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ABSTRACT

This report provides a review of the California Community Colleges Board of Governors' policy and system progress in achieving student equity. It explores the regulatory basis for student equity; advances a definition of student equity; considers the Board's historical commitment to student success; identifies available funding sources; and examines the impact of the Board's policy in promoting access and success for all student groups. In September 1992, the Board of Governors adopted a policy on Student Equity for California's community colleges, built on the earlier programmatic approaches, which directed colleges to assure that students from historically underrepresented groups have an equal opportunity for access, success, and transfer. Appended to the regulations adopted by the Board were definitions, or "indicators," for assessing progress in achieving student equity and to assist districts in their plan development. Collectively, the community colleges have demonstrated improvement in the levels of representation of target population groups. The marginal patterns in success rates for African Americans and Hispanics would suggest, however, that there are some community colleges and districts that may have findings which warrant corrective action. (JA)

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ACHIEVING STUDENT EQUITY: HISTORY AND CURRENT STATUS

Committee on: Equity, Diversity, and Human Resources
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Presentation: Gus Guichard, Vice Chancellor
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Issue

This item provides a review of Board of Governors policy and system progress in achieving student equity. The review explores the regulatory basis for student equity; advances a definition of student equity; considers the Board's historical commitment to student success; identifies available funding sources; and examines the impact of the Board's policy in promoting access and success for all student groups.

Background

The Board and system interest in providing equal opportunities for all students to succeed, with a early emphasis on underrepresented students, has resulted in the adoption of policy statements and the promulgation of various program initiatives. As early as 1969, the Board embraced the Extended Opportunity Program and Services (EOPS), followed by policy statements encouraging equal access for women, the Disabled Student Program and Services (DSPS), the CARE Program and the Matriculation Program.

In September 1992, the Board of Governors adopted a policy on Student Equity for California's community colleges, built on the earlier programmatic approaches, which directed colleges to assure that students from historically underrepresented groups have an equal opportunity for access, success, and transfer. Each district was asked to develop and adopt a student equity plan involving all groups on campus and in the community, and to submit the plan to the Chancellor's Office.

The Board also recommended a set of “student equity indicators” to assist districts in identifying equity issues and setting goals within the plan.

The Partnership for Excellence program was authorized in 1998 and, similar to student equity plans has established performance outcomes for assessing the system’s progress toward achieving student success goals. The Partnership for Excellence goals share the four principal success measures contained in student equity plans. The Partnership for Excellence goals can be conformed to encompass student equity indicators. To the extent possible, these programs will be examined to determine the extent to which initiatives funded through them also advance student equity goals.

In the absence of student equity funding, the use of Partnership for Excellence funds gives promise for achieving, at each community college campus, “statewide goals that reflect the highest priority for the social and economic success of the state”. The Legislature has established educational equity among its highest priorities (Education Code Section 66010.20).

Recommendation

No action is required; this item is presented for Board information.

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Background

The California Community Colleges, as a state system Of colleges separate from K-12 districts was established in 1968 with the formation of a separate governing board--the Board of Governors for California Community Colleges. Promoting diversity and equity were among the very first issues addressed by the Board.

In July 1968, at a joint meeting of the Board of Governors (Board) and the Board of Education (which formerly had oversight responsibility for community colleges) the Board called for a study of community college enrollment and a study of disadvantaged students. At the following independent meeting of the Board, the resulting Berg/Axtel Report noted substantive minority student underrepresentation among community college enrollment. At its October 1968 meeting, the Board established the State Advisory Committee on Disadvantaged Students that ushered in the Extended Opportunity Programs and Services (EOPS) authorized by Senate Bill 164 in 1969. Subsequently, the Board adopted its first Affirmative Action Program outline in February, 1969.

The master program elements identified by the State Advisory Committee on Disadvantaged Students to address the disparity in educational benefits among various underrepresented groups were essentially the same then as. today:

- Promoting access to community colleges through admission; and
- Fostering retention in course and program completion.

