SMC SSTF RESPONSE TASK FORCE RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendations Supported:

Number	Description	Comments
1.1	Community Colleges will collaborate with K-12 education to jointly develop common standards for college and career readiness that are aligned with ~~high school exit~~ **college entrance** standards.	SMC supports this ambitious, long-term statewide effort provided that the indicated language change reported after the November SSTF meeting is included in the final version of the recommendations. We agree with the input from other groups that basing this effort on high school exit standards would be a big mistake. (The current CAHSEE testing levels are 10th grade English and 8th grade mathematics.)
2.2	Require all incoming community college students to: (1) participate in (a) diagnostic assessment and (b) orientation, and (2) develop an education plan.	SMC has already implemented mandatory assessment and orientation. (However, no existing assessment instrument is truly diagnostic. The effectiveness of existing instruments is limited to placement.) We support required student education plans, with the caveat that implementation would require significant additional state funding for counseling services. The SEP process must be flexible, dynamic, and iterative, recognizing that individual student plans will change frequently.
2.4	Require students whose diagnostic assessments show a lack of readiness for college to participate in a support resource, such as a student success course, provided by the college for new students.	SMC has conducted a study demonstrating that students who complete Counseling 20, our student success course, are much more likely to be successful. (For example, the study revealed that students enrolled in Counseling 20 in a fall semester were 29.7% more likely to persist to the following fall term than students not enrolled in the course.) We support this recommendation and feel that implementation should allow for students to complete the course within their first two semesters. Additional state funding would be required to support the needed additional sections.
3.2	Require students receiving Board of Governors fee waivers to meet various conditions and requirements.	SMC supports requiring BOG waiver students to meet satisfactory academic progress requirements similar to those for federal and other state financial aid programs, provided that there is sufficient additional state funding to support enforcement of the new requirements, implementation of appeal processes, and appropriate support and intervention services.
3.3	Community Colleges will provide students the opportunity to consider the benefits of full-time enrollment.	SMC already encourages full-time enrollment of students and supports the concept of better emphasizing the advantages. However, we are doubtful that this will have a profound impact, since our students have so many, varied personal reasons why they choose to attend part-time.
3.4	Community Colleges will require students to begin addressing basic skills deficiencies in their first year and continue remediation as part of their education plan.	SMC supports this recommendation. Since the implementation of mandatory assessment almost ten years ago, we have been actively encouraging early student enrollment in English or ESL and mathematics courses at their assessed level.

5.1	Community Colleges will support the development of alternatives to traditional basic skills curriculum and incentivize colleges to take to scale model programs for delivering basic skills instruction.	SMC supports this recommendation. We have begun working on this in several areas. In math we have developed cohorts of students who are working with supplemental instructors, and based on institutional research findings of improved success rates of students who work with supplemental instructors, we are expanding our supplemental instruction program to other gateway courses, including some at the transfer level. We are in the process of revising our English basic skills curriculum to make it possible for students to complete their pre-college level English classes in fewer semesters. We will study the results of the new courses offered to determine success rates of students in the compressed/intensive courses.
6.1	Community colleges will create a continuum of strategic professional development opportunities, for all faculty, staff and administrators to be better prepared to respond to the evolving student needs and measures of student success.	SMC supports this recommendation, now that the language authorizing the Chancellor to mandate specific professional development activities has been removed.
6.2	Community Colleges will direct professional development resources targeted at both faculty and staff toward improving basic skills instruction and support services.	SMC has been using BSI funding and Title 5 grants to improve basic skills instruction and support services through professional development activities. Indeed, professional development is a key component for new curriculum to be developed and for new programs and services to be successful. However, ongoing funding is needed to support these efforts.
7.1	The state should develop and support a strong community college system office with commensurate authority, appropriate staffing, and adequate resources to provide leadership, oversight, technical assistance and dissemination of best practices. Further, the state should grant the Community College Chancellor's Office the authority to implement policy, consistent with state law.	SMC supports this recommendation, although it is only indirectly related to student success.

7.2	In collaboration with the CCC Chancellor's Office, districts and colleges will identify specific goals for student success and report their progress toward meeting these goals in a public and transparent manner.	SMC supports the establishment by the Chancellor's Office of goals and minimum requirements for the posting of student success data at the local level, and these goals would be incorporated into SMC's Institutional Effectiveness Dashboard, which is currently being developed. As stated in the response to Recommendation 7.3, we do not support the concept of local scorecards developed by the Chancellor's Office based upon ARCC data.
8.2	Invest in the Student Support Initiative.	SMC agrees that it is necessary to invest in those Student Support Initiative recommendations that gain system-wide support.

Recommendations Supported in Principle, but with Problematic Identified Implementation Plans:

