

ED400024 1996-08-00 The Thin Green Line: Community Colleges' Struggle To Do More with Less. ERIC Digest.

ERIC Development Team

www.eric.ed.gov

Table of Contents

If you're viewing this document online, you can click any of the topics below to link directly to that section.

The Thin Green Line: Community Colleges' Struggle To Do More with Less. ERIC Digest.....	1
CALIFORNIA'S FUNDING GAP.....	2
POTENTIAL CONSEQUENCES OF THE FUNDING GAP.....	3
HOW COLLEGES ARE ADJUSTING.....	3
CONCLUDING REMARKS.....	4
CITATIONS.....	4



ERIC Identifier: ED400024

Publication Date: 1996-08-00

Author: Burstein, Matthew

Source: ERIC Clearinghouse for Community Colleges Los Angeles CA.

The Thin Green Line: Community Colleges' Struggle To Do More with Less. ERIC Digest.

THIS DIGEST WAS CREATED BY ERIC, THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER. FOR MORE INFORMATION ABOUT ERIC, CONTACT ACCESS ERIC 1-800-LET-ERIC

There is a tension at the very heart of community colleges: With their ambitious and

broad institutional mission to meet the varied educational needs of their constituents, community colleges must reconcile limited resources with open door admissions policies. This tension has been exacerbated by America's economic difficulties in the late 1980s and early 1990s. While enrollments at most community colleges have shown an upward trend, their budgets have not increased sufficiently to compensate for colleges' rising costs (Kapraun and Heard, 1992). Making matters even more difficult, state-level financial support for higher education between 1990 and 1991 fell 30% in Massachusetts, 27.2% in New Jersey, 15% in Rhode Island and Virginia, 13% in Connecticut, 10% in Maryland, and 9.5% in California (Summers, 1991).

In order to deal with the budget troubles which seem so much a part of educational planning in the 1990s, community colleges have taken various steps to preserve a maximal amount of student programming while simultaneously facing up to the harsh realities of their limited funding levels. In order to meet the goals of their broad mission statements while adjusting to insufficient or diminishing levels of funding, colleges have generally had to cut back on programming and find sources of revenue outside of state support. This digest examines the limitations of California's educational funding plans and chronicles the efforts of California's community colleges to deal with the impact of their state's financial problems.

CALIFORNIA'S FUNDING GAP

The California community college system, with its 107 colleges and 1.4 million students, accounts for 10% of all U.S. college students and is the largest system of higher education in the world (Huggett, 1991). A 1992 study undertaken by the Board of Governors of the California Community Colleges revealed that the revenue sources which support the colleges would provide approximately \$2.8 billion dollars for the academic year. However, the study also determined that \$5.1 billion would be required for the colleges to meet the standards advocated by the Board of Governors to carry out their institutional mission as set forth in California's Master Plan for Higher Education. This "funding gap" is the difference between actual funding and the funding required to fully meet the institutional mission, and, at \$2.3 billion, the gap is 82% more than what is actually available in the budget. According to the study, this gap has developed over the past decade as a result of 1978's Proposition 13 (which limited property taxes), inadequate funding between 1982 and 1985, the funding cap on growth since 1982, and California's current budgetary problems. The following elements of the gap were highlighted by the Board of Governor's study:

- * \$245 million to adequately serve the 52,000 enrolled but not funded FTE students.

- * \$1,548 million to raise the operating budgets from their current levels (\$3,100 per FTES) to the current Program-Based Funding standard (\$4,800 per FTES).

- * \$39 million to increase staff development and deferred facilities maintenance funding to the recommended levels.

* \$98 million to continue the capital outlay program at necessary levels.

* \$382 million to restore access levels to those suggested by the Master Plan by meeting the demand for adult education.

POTENTIAL CONSEQUENCES OF THE FUNDING GAP

California's community colleges have not remained unscathed by the seriousness and the duration of the funding gap. The picture of California's community colleges that is painted by the Board of Governor's study is one of a system attempting to meet the needs of its constituents by straining beyond its means. Compared to similar colleges in eight large, industrial states, California's community colleges have a higher student/faculty ratio (27:1 compared with 18:1), larger class sizes, and higher course loads taught by instructors during each academic term (five per term in California, compared with only four elsewhere). Similarly, library facilities do not provide the quality or quantity of services available in comparable systems, and they frequently rely on outmoded technology (Newmeyer and McIntyre, 1992).

The funding gap has also had an impact on educational access in the state. Whereas community colleges served one in every eleven adult Californians in 1981, the colleges were serving one in every fourteen a decade later. For colleges to have maintained the same level of access, they would have had to enroll 280,000 more students than had actually enrolled in Fall 1991--an unlikely proposition, as it is estimated that the colleges turned away 120,000 potential students. (Newmeyer and McIntyre, 1992). Moreover, tuition increases have caused a large number of students who might otherwise have attended the University of California or the California State University to enroll in community colleges for the first two years of their undergraduate education. This influx of students intending to transfer has diverted college resources away from such activities as job retraining or citizenship education (including English as a second language).