Promoting educational opportunity through legislative appropriations and regulatory program guidelines, following the example of EOPS, proved to be a successful model and led to the development of other programs addressing under-served population groups: Disabled Student Programs and Services (DSPS), Reentry Women Programs, Cooperative Agency Resources for Education (CARE), and Matriculation. Though inspired by an interest in promoting diversity and equal opportunity for educational success, these methods (in today's terminology) are considered race neutral in that they do not specifically target minority groups but instead target indirect indicators which are closely aligned with some of the conditions predominant in minority populations groups such as economic disadvantage, receipt of public assistance, single parenthood, etc.

In February, 1979 the Board adopted a Student Affirmative Action Plan. Despite the Board's early interest in promoting more direct Affirmative Action measures within California community colleges, its posture was limited to encouraging districts to adopt faculty and student Affirmative Action policies, practices, and procedures. The first steps to move the community college system in the direction of a more aggressive mandate to regulate Affirmative Action practices was a legislative appropriation and the regulatory mandate of the Faculty and Staff Diversity program of 1987.

Statutory Authority

Renewed Board concern for the status of underrepresented students was evidenced by the establishment in 1989 of a standing Board Committee on Equity and Diversity. The impetus for the Board of Governors Student Equity policy emerged from this climate and has its foundation established in AB 617, Chapter 1198 (Statutes of 1991). Underpinning this legislation was a body work completed by the California Commission for the Review of the Master Plan of Higher Education including two reports which recommended changes in the master plan and a renewed emphasis on education which recognizes the changing multicultural aspects of California's population.

Based on this work, the Legislature made the following key declarations (among others), establishing a context for future higher education efforts:

- (1) California is on the threshold of becoming a state with a new multicultural majority as the ethnic composition of the populations is changing dramatically . . .
- (2) Current estimates indicate that California will need to accommodate hundreds of thousands of additional students by the year 2005 . . . especially if groups that are historically and currently underrepresented increase their rates of participation
- (3) California must support an educational system which prepares a multicultural society
- (4) To accomplish these goals, California's system of higher education will need to expand."

Based on these findings the Legislature established a *Comprehensive Mission Statement* for all California public as well as private schools.

Section 66030 of the Education Code requires governing boards (including the Board of Governors) to ensure and maintain multicultural learning environments free from all forms of discrimination and harassment. This responsibility is reinforced in Ed. Code Section 66010.2(c) which requires education equity, not only through a diverse and representative student body, but also through educational environments in which each person has a reasonable chance to fully develop his or her potential.

Student Equity Policy and Plan

In September 1992, the Board adopted overall policy on student equity, including a regulation, which requires district to develop, implement and evaluate student equity plans. The Board's student equity policy outlined the elements for inclusion in each district plan:

1. Campus-based research and campus climate studies to note evidence of any adverse impact on historically underrepresented groups and identify barriers to educational access or success;
2. Goals to address any adverse impact noted for any group in the areas of access, success, or transfer
3. Strategies for attaining goals—including increased coordination among existing student services programs and with faculty and other instructional staff;
4. Resources designated for implementation of the plan;
5. Process and a schedule for evaluation; and
6. An executive summary.

The most critical element in developing a viable student equity plan is the conduct of basic research. Appended to the regulations adopted by the Board were definitions, or “indicators,” for assessing progress in achieving student equity and to assist districts in their plan development:

ACCESS: The percentage that each group is enrolled compared to its representation in the adult population within the community served.

COURSE COMPLETION: Ratio of the number of credit courses actually completed by the end of the term compared to the number of courses enrolled on the census day of the term.

ESL AND BASIC SKILLS COMPLETION: Ratio of those who complete a degree applicable course after having completed the final ESL or basic skills course.

DEGREE AND CERTIFICATE COMPLETION: Ratio of receipt of degree or certificates to the number of students with the same informed matriculation goal.

TRANSFER RATE: Ratio of those who earn 6 or more transferable units during the first college year and who also stated at entry their intent to transfer, to those who transfer after one or more (up to eight) years.