Number	Description	Comments
2.1	Community colleges will develop and implement a common centralized assessment for English reading and writing, mathematics, and English as a Second Language (ESL) that can provide diagnostic information to inform curriculum development and student placement and that, over time, will be aligned with the K-12 Common Core State Standards and assessments.	Since there are no truly diagnostic assessment instruments on the market today, implementation of this idealistic recommendation is truly a long-term project. Any such instrument must be developed through a comprehensive review of course objectives, learning outcomes, and entry and exit skills for every English, ESL, and mathematics course taught at a California community college. Simply reviewing the newly adopted Common Core State Standards will not be sufficient to address the differences among individual colleges. SMC would welcome assessment instruments that provide diagnostic information that can inform curriculum development in addition to meeting student placement needs. Even if a common assessment is selected, local cut scores would need to be determined based on local curriculum and local student populations, which differ from college to college.
2.3	Community colleges will develop and use centralized and integrated technology, which can be accessed through campus or district web portals, to better guide students in their educational process.	SMC is very supportive of using technology tools to support guiding students through the educational process. However, SMC's experience with our degree audit program and other electronic tools is that they supplement, rather than replace, face-to-face counseling. (The complexity of transfer paths in California and the lack of consistency of curricula among the community colleges in California from which students may be transferring units make it difficult for such programs to provide complete information without manual entry and for students to correctly interpret various transfer requirements on their own.) We are skeptical of the ability of the Chancellor's Office to develop so ambitious a list of technology tools that will be compatible with all enterprise computing systems used by California community colleges. Perhaps, it would be preferable for the Chancellor's Office to focus on developing minimum standards for such applications rather than attempting to serve a centralized software engineer function.
3.1	The Community Colleges will adopt system-wide priorities that: (1) reflect the core mission of transfer, career technical education and basic skills development; (2) encourage students to identify their educational objective and follow a prescribed path most likely to lead to success; (3) ensure access and the opportunity for success for new students; and (4) incentivize students to make progress toward their educational goal.	SMC supports clarification of the currently vague enrollment priority guidelines in Education Code and Title 5 provided that some degree of flexibility remains to allow for the specific needs and characteristics of individual college districts.

4.1	Community Colleges will use the requirements for a student to complete a program of study, along with state and local data, including enrollment trends and labor market demand, to develop course schedules and determine course offerings.	SMC has traditionally excelled at building course schedules that are based upon student needs and has indeed served as a statewide model. Other than basic skills courses, our schedule for credit courses includes almost no offerings that do not meet transfer and/or degree- or certificate requirements. We do not offer the kinds of credit "recreational/avocational" courses the Chancellor so often references. Our primary scheduling challenge during these times of access rationing is dealing with the competition for scarce resources among the established priorities of transfer, career technical, and basic skills offerings. Although we absolutely support the principle of this recommendation, we find most of the implementation examples to be flawed. Using student educational plans as the basis for scheduling is simply not implementable. (IGETC, CSU GE, and degree/certificate requirements are far more useful tools.) The implementation plans in this recommendation would not allow for development of new academic programs, since this process generally begins with the offering of a few stand-alone courses in the new discipline. (Such courses would not be funded if this recommendation were to be implemented as written.) While we certainly support some sort prioritization among the ten categories of noncredit instruction, we are opposed to the wholesale elimination of all categories other than CDCP (Career Development and College Preparation). Fortunately, other statewide groups have offered similar input to the SSTF, and the implementation portions of this recommendation are being revised. Hopefully, with the forthcoming revisions, this recommendation will move to the "support" category for SMC.
5.2	The state should develop a comprehensive strategy for addressing basic skills education in California that results in a system that provides all adults with the access to education in mathematics, English, and English as a Second Language (ESL).	SMC agrees that basic skills education strategies need to be developed and supported to provide all adults with the access to education in mathematics, English, and ESL. However, we believe that strategies are best developed at the local level, allowing colleges to draw on their particular strengths and to address the unique needs of their local student populations. The model of having colleges work with their internal institutional research offices to identify local needs and to determine which strategies are most successful is the best way to fulfill this recommendation. For example, at SMC we know that students who participate in our Counseling 20 class, our Day of Welcome, and classes enhanced with supplemental instruction are more successful than students who do not participate in these interventions. Colleges with effective practices should be urged to share these practices with other colleges. However, SMC urges the task force to avoid adopting any models or set of strategies that assume a "one size fits all" principle. Support is needed in the form of ongoing funding for professional development to make it possible to develop these strategies.

7.3	Implement a student success score card.	SMC agrees with the concept of a student success score card and is indeed in the process of establishing an institutional effectiveness dashboard which will incorporate student success measures. However, we disagree with the concept of local student success score cards created by the Chancellor's Office for each district/college based upon ARCC data, which we have found to be unreliable at the local level. The Chancellor's Office should instead focus on developing a system-wide score card and limit its role in the posting of local student success data to the establishment of minimum requirements for the categories in which local data are to be posted.
8.4	Do not implement outcomes based funding at this time.	We agree that outcomes based funding should not be implemented, but we are concerned with the meaning of the "at this time" phrase in the recommendation. As stated in the response to Recommendation 7.3, we have concerns with the concept of a Chancellor's Office developed local scorecard based upon ARCC data.

Recommendations Opposed:

Number	Description	Comments
2.5	Encourage students to declare a program of study upon admission and require declaration by the end of their second term.	While SMC agrees with and practices the "encourage" portion of this recommendation, we oppose the "require declaration by the end of their second term" portion and, in particular, the punitive nature of the proposed implementation plan. We support the concept of allowing community college students to explore various disciplines and career paths, while receiving guidance to support them in making their decisions. After all, the community college general education experience often provides students with their very first exposure to various disciplines. Students often change their minds multiple times during this process, but appropriate counseling can minimize the number of "wasted" units. In fact, premature selection of a major can often result in completion of more courses that are not applicable to a subsequent educational goal. Completing IGETC or CSU GE requirements is a valid and valuable goal for any community college student, as preparation for both transfer and future employment.
~~8.1~~	~~Consolidate select categorical programs.~~	Recommendation has been withdrawn by the SSTF.
8.3	Establish an alternative funding model to encourage innovation and flexibility in the delivery of basic skills instruction.	SMC opposes this recommendation. It, in fact, constitutes an example of the outcomes based funding which is not supported "at this time" in Recommendation 8.4. More effective ways to encourage innovation could include: enhanced funding to hire more full-time faculty with expertise in basic skills education; support for professional development activities that individual colleges deem valuable (rather than made mandatory); statewide workshops that would allow colleges with model programs to share knowledge and expertise (effective practices) with other colleges.

JH/RL
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