The educational costs per full-time undergraduate student will remain constant in real terms. That is, these costs will increase only at the rate of inflation, assumed to average four percent per year.

- ◆ The shares of undergraduate costs borne by the student and by the state will remain constant.

Additional assumptions are noted in the text below.

Demand in 2006: Projected Enrollments

The demand on California's colleges and universities has never been greater. The technical paper's very conservative projections are that California colleges and universities will have to accommodate some 50 percent more full-time equivalent students—from 915,000 to 1.4 million—by the year 2006. Many, but not all of these students will be traditional 18-year-olds ready to enter college, the fastest growing group of applicants. Adult students, as a proportion of the population, will remain about constant.

These projections assume that efforts to improve the public schools will not result in proportionately more high school graduates being prepared to enter California's colleges and universities. Nor do the projections take into account probable new demands—for example, expanded efforts to retrain workers

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at all levels as technology advances and world trade expands. Neither do they include the large numbers of recent immigrants who increasingly rely on community colleges for English as a Second Language and for integration into the California economy.

The Cost of Opportunity in 2006

To project the cost of educating 50 percent more students, the technical paper assumed that the distribution of the projected 1.4 mil-

lion full-time equivalent, undergraduate students would remain constant among the University of California, The California State University, the California Community College, and private institutions. The projected number of students in each public sector was multiplied by the educational costs per student in each sector,³ and reduced the total

There is general agreement that even when the recession ends, state revenue growth will be slow as the economy undergoes major shifts.

result by the portion of costs contributed by student fees and other non-state revenues.

The result is that to accommodate the increased number of students, state support for higher education would have to increase by about 52 percent in real terms—that is, from \$5.8 billion in 1991 to \$8.7 billion in 2006. This 52 percent increase, large enough in itself, is based on the more optimistic economic conditions of the 1990-91 base-line year. The technical paper also found that if one were to estimate from the more depressed 1992-93 economic conditions, state support would have to increase 85 percent in real terms in order to accommodate the larger number of students.

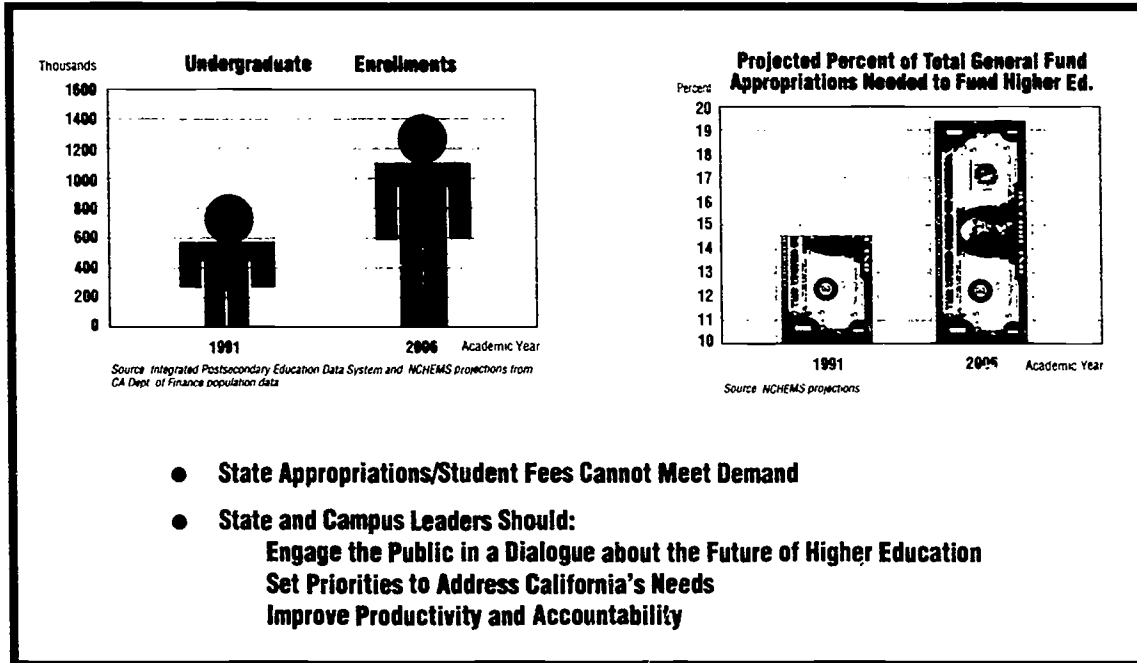
Meeting the Cost:

The Size of the State Revenue Pie

California's economic problems are long-term. There is general agreement that even when the recession ends, state revenue growth will be slow as the economy undergoes major shifts. The technical paper estimates that California's economy must expand at a real rate of 2.8 percent per year (over and above the four percent annual inflation) to accommodate enrollment increases and maintain funding levels similar to those in 1990-91, the fiscal year prior to the state's (and nation's) economic downturn.