Challenges to Implementing the Student Equity Policy

Implementation of the Board's Student Equity regulations was delayed through January 1993 for review by the Department of Finance to determine if the Title 5 provisions created a state mandated cost, with the result that the due date for plans was set back to December 31, 1993.

Plans were received from 69 districts including 103 colleges. A group of readers determined that many of the plans required additional work in order to address all the elements required for a complete plan. The Board consequently directed the Chancellor's staff to contact colleges whose plans needed improvement and take steps to assure all community colleges have approved student equity plans.

Although over 90% of the districts developed plans, more than half of the colleges represented by these plans were just beginning to put in place elements needed to implement a plan: comprehensive institutional research to support a campus climate study; a comparative data base grounded in the Board's five student equity indicators; and viable strategies to address any equity issues noted.

The plan review also identified certain challenges:

- Additional time would be required to address the research problems posed by the operational definitions called for in the Board's student equity policy;

- The need for clear leadership in the development of model student equity plans and more defined operational definitions of equity indicators;
- Providing direct and sustained involvement of faculty, staff, and students in the planning process; and in the elimination of barriers to the educational process.
- Despite the finding of no mandated cost, at the time of the adoption of the Title 5 regulations, the complexity of the research questions posed by student equity planning has a considerable fiscal impact on district research functions.

The debate within the newly established consultation process indicated that a number of districts were unable to conduct the type of institutional research necessary to develop viable plans in the absence of state support. The emergence of the Proposition 209 debate suggested that the struggle to obtain state funding would be a time-consuming process. The Chancellor therefore agreed to accept existing student equity plans on file, and pledged to seek state funding to support the planning and implementation of student equity plans.

Commitment to Diversity

Proposition 209 represented a challenge to existing affirmative action practices that many thought would bring an end to affirmative action programs in California. Although the passage of Prop 209 did not end such programs, it generated a controversy which, in light of uncertain legal repercussions, eroded the confidence of many in advancing policies which promoted diversity. Additionally, in the absence of state funding, many colleges put their student equity initiatives on hold while waiting for clear direction from the courts.

Proposition 209 prompted widespread debate and reexamination of the practices used to foster diversity and led to some modifications in district policy and practices that promoted diversity and equity.

At its November, 1996 meeting, the Board of Governors amended its Student Equity regulations to:

- Require community college districts to have in place a student equity plan as a minimum condition for receipt of state funding

- Expand the focus of the plan beyond historically underrepresented groups in order to promote student success for all students; and
- Establish criteria for determining when disparities in success rates were significant enough to justify remedial action.

In a November 1998 ruling, the Sacramento Superior Court held that the affirmative action statutes affecting the community colleges as implemented by the Board of Governors Title 5 regulations are constitutional. The court further noted that the limited preferences allowed by the Board's regulations are permissible because they are narrowly tailored and may be invoked only when districts can demonstrate a statistically significant disparity in the success rates of students from underrepresented groups which has endured despite efforts to eliminate them by race or gender neutral means.

Although this ruling has given reassurance to many in the system that diversity and equity policies and procedures are constitutionally permissible, it has not served to fully revitalize district affirmative action activities.

In September, 1998, the Board of Governor adopted the California Community College Commitment reaffirming its support for diversity and equity programs and policies. The cornerstone of the Commitment is contained in its four goals:

1. Foster success for all community college students;
2. Increase opportunities to hire and promote more diverse staff and faculty;
3. Implement a public awareness campaign emphasizing the value of diversity; and
4. Obtain additional resources to carry out the necessary activities to achieve these goals.

Student Success Resources

Since the adoption of Prop 209, the community college system has received two new appropriations to promote student success. The Fund for Student Success (FSS) (\$11.4 million), authorized in 1997, provides planning and institutionalization funds to improve student outcomes. The

Board has taken steps to forge a link between this fund and student equity by supporting grants to districts which have attempted to improve practices and stimulate the development of student equity/success plans.