HOW COLLEGES ARE ADJUSTING

California's community colleges have taken decisive action during this crisis period. Some of the methods utilized by colleges for working around budget limitations include:

* Increasing business ventures: licensing products with college logos and mascots, accepting corporate sponsorship for athletic championships, and marketing college event radio and television broadcasting rights.

* Cutting course sections: during a three-year period, colleges cut some 13,000 course sections, about 10% of all classes offered in the system.

* Increasing average class size: 31.5 students, compared to the national average of 21.

- * Personnel reductions: several ways of reducing budget expenditures included: not replacing vacancies created by the departure of faculty, staff and administrators; reducing many staff positions to part-time status; laying off employees; hiring freezes; and implementing "golden handshake" and early retirement policies.
- * Transferring of costs: deferring maintenance, shifting employees to alternately (or non-governmentally) funded programs.
- * Redirection of monies between educational units.
- * Offering low-expense coursework: because all courses receive the same amount of state assistance, colleges began to focus resources on courses which cost less to produce.
- * Cutting summer course offerings.
- * Reducing student activities, facilities and services, including library hours and dramatic productions.
- * Moving off-campus and extension courses back to the campus.
- * Cutting the distribution of the schedule of classes: rather than merely mailing schedules to all local constituents, schools began to mail schedules only to continuing students or made them available on campus.
- * Utilizing differential fee structures, whereby community college student who already have baccalaureate degrees paid \$50 per unit instead of the normal \$13 per unit fee.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

Many of these activities have had serious effects on the abilities of community colleges to meet the needs of their constituents and fulfill their missions. The differential fee structure, for example, directly resulted in a loss of 50% of students with Bachelor's degrees and 4% of all community college students (Brinkman, 1993). Not only did this fee structure reduce college enrollments, but it demonstrated an institutional bias: Generally, students with Bachelor's degrees who attended community college were those who were seeking job training of some sort. This bias toward traditional transfer and vocational students stands in contrast to the universality of the mission of the community college. The differential fee structure was subsequently dropped in January of 1996, marking a return to the broader notion of educational access that the community college represents. Colleges will have to continue to make similar strides to balance the needs of the community, the educational mission of the college, and the financial situation of the state.

CITATIONS

Brinkman, Charles R. IV. "How Will the Implementation of a Differential Tuition Fee Structure at the California Community College System Influence Student Enrollment?" Graduate Seminar Paper: University of California, Los Angeles, 1993. 44pp. (ED 359 993)

Huggett, Kim. 1991: How Colleges are Coping, Pleasanton, CA: Chabot-Las Positas Community College District. 1991. 16 pp. (ED 377 921)

Huggett, Kim. How Colleges are Coping, Numbers 2-6, February-October 1992. Pleasanton, CA: Chabot-Las Positas Community College District, 1992. 37 pp. (ED 377 922)

Huggett, Kim. How Colleges are Coping, Numbers 7-13, January-November 1993. Pleasanton, CA: Chabot-Las Positas Community College District, 1993. 73 pp. (ED 377 923)

Huggett, Kim. How Colleges are Coping, Numbers 14-17, March-October 1994. Pleasanton, CA: Chabot-Las Positas Community College District, 1994. 48 pp. (ED 377 924)

Kapraun, E. Daniel, and Heard, Don A. Assessing the Financial and Institutional Concerns of Arkansas Community and Technical Colleges: A Model Approach. Fayetteville, AK: Department of Educational Leadership, Counseling, and Foundations, University of Arkansas, 1992. 17 pp. (ED 352 088)

Newmeyer, Joe, and McIntyre, Chuck. Funding Gap Study. Sacramento, CA: Board of Governors of the California Community Colleges. Paper presented at a meeting of the Governors of the California Community Colleges, Sacramento, CA, March 12-13 1992. 69 pp. (ED 351 066)

Summers, Susan Robinson. Financing the American Community College in the 1990's: A Kind of Blues or the Same Old Tune? Gainesville, FL: Interinstitutional Research Council, University of Florida, 1991. 26 pp. (ED 336 146)

The Clearinghouse operates under OERI Contract No. RI 93-00-2003. The opinions expressed in this digest do not necessarily reflect the position or policy of OERI and no official endorsement by OERI should be inferred.

Title: The Thin Green Line: Community Colleges' Struggle To Do More with Less. ERIC Digest.

Document Type: Information Analyses---ERIC Information Analysis Products (IAPs) (071); Information Analyses---ERIC Digests (Selected) in Full Text (073);

Descriptors: Class Size, College Planning, Community Colleges, Economic Factors, Educational Economics, Educational Finance, Enrollment Trends, Financial Exigency, Financial Support, Institutional Mission, Program Termination, Retrenchment, School

Effectiveness, State Aid, Teacher Student Ratio, Two Year Colleges

Identifiers: California Community Colleges, ERIC Digests

###



[\[Return to ERIC Digest Search Page\]](#)