Is it likely that California's economy will expand at this average rate of 2.8 percent?

³In NCHEMS' calculation of "educational cost," capital costs and student financial aid were excluded.



Not if the past is any guide. In real terms, economic growth over the past 12 years has averaged around 1.2 percent annually; for the past six years it was -0.1 percent annually. Accommodating the estimated 450,000 additional students by the year 2006 would require about 52 percent increase in state support in real terms. Even if higher education were to again receive its 1991 share of state general funds, the state economy would have to grow nearly seven percent annually (2.8 percent adjusted for inflation) to produce sufficient state revenues to fund the increase in state support for higher education. This seven percent rate, in inflated terms, would double the size of the California economy every ten years; in real terms, every 25 years. It is not impossible for California's economy to grow at this rate, but it is highly improbable. Most likely, revenues will be greater so the pie will be larger, but it will not be large enough.

*Meeting the Cost:
Higher Education's Slice of the Revenue Pie*

One answer to slow revenue growth would be to dramatically increase higher education's share of state revenues. In 1993, higher education's share was 12.4 percent—an actu-

al decline from the 15.9 percent share enjoyed in 1985. Yet meeting the costs of future demand would require that higher education's share increase to nearly 20 percent by 2006.

In calculating the budgetary share of state revenues that higher education would require, the technical paper conservatively assumes that the shares of competing public services would remain constant. But how likely is it that higher education could increase its own share of public funds at the expense of the public schools, welfare, health care, and corrections? Higher education's future share of the state budget—its slice of the pie—is unpredictable in the face of future and unforeseen state needs, but it cannot reasonably be expected to increase enough to support expected enrollment.

Meeting the Cost: The Student Fee Option

Why not raise student charges if state support is inadequate? Although this has been the solution for the past three years, it seems highly unlikely that student fee increases can make up the 52 percent budget gap between increased demand and the cost of continuing the *status quo*. California will need to address basic questions of how much of the

financial burden of higher education should be borne by students and how state subsidies should be allocated, to whom and for what purposes. But the policy of using budget shortfalls to determine the "appropriate" levels of student fees has practical limits, as many private colleges and universities learned in the 1980s. Another major difficulty with this approach is that it undermines fiscal discipline and provides disincentives for efficiency.

The enrollment decline over the past few years can likely be attributed to budgetary cutbacks, skyrocketing student fees, and decreasing state financial aid. Since 1991, the state's historic commitment to access and opportunity has eroded. Enrollment has dropped by approximately 120,000 in California's community colleges, 21,000 in the State University and 2,000 in the

But the policy of using budget shortfalls to determine the "appropriate" levels of student fees has practical limits, as many private colleges and universities learned in the 1980s. Another major difficulty with this approach is that it undermines fiscal discipline and provides disincentives for efficiency.

University of California.⁴ More decreases in enrollment are expected. Ability to pay—not ability to benefit—appears to be an increasingly important criterion for access to higher education.

*The Bottom Line:
What Do the Numbers Mean?*

What are the implications of these enrollment and revenue projections? The short answer is that California and its higher education institutions face an unprecedented and critical problem. Declines in the quality and accessibility of higher education are

almost inevitable as long as state officials and higher education administrators focus almost solely on revenue solutions. As this report reveals, state dollars combined with

Higher education's leaders should continue pressing for realistic state funding. But with equal vigor they—and governmental leaders as well—should actively pursue policy options to reduce higher education's operating costs and to increase its learning productivity and effectiveness.

student fees will not be sufficient to support projected enrollments. This does not mean, however, that increased state revenues and student fees might not be a part of a long-term policy-based answer. Higher education's leaders should continue pressing for realistic state funding. But with equal vigor they—and governmental leaders as well—should actively pursue *policy options* to reduce higher education's operating costs and to increase its learning productivity and effectiveness.

II. What Can Be Done? Examples of Policy Options for the 21st Century

If increased state revenues and higher student fees cannot maintain opportunity and access in California's colleges and universities, what can? To explore possible answers, the Center convened faculty, students, administrators, and others for consultation during April 1993. Some 40 people participated—about 10 at each of four informal meetings in San Jose.⁵ These policy panels reviewed the technical paper in progress, and discussed a wide range of policy options. We were not seeking, nor did we ask for comments about what *should* be done; nor did we ask participants to agree or reach consensus. We sought, rather, their suggestions for poli-

⁴ UC and CSU enrollment losses through fall 1992 from the California Department of Finance, June 1993. Community college enrollment losses through spring 1993 from the California Community College.