The Partnership for Excellence (PFE) program, authorized in 1998, is now funded at \$300 million “. . . for the purpose of achieving annual performance goals and improving student learning and student success.” According to the statute, the Partnership for Excellence program is dependent on a mutual commitment by the State of California and the California Community Colleges to achieve statewide goals that reflect the highest priority for the social and economic success of the state.” The common educational mission of achieving “educational equity through educational environments in which each person, regardless of race, gender, age, disability, or economic circumstances, has a reasonable chance to fully develop his or her potential” is consistent with these goals. Furthermore, the designation of the requirement of a district student equity plan as minimum condition for the receipt of state funds identifies this policy as among the Board’s highest priorities.

The areas in which statewide goals have been articulated and outcome measures have been established for the Partnership for Excellence program closely parallel 4 of the 5 equity/success indicators contained in the Board’s student equity policy: course completion; ESL/basic skills completion; degree/certificate completion; and transfer. The performance outcomes for the Partnership for Excellence are based on projections of expected growth rates and improvements in student success rates.

Measures of Student Success

The success rates calculated for Partnership for Excellence goals are broad measures for overall systemwide student success. Partnership for Excellence, similar to Student Equity, determines “success rates” by calculating the percentage of those in each indicator area who are successful among all those who, for example, have attempted to enroll in transfer, basic skills, or vocational education courses. Student Equity provides another dimension by calculating the success rates of various target sub-groups within this population to determine if they are in line with that of the general population. All things being equal, the levels of representation of subgroups that are successful should be commensurate with their levels of representation within the population of those that enrolled or pursued a given goal.

As an example, if 1,000 students were enrolled in basic skill courses and 850 successfully completed, their PFE success rate would be 85%. Student equity would further expect that, all things being equal, the success rates of each of the various target populations that comprise the base population would be 85 % as well. Thus, if Hispanic students constituted 10% of the enrollment (100), they might be expected to represent 10% of the successful completers (85). The actual success rate of Hispanic completers may vary, however. That variation can be used to determine the extent to which positive or negative forces may be exerting a potential influence on the results of certain groups.

The calculation of the actual impact ratio of forces exerted on completers in comparison to their levels of representation in the base population is the method used to test whether the results experienced by a given group are within tolerable ranges of expectation. The impact ratio would be expected to be 1, 100%, or $((85/.10)/(1,000/.10))$. An impact ratio above 100% would indicate that the target group is succeeding at a higher rate than the general population, and an impact ratio below 100% would indicate that the target group is succeeding at a rate below that of the general population. Target groups which succeed at a rate significantly or substantively below the general population for a given indicator area are identified as equity/success issues which may give rise to the need for possible corrective action.

The Federal Office of Economic Opportunity (OEO) has established an impact ratio of 80% as the level at which one might conclude that forces are operating so as to have an adverse impact on a target population. The Board of Governors has established in its student equity policy that an impact ratio of 70% or less is extreme enough to require corrective action. Both indicators are important in that affirmative action case law requires:

1. Employment of race/gender/disability neutral means to address goals directed at improving substantive levels of underrepresentation.
2. "Corrective action" measures may employ race/gender/disability conscious means to address goals directed at improving significant levels of underrepresentation only when race/gender/disability neutral means have been exhausted and proven that they do not or can not work.

If race/gender/disability conscious methods are use to achieve diversity goals then “narrowly tailored” requisites would come into play. Evidence must be provided that:

- a. the least restrictive means or race-neutral alternatives have not or will not work;
- b. race, gender or disability is not the sole or controlling criteria for determination;
- c. race conscious methods involves a “temporary deviation from the norm of equal treatments” (e.g. a starting point for corrective action (70%) and an ending point (80%) terminating action); and,
- d. there is a minimal burden on those who are excluded from the benefit conferred.

