Major Features of the California Master Plan for Higher Education

The original Master Plan was approved in principle by the Regents and the State Board of Education (which at that time governed the CSU and the Community Colleges) on December 18, 1959 and was submitted to the Legislature in February 1960. A special session of the 1960 Legislature passed the Donahoe Higher Education Act, which included many of the Master Plan recommendations. Governor Edmund G. (Pat) Brown signed the Donahoe Act into law on April 26, 1960. For various reasons, many of the key aspects of the Master Plan were never enacted into law although agreed to by the segments and the state.

The major features of the Master Plan as adopted in 1960 and amended in subsequent legislative reviews are as follows:

1. **Differentiation of functions** among the public postsecondary education segments:
   - UC is designated the State's primary academic research institution and is to provide undergraduate, graduate and professional education. UC is given exclusive jurisdiction in public higher education for doctoral degrees (with the two exceptions—see CSU below) and for instruction in law, medicine, dentistry, and veterinary medicine (the original plan included architecture).
   - CSU's primary mission is undergraduate education and graduate education through the master's degree including professional and teacher education. Faculty research is authorized consistent with the primary function of instruction. SB 724 (2006) authorized CSU to award a specific Doctor of Education (Ed.D.) in educational leadership. Other doctorates can be awarded jointly with UC or an independent institution.
   - The California Community Colleges have as their primary mission providing academic and vocational instruction for older and younger students through the first two years of undergraduate education (lower division). In addition to this primary mission, the Community Colleges are authorized to provide remedial instruction, English as a Second Language courses, adult noncredit instruction, community service courses, and workforce training services.

2. **Access and differentiation of admissions pools.** The establishment of the principle of universal access and choice, and differentiation of admissions pools for the segments:
   - UC was to select from among the top one-eighth (12.5%) of the high school graduating class.
   - CSU was to select from among the top one-third (33.3%) of the high school graduating class.
   - California Community Colleges were to admit any student capable of benefiting from instruction.
Access guarantee. Subsequent policy has modified the Master Plan to provide that all California residents in the top one-eighth or top one-third of the statewide high school graduating class who apply on time be offered a place somewhere in the UC or CSU system, respectively, though not necessarily at the campus or in the major of first choice.

State law affirms the state’s commitment to fund all eligible California residents:

“The University of California and the California State University are expected to plan that adequate spaces are available to accommodate all California resident students who are eligible and likely to apply to attend an appropriate place within the system. The State of California likewise reaffirms its historic commitment to ensure that resources are provided to make this expansion possible, and shall commit resources to ensure that [eligible] students ….. are accommodated in a place within the system.” [California Education Code 66202.5]

3. Community college transfer. The transfer function is an essential component of the commitment to access. UC and CSU are to establish a lower division to upper division ratio of 40:60 in order to provide transfer opportunities to the upper division for Community College students. The goal was that UC and CSU would enroll at least one community college transfer student each two freshmen enrolled. All eligible California Community College transfer students are to be provided a place in the upper division and are to be given priority over freshmen in the admissions process.

4. Affordability and fees. The 1960 Master Plan reaffirmed California's prior commitment to the principle of tuition-free education to residents of the state. However, the 1960 Master Plan did establish the principle that students (as well as faculty and staff) should pay fees for auxiliary costs like dormitories, parking, and recreational facilities rather than the state. Because of state general fund reductions in the 1980s and 1990s, fees were increased and used for instruction at UC and CSU, effectively ending the no-tuition policy. However, fee increases have been accompanied by substantial increases in student financial aid.

5. Cal Grant program. The provisions on student aid, now called the Cal Grant program, are designed to ensure that needy and high-performing students have the ability to choose a California institution of their choice, whether it be at UC, CSU, the community colleges, or at one of the independent California colleges and universities. The Cal Grant maximum award level was designed to give students the choice of attending independent California colleges and universities, thereby partially alleviating the demand for spaces in public institutions.