The names of participants at the policy panel meetings are listed in Appendix B.

cy options that *might* guide future debate over higher education in the state.

Policies over Solutions

Abstract concepts—for example, “goals,” “policies,” “objectives,” and “guidelines”—played little role in policy panel discussions; even experts would have become bogged down in definitions. In summarizing the suggestions, however, it is important to distinguish—at the risk of oversimplification—between “policies” and “solutions.” State “policies” reflect public interest in higher education, and guide and limit the decisions of both public officials and higher education’s leaders. “Solutions,” on the other hand, are practical answers to problems. In an ideal world, a range of possible solutions would be measured against relevant state policies. But when state policies are unclear,

State “policies” reflect public interest in higher education, and guide and limit the decisions of both public officials and higher education’s leaders.

outdated, or lacking—as they are in California—solutions are necessarily fragmented and expedient. In the real world, we might choose to focus on immediate problems and solutions in order to highlight basic policy questions that need resolution. In this sense—but only in this sense—might “laundry lists” of solutions be useful. But rarely does a such a “laundry list” clarify issues for policy debate and analysis. Further, almost by definition, such lists obscure important issues because they emphasize means instead of long-term policies and public interests.

What Can Be Done? A Policy Agenda

We have tried—although not always successfully—to avoid specific “solutions” in selecting among the policy panels’ suggestions. These headings and the questions raised are not comprehensive, but they can be viewed as the beginning of an agenda for

policy discussion.

The Aims of Higher Education. The most important questions to shape a policy agenda concern the appropriate priorities of our colleges and universities. These questions cannot be asked and answered in a vacuum, but are inextricably tied to the destiny of California as a whole. They are at the heart of the economic and social aspirations of all of California’s citizens, and the answers to these questions determines the outcome of the other important policy decisions that follow them.

- Do colleges and universities offer the appropriate balance between teaching, research and public service? What are the other important functions that our colleges and universities serve?
- Who should California’s colleges and universities serve? Are past policies assuring access to all who could benefit still appropriate? Are there other alternatives?
- How much and what kind of research best meets the future needs of California? Do we need more or less basic research?
- Should California’s colleges and universities play an active role in improving elementary and secondary schooling? Should they be more active in improving health care or resolving other social problems?

Paying for Higher Education. Questions about who pays (and how much) reveal the true priorities of the state and the colleges and universities. These questions focus on how the state invests its resources in higher education; that is—in institutions, in people and in particular functions. These questions also get at the heart of “fair share”—fair share for California taxpayers, for students and families, and for the private sector as well. Patterns of long-term funding of higher education reveal the extent to which Californians view higher education as a “public good” benefiting the state as a whole.

- Does the method the state uses to finance higher education provide incentives for quality, access, and accountability?

- What are the appropriate roles of students, their families and the state in financing college?
- Should more emphasis be placed on student support through need-based financial aid programs, and less on direct state support of public colleges and universities?
- How many more students can be accommodated by internal reallocation of college and university resources?
- Could part of the additional demand be accommodated by the unused capacity of private colleges and universities?
- Whether distributed directly to institutions or students, should the state subsidy be more progressive? That is, should it provide the greatest support to those with the least personal financial resources?
- Could colleges and universities be more efficient in attending to their primary missions if they subcontracted more functions such as bookstores, data processing, child care centers, and student loan programs?
- Are existing campuses fully utilized?
- To what extent should higher education be expected to find resources to assist the state in maintaining access by: 1) becoming more productive and efficient through reducing administrative overhead, 2) streamlining the curriculum and refocusing faculty efforts and 3) using more technology to deliver instruction?

Flexibility and Responsibility in Higher Education. These questions focus on how we organize higher education in the state to be responsive to public purposes and hold education leaders responsible for achieving these purposes.

- What lessons, if any, are relevant for higher education from corporate trends to be more competitive through decentralization?
- Should the accountability of campuses and systems be based upon evidence of success in achieving their missions?
- Should campuses in large systems be given

greater autonomy and allowed more flexibility than they now have?

- Do large multicampus systems with central administrations add to the effectiveness and efficiency of campuses and promote responsiveness to public needs?
- Could more regionally-based structures for higher education be made responsive to local, regional and state needs?
- If systems are retained, should campuses have their own boards with more than advisory authority?
- Are decisions about higher education weighted in favor of the "providers"—that is, administrators, staff and faculty—as opposed to student and public needs?
- Are there modes of instruction, such as collaborative learning, that could improve quality and more effectively utilize the faculty?
- Are current personnel practices, including collective bargaining, a help or hindrance in addressing public needs?

