

DRAFT

Dr. Jack Scott, Chancellor
California Community Colleges
1102 Q Street
Sacramento, CA 95811

Re: Student Success Task Force (SSTF) Recommendations

Dear Chancellor Scott:

Shared governance groups at De Anza College, including Academic Senate, Classified Senate, Student Services Planning and Budget Team, College Council, DARE (Developmental and Readiness Education) Task Force, and divisions and departments have been engaged in discussion and analysis of the potential impact of the Student Success Task Force (SSTF) recommendations. Assembling the discussions and analyses we have heard campuswide, we have the following response:

We fully endorse the California Community College Independents (CCCI) response to the SSTF recommendations (found at a.fhda.edu/images/fa-current-events/CCCI-Response.pdf).

We expect that our shared desire for increased student success means that extensive consultation and collaboration between the Chancellor's Office and faculty, staff, administrators, and students of our California Community Colleges will be conducted prior to any system-wide implementation of task force recommendations.

Rather than implementing fundamental changes in our student support structures, including matriculation, as proposed in the Student Success Task force recommendations, we strongly call for reinstating adequate funding of current student support services, including matriculation, which have suffered crippling funding cutbacks. Years of data from our successful student success cohort programs demonstrate that when students have access to adequate assessment, orientation, counseling and advising, and educational planning, there is a strong correlation between matriculation and student success. Existing matriculation structures, legislation and components have the potential to produce outcomes identified in the Student Success Task Force recommendations, but the budget allocation for matriculation services has been systematically and drastically reduced in the last several years. We urge you to do whatever you can to help adequately fund current matriculation services.

We also strongly oppose, as a general principle, basing any community college funding, including Basic Skills Initiative funding, on performance based criteria as a means to "incentivize" student success. Such a model of funding has proven to be highly detrimental to achieving student success for underrepresented students and underfunded schools in the K-12 No Child Left Behind policy.

In addition, we wish to convey to you what our college sees will be the detrimental impacts of some of the most current (December 1, 2011) SSTF recommendations on the very student success that these recommendations intend to support. In particular, we are concerned about the following recommendations:

2.5 Encourage students to declare a program of study upon admission, intervene if a declaration is not made by the end of their second term, and require declaration by the end of their third term in order to maintain enrollment priority.

The premise that all students who haven't declared a program of study within two terms are "wandering aimlessly" and squandering college resources is an extremely shortsighted view that does not take into account the fact that college is not just a career training ground and that many students do not know what they want to major in straight out of high school. In a quarter system, if a student enrolls in two terms/quarters consecutively, then s/he has to declare a program of study within 7 months of enrolling in college, whereas two consecutive terms in a semester system means a few academic year. As an equity issue between semester and quarter system colleges, we feel that basing policy on "terms" is too confusing. We prefer that students be allowed to complete up to 45 units of degree-applicable credit coursework before being required to declare a program of study.

3.2 Require students receiving Board of Governors (BOG) Fee Waivers to meet various conditions and requirements.

First of all, the unit cap on BOG fee waivers needs to be made clear for students in quarter system schools. Requiring students receiving a BOG fee waiver to meet “satisfactory progress standards” such as a minimal GPA, and also limiting the number of units covered under a BOG fee waiver to 110 units will make a college education significantly more out of reach for our neediest students, undermining their success. De Anza Student Trustee and Statewide Student Trustee President Emily Kinner has noted that Recommendations 2.5 and 3.2 together are “a vicious circle and a contradiction.” To be eligible for financial aid outside of the BOG fee waiver, students already currently need to declare an educational plan. Unit caps on financial aid in and of themselves are a penalizing measure, and recommending unit caps without also recommending funding more student success support interventions would handicap low-income students who also often have other issues that are barriers to passing classes. We urge the SSTF and Chancellor’s office to make sure that any unit caps do not apply to non-credit or basic skills classes and to also consider the impact of this recommendation on students whose goals are career retraining.

7.3 Implement a student success scorecard

7.4 The state of California should develop and support a longitudinal student record system to monitor student progress from elementary through postsecondary education and into the workplace

We support accountability, but if these recommendations intend to create new bureaucratic reporting structures and regulations that would further burden college resources, we do not support that. We also would like more clarification on the funding recommendation on this part of this recommendation 7.3, since the current Recommendation 8.1 makes no mention of score cards as a condition of receiving funding:

“Amend Title 5 to require local boards to discuss the scorecard at a public hearing and certify its content. Colleges would then publicly post their scorecard on websites and at physical locations and the Chancellor’s Office would make results for all colleges readily available for public view. Implementation of the scorecard process would be required as a condition of receiving funding under the Student Support Initiative (see Recommendation 8.1.)”

We do support the SSTF’s decisions to amend some recommendations, in particular:

- 1) Eliminate the recommendation to consolidate categorical program funding in 8.1
- 2) Relax limits on non-credit classes to only those identified as Career Development or College Preparation. Since our college is a founding member of The Democracy Commitment: <http://www.deanza.edu/communityengagement/democracycommitment>, we believe that non-credit classes such as citizenship classes that serve our most societally marginalized students to help them prepare to participate productively in our democratic processes is a high priority.
- 2) Remove the proposal to charge students the full cost of instruction for any courses not included in their program of study. Creating tiered systems of fees that would again impose hardship on a majority of our underrepresented students is a destructive blow to our CCC Mission and our tradition of open access.
- 4) Refine the comprehensive strategy for addressing Basic Skills education to distinguish that ESL courses are not reviewing or remediating skills but are actually teaching new academic writing, reading, and communication skills to English language learners.

We appreciate your acknowledgement of our concerns and incorporating our feedback on the SSTF recommendations into how you present these recommendations to the Board of Governors and the California state legislature.

Sincerely,

Karen Chow, Academic Senate President & De Anza Academic Senate