6. Separate governing boards. The establishment of a governance structure for the segments, reaffirming the role of the Board of Regents of UC and establishing a Board of Trustees to oversee CSU and, in 1967, a Board of Governors for the Community Colleges.

7. Higher education coordinating agency. The establishment of a statutory coordinating body, the Coordinating Council for Higher Education, to renew the Master Plan at regular intervals and to coordinate new campuses and new academic offerings among the segments of higher
education. This was replaced in 1973 by the California Postsecondary Education Commission (CPEC).

Major legislative reviews of the Master Plan have been conducted by the Legislature (and occasionally by blue-ribbon commissions) about once a decade since the 1970s and aspects of the Master Plan have evolved since 1960.

The California Master Plan for Higher Education in Perspective

The Master Plan was adopted in 1960, when the “baby boomers” were reaching college age and vast increases in college enrollment were projected for the years 1960-1975. The Master Plan was born of the tremendous pressures to find a way to educate unprecedented numbers of new students, and it succeeded beyond expectations. The Master Plan did much more than that, however. It also helped create the largest and most distinguished system of public higher education in the nation.

It can be argued that there are two major dimensions to this accomplishment:

- The Master Plan arguably transformed a collection of uncoordinated and competing colleges and universities into a coherent system. It achieved this by assigning each public segment—the University of California, the California State University, and the Community Colleges—its own distinctive mission and pool of students. It established a broad framework for higher education that encourages each of the three public segments to concentrate on creating its own distinctive kind of excellence within its own particular set of responsibilities. And from the very beginning the framers of the Master Plan acknowledged the vital role of the independent colleges and universities, envisioning higher education in California as a single continuum of educational opportunity, from small private colleges to large public universities.

- The Master Plan created, for the first time anywhere, a system that combined exceptional quality with broad access for students. This characteristic has made California the envy and exemplar of higher education not only in other states but in nations around the world. A team of international visitors from the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, here to review higher education in 1988, noted that California had succeeded in encouraging "constructive competition and cooperation" among its colleges and universities and praised the "complex of creativity" that characterizes California's system of higher education and makes it a model for other nations.
Among the other indicators of the Master Plan's success:

- A much higher proportion of California's population, from every ethnic group and by gender, is in college now than was the case in 1960. Enrollments in public higher education have increased ten-fold (from 179,000 to 1.8 million FTE) since 1960, while the state's population has not even tripled (15.3 to 38.3 million).

- The University of California, the California State University, and the Community Colleges have all grown enormously since 1960 in response to steadily increasing demand for education. UC added four new campuses, the CSU added eight, and the Community Colleges added 47 (from 63 to 110) new colleges.

- Despite decades of unprecedented growth, the quality of California's public universities and colleges is considered exemplary.

Here is what Clark Kerr said to the Legislature in 1999, looking back at what has been accomplished:

“What did we try to do in 1960? First of all, we faced this enormous tidal wave, 600,000 students added to higher education in California in a single decade. There were new campuses that had to be built, faculty members that had to be hired, and so forth, and it looked like an absolutely enormous, perhaps even impossible, challenge before us. We started out in our Master Plan asking the state to commit itself, despite the size of this enormous tidal wave, to create a place in higher education for every single young person who had a high school degree or was otherwise qualified so that they could be sure, if they got a high school degree or became otherwise qualified that they would have a place waiting for them. That was our first and basic commitment. I might say it was the first time in the history of any state in the United States, or any nation in the world, where such a commitment was made -- that a state or a nation would promise there would be a place ready for every high school graduate or person otherwise qualified. It was an enormous commitment and the basis for the Master Plan.”

[http://www.ucop.edu/acadinit/mastplan/kerr082499.htm]
In the latter half of the 1990s, a series of reports bearing sober titles like “Breaking the Social Contract” and “California at the Crossroads” urged California policymakers to prepare for the imminent arrival of baby-boomers’ children at the doors of the state’s colleges and universities. If the state wasn’t ready, the reports warned, the consequences of the predicted surge in enrollments would be dire. One referred to a “hurricane” threatening “California’s historic commitment to college opportunity,” but the metaphor that came to stand for the coming generation of college students—coined by Clark Kerr, the architect of California’s 1960 Master Plan for Higher Education—was Tidal Wave II.