Quality in Higher Education. Questions about quality in higher education get at the "business of the business." For the past 30 years, definitions of quality in colleges and universities have been linked with resources (endowment, library holdings, faculty "superstars," federal grant dollars, etc.) and reputation. These questions explore other dimensions of quality.

- What should college-educated students know and be able to do? What are the appropriate ways to assess the outcomes of college?
- How should quality scholarship (in teaching, research and service) be evaluated and rewarded?
- In what ways can the curriculum be restructured to educate students more effectively? What practical experiences should be integrated into the curriculum?
- Should credentialing be separated from educational functions in colleges and universities?
- Should the time required to receive a degree

be reduced for some or all students?

- Should degrees be based on knowledge and competencies rather than the accumulation of credits?
- What incentives might be strengthened in order to improve the quality of research and teaching?
- In what ways could the delivery of higher education be accomplished more effectively and efficiently? In what ways might California better deliver education to underserved populations?
- Has the curriculum shifted from "student-focused" to "professor-focused?"
- Should state policy encourage apprenticeship learning in selected fields?
- Should community colleges be used more extensively for lower division education? For general education? Should all or some university campuses offer only upper division and graduate education?

These questions exemplify the many ideas that arose during policy panel discussions. They are *only* examples. Ultimately, a full range of ideas must be carefully examined in the context of state goals for the future.

III. Conclusion: Thinking about Hard Questions

Do the people of California expect the same broad access to quality higher education in the next century as that enjoyed in the past? If they do, the present *de facto* policy that relies on fragmented, short-term solutions must change. Instead, state and higher education leaders must begin asking and tackling broader and more fundamental policy questions. Money alone is not the answer to all present and future ills, and state and higher education leaders must abandon the notion that new revenues alone will meet the needs of colleges and universities for the future. New, coherent, and com-

prehensive policies must be articulated. The deep values and vision of those who established the master plan in 1960 are still alive and real, but they are now poorly served. California's stagnant economy has strained policies based on that vision, and perhaps more importantly, traditional policies concerning higher education are being overtaken by events—by secular changes in California's social, economic, demographic and technological environment.

Finally, the questions in the last section of this report represent preliminary attempts on the part of the Center and participants in

Money alone is not the answer to all present and future ills, and state and higher education leaders must abandon the notion that new revenues alone will meet the needs of colleges and universities for the future. New, coherent, and comprehensive policies must be articulated.

the policy panels to articulate issues that are central to the future of California higher education. Many of these questions must be refined and additional issues need to be added. Most importantly, the discussion must move forward in many different institutions and forums throughout the state.

Over the next few years, the Center will address some of the most critical questions raised here. We urge others to do the same. Our efforts will be particularly directed towards understanding and articulating the public purposes of California higher education in the 1990s and into the next century, and towards examining the financial, organizational and public policy approaches that might best achieve these purposes. These issues must be raised publicly and they must be widely debated within and beyond the higher education and political communities.

APPENDIX A

The Center expresses its appreciation to the advisory committee, for its assistance in the NCHEMS analysis. Their insights and guidance were valuable as the work proceeded. However, this report and the technical paper are the responsibility of the Center and NCHEMS respectively. The advisory committee members were:

Frank Bowen
David Breneman
Robert Harris
Art Hauptman
David Longanecker

APPENDIX B

The Center expresses appreciation to those participating in the policy panels for their candid views expressed during the meetings. Many of the ideas in this document were discussed at the panel meetings. The Center, however, assumes responsibility for the views expressed in this paper. The policy panel participants were:

Del Anderson	John Immerwahr
David Axeen	Dennis Jones
Leon Baradat	Lee Kerschner
Doug Barker	Rev. Paul Locatelli, S.J.
Aubrey Bonnett	John Lovas
Frank Bowen	Arturo Madrid
Howard Brooks	Art Marmaduke
Desdemona Cardoza	Peter MacDougall
Constance Carroll	William Moore
Trevor Chandler	Arlene Okerlund
Sister Magdalen Coughlin	Roderic Park
K. Patricia Cross	Michael Pavel
Adela de La Torre	William Pickens
Ann Duffield	Lyman Porter
Dolores Escobar	Richard Richardson
Joseph Fink	Guillermo Rodriguez, Jr.
Bernadine Fong	Jack Schuster
Calvin Frazier	John Smart
Tobin Freid	Virginia Smith
Marian Gade	Deborah Wadsworth
Lyman Glenny	Marjorie Downing Wagner
Manual Gomez	Steve Weiner
Alexander Gonzalez	Frank Wong
Robert Harris	Robert Zemsky
Sidney Harris	

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