Conducting basic research and monitoring institutional progress, when properly employed, may lead districts to take corrective action that can include, under the circumstances indicated above, narrowly tailored race/gender conscious measures. Consequently, the Board requires more than a policy, in areas subject to litigation such as this, but credible implementation practices and procedures as well.

Student Equity regulations require districts/colleges to adopt a plan. Unlike faculty and staff diversity regulations, they do not require plans to be periodically updated or evaluated. In the absence of such requirements, there is no regular oversight responsibility to monitor the implementation of student equity plans, to restrict improvement strategies to race/gender/disability neutral measures, or to authorize narrowly tailored race/gender/disability conscious measures in light of appropriate evidence.

In the absence of basic demographic research called for by student equity plans, the system is limited in its ability to:

1. Determine with precision which student population groups are succeeding and which are not;
2. Establish baseline data to evaluate progress and the success of selected strategies in advancing institutional success goals for all students.

3. Adequately determine where to most effectively allocate its resources to address areas of greatest need to achieve student success.

Partnership for Excellence goals can be combined with those of student equity to achieve the intended objectives of both programs. A number of colleges have successfully demonstrated their ability to improve their overall performance measures for Partnership for Excellence without compromising their aspirations for achieving educational equity. In the absence of student equity funding, this use of Partnership for Excellence funds gives promise of hope for achieving, at each community college campus, “statewide goals that reflect the highest priority for the social and economic success of the state”.

Access

The success indicators for the Partnership for Excellence does not include a measure of student access. However, a diverse and representative community college student body has been a historical item of concern of the Board. Promoting access for all has been the key to a diverse community college. That diversity has been viewed as a source for other segments of higher education to tap in making improvements in the diversity of their own student enrollment.

Outside of its segmental reporting responsibility, the Chancellor’s Office first began reporting racial and ethnic student data in it’s 1979 Student Affirmative Action Plan based on Fall 1977 enrollment data. Applying the student equity assessment model to the 1977 enrollment data, Hispanics were found to be significantly underrepresented when compared to their levels of representation in California’s adult population at that time giving legitimate cause, over the years, for the Board’s concern for promoting diversity in the community college system.

is data is reported in Appendix A and tracts both gender and equity patterns at four-five year intervals up through our most recent report for 1997. These findings show that in the last two decades Asian/Pacific Islanders and Hispanics have been the fastest growing populations groups in California. Likewise, these two groups have also been the fastest growing population groups in California community college enrollment in the period from 1977 to 1997. Despite a decline in the rate at which the adult population is enrolling in community colleges (8% in 1977 and 6% in 1997), there are no noted levels of substantive underrepresentation of Hispanics), women, or any other historically underrepresented population groups. Whites on the other hand, have experienced only a 15% increase

in California's adult population and a -33% decline in California's community college enrollment. Although, the levels of underrepresentation of whites is not significant enough to warrant corrective action, they are substantive enough to monitor and consider the development of goals to attempt to reverse this trend.

Course Completion

Student Equity/Success indicators for course completion, basic skills completion, and Degree/Certificate completion were first reported in 1993. This along with updated findings based on 1997-98 data are contained in Appendix B. According to these findings, there has been a slight drop in the success rates over the past five years for transfer courses (69.7% to 68.9%), Vocational education (75% to 74.7%), basic skills (63.6% to 59%), and general course completion (69.2% to 68.3%). Despite these findings there are no substantive levels of underrepresentation in the completion of transfer, vocational education, or all community college courses as a whole that would call for monitoring or the establishment of goals to address adverse trends for groups by gender, ethnicity, or disability.

However, an examination of basic skills course completion reveals that in 1997-98, African-Americans were found to be moving into the category of substantive underrepresentation

when compared to their levels of enrollment in these courses. Although, the levels of underrepresentation is not significant enough to warrant corrective action, they are substantive enough to monitor and consider the development of goals to attempt to reverse this trend.