Some in Sacramento dismissed the rhetoric. “I don’t know who’s calling it a tidal wave. It’s a catchy word. But it’s a poor metaphor. A tidal wave is uncontrollable,” a staffer with the Legislative Analyst’s Office (LAO) told the San Francisco Chronicle, accusing higher education leaders of inflating the projections for their own benefit. In its analysis, the LAO concluded that enrollment would gradually increase but that college participation rates as a percentage of the population would drop, for a simple reason: Latinos, who were growing faster than any other population segment, would continue to attend college at lower rates.

The assumption that those low participation rates could not be nudged up by public policy action was sharply countered by higher education experts, as was the report’s recommendation to “manage” enrollment by increasing fees and tightening admissions requirements. “Anybody who would say, as a matter of public policy, that the participation rates among blacks and Latinos are okay is not being

Pamela Burdman, currently a program officer in Education at the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation and a former higher education reporter, joins WestEd this summer as a senior project director. The initial version of this article was prepared for a book of journalistic accounts of recent developments in American higher education to be published under the auspices of The National Center for Public Policy and Higher Education.
realistic about the needs of this state,” noted Jerry Hayward, a retired chancellor of the state’s community college system.

A decade later, the tidal wave had yet to hit shore. By 2005, the year that many of the reports used in their analyses, California’s public higher education institutions were enrolling roughly 200,000 students fewer than the higher projections had suggested. This was the result of a couple of worrisome trends:

- A sharp drop in the percentage of students going to college directly after high school. In 1985, about 58 percent of California’s high school graduates went straight into a public institution of higher education (the majority into a community college). Twenty years later, the figure had dropped to 46 percent, according to the California Postsecondary Education Commission (CPEC).

- A continued racial gap in both high school graduation and college participation. Latinos and African-American ninth-graders continued to be much less likely to attend college than white and Asian students (and those who did were much less likely to earn a degree).

The result has been a decline in the state’s overall education level. In earlier generations, the Golden State was known for its high education levels—only three states have an over-65 population that is better educated. But among 25-to-34-year-olds, California is now in the bottom half in baccalaureate attainment. In fact, California’s early and pronounced slide is a major contributor to falling education levels nationwide. The trend is particularly troubling when contrasted with increasing education rates in other countries.

“People are having a hard time understanding that California is not still at the top of the heap,” said John Douglass, an educational historian at the University of California, Berkeley. “Most people have no idea that we have such low BA production rates.”

So was the Sacramento analyst right in insisting that no tidal wave was coming? Or did fee increases and admissions restrictions at the state’s four-year universities effectively “manage” enrollments away? Or were the lower numbers a case of a self-fulfilling prophecy, in which the state’s failure to prepare for escalating enrollments or to stimulate minority college-going effectively curtailed access, as the reports had warned? And is the tidal wave’s absence from higher education, for whatever reason, largely responsible for the declining education levels in the state? Or are low completion rates to blame?

Each of the suppositions has some merit—and several of them might be true. But answers are scarce when the leadership isn’t asking the questions. In the years during which California might have been addressing the crisis, the state’s higher education leadership structure appeared to be fraying.

**Policy Leadership in Disarray**

The California Postsecondary Education Commission (CPEC), never a powerful coordinating body, dwindled from a staffing level of 52 in the early 1990s to just 22 by last year. Only sporadically has a series of education secretaries appointed by Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger even hired a higher education specialist. Meanwhile, a 1990 term-limit law has winnowed the ranks of lawmakers devoted to higher education. “Where’s Gary Hart and Al Alquist and John Vasconcellos?” asked Barry Munitz, former CSU Chancellor, recalling some of the previous “legislative lions” for higher education. “There are too many people confused about with whom to even speak to get something done at the state level.” By 2008, the legislature’s remaining stalwart for higher education, Senator Jack Scott (D-Pasadena), was terming out.

“We have seen state policymaking in the last decade continue to go from pillar to post based solely on short-term political pressures and how many dollars are in the state treasury,” noted Steve Weiner, a retired higher education administrator and accrediting official. “As far as I can tell, the leadership of the state of California is completely asleep at the switch when it comes to education, and particularly higher education.” Early in 2008, education advocates were still pinning hopes on Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger’s promised “year of education in California.” But whether the plan even included higher education remained a mystery.

And at that point, leadership transitions and organizational challenges were consuming all the attention at two of the three higher education systems. Interim leaders were heading both the University of California System (UC) and the California Community Colleges (CCC) after the abrupt resignations of the incumbents. UC’s Robert Dynes had been pushed out in the wake of damaging exposes on executive compensation practices and a battle with the Regents over the role of the system headquarters. At the 109-campus CCC, Chancellor Marshall Drummond had vacated his Sacramento job to return to his prior post with the Los Angeles community colleges.

The two systems faced opposite problems: UC, which enjoys constitutional autonomy, was dealing with the effects of ten years of bureaucratic accretion, including a 25 percent increase in central office staff, while the CCC had been forced to trim its Sacramento staff by the same percent over the same period.
Even before the budget crisis hit in 2008, the community colleges’ system office was employing 130 full-time individuals—fewer than UC’s information technology staff alone.

By late 2008, the systems had recruited seasoned leaders in UC’s Mark Yudof and the CCC’s Jack Scott. But as the state battled what one higher education advocate called “one of the most difficult and contentious budget cycles in the state’s history,” it was unclear whether either of them—or CSU’s Charlie Reed—would have the energy or the ability to tackle higher education’s underlying challenges or the weaknesses of the California Master Plan.

**The Master Plan**

For nearly 50 years, California’s higher education system has been shaped by the tripartite division of the vaunted Master Plan. The 1960 document’s bold vision of access and quality safeguarded a system of selective research universities (the University of California) and provided baccalaureate education through less-selective campuses (the California State University system), while simultaneously ensuring broad access to higher education through a far-flung network of community colleges. The Master Plan has been credited with the state’s superior education level and strong public research universities. But as the 50th anniversary of the Plan approached, a vision that could carry California for the next 50 years had yet to materialize—in part because it would require acknowledging the weaknesses of the very durable existing one.

Though the need for a new plan has been obvious to analysts for more than a decade, there simply has been little appetite for addressing—or even acknowledging—the decline in California’s educational capital. The Master Plan focuses on the divisions among the systems but not on the educational needs of the state—and certainly not its needs in the 21st century.

Meanwhile, instead of strategies to increase education levels, higher education policy discussions over the last decade or so have been consumed with narrower issues: the unraveling of affirmative action at UC in the late 1990s, a series of fee increases beginning in 2003 that shocked students, and controversies related to executive pay at UC and Cal State—not to mention the episodic budget crises. While each of these has important implications for higher education’s capacity to meet the needs of the state, more fundamental issues went unaddressed and even unmentioned. The forest (the needs of the state and its students) seemed to have been obscured by the trees (the woes of the three powerful public higher education segments).

“In the mid-1990s, the state was projected to face a huge tidal wave of new students,” said David Longanecker, director of the Western Interstate Commission on Higher Education (WICHE). “So they responded by creating an elite campus in Merced, serving an enrollment of only a few thousand for the foreseeable future, and a specialized campus in Monterey Bay.” In addition to UC’s Merced campus and Cal State Monterey Bay, one Cal State campus and five community colleges have opened. “That’s eight small campuses to serve an influx of 400,000 students,” Longanecker pointed out. “If you were to have a good policy analyst from the moon come down, they would take a look and say there is not a heck of a lot that has changed over the last ten years.”