Degree/Certificate Completion

In 1993-94, Hispanics were found to be substantively underrepresented in obtaining community college degrees and certificates. The overall success rates increased, over the past four years, for those enrolling in community colleges courses who ultimately obtained a degree/certificate (1.1% to 1.2%) and those who enrolled in transfer courses who obtain and AA/AS degree (1% to 1.2%). By 1997-98, none of the target group populations were noted to be substantively underrepresented.

Although, the improvement noted here is a reflection of the progress being made by identifiable target groups, a growing number of students have elected not to identify themselves by gender, ethnicity or disability. This population group gives cause for concern due to significant levels of underrepresentation noted in achieving degrees and certificates, and the

ability to specifically identify who these students are that need to be served.

Transfer

Students Equity/Success indicators for UC and CSU transfer were first reported for student equity in 1993. These 1993 data, along with updated findings based on 1997-98 data, are contained in Appendix C. Based on these findings, the transfer of community college Associate degree recipients has declined to both the UC system (18.3% to 14.3%) and to the CSU system (56.6% to 44.4%).

African-Americans, who were significantly underrepresented in their rates of transfer to the UC system in 1993 (42%), continue to transfer at rates significantly below that expected in 1997 (40%). Additionally, Hispanics are now significantly underrepresented in their transfer rates to UC; and Native Americans continue to be substantively underrepresented in their transfer rates to UC.

Despite a more substantive decline in transfer of community college students to the CSU system, there are no substantive levels of underrepresentation in the rates of transfer of identified ethnic groups.

Minimum Standards Review of Student Equity Plans

The Chancellor has initiated a comprehensive review of district compliance with Title 5 regulations that require certain minimum conditions to be met by each community college district receiving state funds. Districts have been requested to provide evidence of having met the requirements of the relevant sections, including sections 51027 and 54220, which require the development and adoption of a student equity plan. Initial responses were due by March 15, but the districts that did not submit complete evidence of conformance have until November 15 to submit their information. Human Resources division staff have begun to review those plans already submitted. This review of student equity plans will provide an opportunity to compare each districts student equity plan objectives with individual district accomplishment in achieving similar Performance for Excellence goals. Following such review, districts will be advised as to other measures that might be taken to more fully achieve their local student equity goals.

Summary

Collectively, the community college have demonstrated improvement in the levels of representation of target population groups in achieving access, successful course completion, and in transfers to the California State University. The marginal patterns in success rates for African-Americans and Hispanics at the statewide level would suggest, however, that there are a number of individual community colleges and districts that may have findings which warrant or may even require corrective action.

As a system, however, continued attention is required to improve transfer rates to the University of California. In order to address these problems the Chancellor has entered in Memoranda of Understanding (MOU) with both UC and CSU to increase the number of transfers to both systems. However, the Board may wish to continue to monitor institutional as well as statewide progress. Improvements, in order to be achieved, must take place on a campus by campus basis. The Board is only able to facilitate improvement through its policies, monitoring and implementation procedures; and through the provision of the necessary resources to enable district to implement the necessary strategies to overcome education barriers to student success.

In the absence of specified student equity funding, the use of Partnership for Excellence funds gives promise for achieving, at each community college campus, "statewide goals that reflect the highest priority for the social and economic success of the state". The Legislature has established as among its highest priorities: "...Access to education, and the opportunity for educational success for all qualified Californians. ". . . and "...Educational equity not only through a diverse and representative student body and faculty but also through educational environments in which each person, regardless of race, gender, age, disability, or economic circumstances, has a reasonable chance to fully develop his or her potential." (Education Code, Section 66010.2)

These goals are consistent with those of the Partnership for Excellence program, which was "established for the purpose of achieving annual performance goals and improving student learning and student success."

Next Steps

The Chancellor has initiated a review of district compliance with minimum conditions for the receipt of state funds. The review of student equity is an integral part of that overall review and will be combined with a comparison, as appropriate, with district accomplishment of Performance

for Excellence outcomes. Technical assistance will be provided to assist districts achieve their student equity goals.

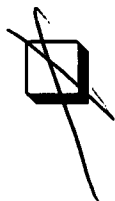


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