**Looking in the Wrong Direction**

One explanation for the lack of urgency is that state planners and policymakers were looking at the wrong indicators. As of 2007, there were no warning signs of the economic downturn to come. “You’re still third on the New Economy Index; you’re still the 12th wealthiest economy,” Longanecker
told CPEC commissioners at the time. “One of the reasons we see the South making more progress with higher education is because they see themselves as distressed, and the rest of us don’t.”

In addition, the idiosyncrasies of federal statistics-collection obscure serious deficits in California’s performance. While the figures show California ranking among the top dozen states in graduation rates at both two- and four-year institutions, contributing to California’s “B” ranking on persistence and completion in Measuring Up, they do not account for two factors. First, a much smaller proportion of students there start at four-year universities, so high baccalaureate graduation rates are not sufficient to build a skilled workforce. Since a greater proportion of students go to community colleges, California’s success in educating its population is highly dependent on two-year students’ earning degrees.

But second, many federal measures exclude part-time students, and California has proportionally 20 percent more part-timers than the nation as a whole, concentrated in the community colleges. Since part-time students complete college at much lower rates, California’s high performance on federally collected graduation rates could lull state leaders into overlooking a problem with completion rates, especially in the community colleges.

For example, on national comparisons of three-year graduation rates for community colleges, California ranked third in 2006, with a 46.3 percent graduation rate (because of an apparent change in calculation methodology, California’s federally reported graduation rate dropped even lower, to 33 percent, in 2007). But when part-timers are included, only about a quarter of students who want to transfer or complete a degree or credential do so within six years of enrolling, according to several reports. Sadly, the revelation of those more depressing statistics by independent researchers set off a fierce debate among community college insiders about the correct way to calculate transfer and completion rates instead of provoking a call to improve students’ success, regardless of how it is measured.

Not surprisingly, when policy discussions do center around the failure of the state’s education system, they invariably concentrate on the poor performance of the state’s primary and secondary schools. But the relationship between lack of rigorous K-12 preparation and the low collegiate success rates—especially at community colleges—has until recently been off the policy radar. Likewise, much of the media attention has focused not on those rates but on the highest-achieving students and their relative chances of attending the UC’s most elite campuses. With three separate routes into to higher education, the attention has been focused on university eligibility (a zero-sum game), even as half of CSU’s students and about three-quarters of those going to community colleges fail to pass placement exams for freshman math and English.

“In 1960 our public colleges and universities served a small and homogeneous portion of the young adult population. Today’s public colleges and universities must serve a large and diverse population of students whose demographic characteristics and attendance patterns are profoundly different than in 1960,” wrote Nancy Shulock, director of the Sacramento State University Institute for Higher Education Leadership and Policy, earlier this decade.

In particular, the role of the CCC has changed dramatically. The idea of a strong system of public two-year colleges, codified in the Master Plan, was initiated in California. In proclaiming that only the top one-third of high school graduates could attend one of the state’s universities, the Plan assigned the community colleges the responsibility to serve any student who could benefit from college. As some postsecondary education has become increasingly necessary for anyone wishing to pursue a family-supporting career, the community colleges have become more and more important. But until very recently, the state’s vision for the CCC has not included completion.

“The Master Plan is access, access, access,” noted Charlie Reed of Cal State. “Today it’s access and completing the degree and getting out and going into this workforce that California has.”

California’s community colleges are asked to provide that access and success with fewer resources than those in other states—and with even less per-student funding than the K-12 system. Though state subsidies in California approach the national average, extremely low fees and minimal investment in financial aid put the community college system at a serious disadvantage. The colleges receive roughly $5,500 per student in fees and state funding per year, compared with nearly $7,000 in other western states, according to WICHE. UC and CSU get $22,000 and $12,000 per student, and the K-12 system receives more than $9,000 for each student enrolled.

A Policy Void

Whether those allocations are aligned with state priorities is hard to answer in a state that hasn’t set any. An opportunity to make degree completion an explicit goal came and went during the three-year period from 1999 to 2002, when the Master Plan was revisited. Despite state Senator Dede
Alpert’s push to overhaul the plan, the final revision barely altered the original version, aside from the addition of sections on K-12 education. And those modest changes were never enacted into law.

Since then, the only significant departure from the Plan has been the 2005 vote of the legislature to allow Cal State to offer doctorates in education. A 2008 proposal surfaced to extend the doctorate to nursing as well. But serious attempts at goal-setting—such as a 2008 higher education accountability bill authored by Jack Scott and vetoed by Schwarzenegger—have gone nowhere.

“California has basically a structural inadequacy in dealing with the educational needs of California and its long-term competitiveness,” said Douglass. “I came to this reluctantly, because I’ve always had a strong sense of the magic and power of California’s tripartite structure. California was an innovator that kept doing things to change the system at the margins. In the last 30 years, it’s basically not done anything innovative to its higher education system.”

What has passed for goal-setting is a series of “compacts” between the state and its four-year universities, guaranteeing funding and fee levels over a four-year period. The four-year institutions favor the compacts because of the predictability they offer. But that seems to be their main virtue.

“There’s no teeth in them,” noted Shulock. “There are no state priorities. They just require that UC and Cal State report certain things. They don’t say we want you to improve transfer or help the state meet its shortage of computer scientists or engineers. The governor just shakes hands with the President of UC and says here’s what you’re getting. Community colleges don’t fit in. They’re just micro-managed by the legislature and the Department of Finance.”

The compacts have not even been effective at ensuring predictable fee increases, at least for the state’s four-year institutions. Between AY 1997-1998 and AY 2008-2009, tuition and fees nearly doubled, from $4,212 to $8,027 at UC and from $1,946 to $3,849 at Cal State (as reported by the California Postsecondary Education Commission). Because the state’s recent fiscal crisis forced severe cuts, students at both universities will see a fee hike of 9 to 10 percent for 2009-2010—or more if the deepening budget hole forces another increase. But in the end, the compacts could not save the universities from falling into the state’s gaping budget hole. Early this year, when the state was short $42 billion and nearly out of cash, a special session of the legislature slashed funding for UC and CSU. Only the community colleges retained a small amount of money for enrollment growth—although not enough to absorb a combined influx of students frozen out of the universities and laid-off workers seeking re-training. Many colleges were seeing enrollment increases of 10 percent or more during the academic year.

Left out of the compacts, the community colleges’ budget share continues to be unpredictable and politically hard to defend. Under Schwarzenegger, himself a graduate of Santa Monica College, their fortunes rose modestly. Nevertheless, community college leaders have grown weary of being buffeted by the fortunes of the other systems. They attempted a ballot initiative in 2008 to bring more money into their system, insulate it from K-12 budget decisions, and ensure their portion of the state budget while reducing fees from $20 to $15 per unit.

“It’s a response to an untenable situation,” said Dale Shimasaki, a veteran higher education political consultant, at the time. “They’re trying to figure out a way to get some stability and not have to fight with K-12 all the time. When
you fight adults vs. kids, the kids generally win. It’s a loser issue to be boxed in on.”

Despite a rare alliance among college presidents, union leaders, faculty, and students (for whom the fee decrease was predictably popular), the initiative ultimately brought the colleges into direct political combat with K-12. Opposition by the state teachers’ union—along with both of the university systems, several business organizations, low-tax advocates, and the governor—imperiled the effort, and early word of the impending budget shortfall effectively doomed it.

But even had the initiative passed, it was no more likely to have remedied the overarching problems faced by the state than the compacts had. If anything, the initiative gambit is a symptom of the state’s segmented approach. “While other states are mobilizing in response to the state-by-state report cards issued by the National Center for Public Policy and Higher Education, no such activity has occurred in California, because these state-level measures of educational performance do not have any natural audience,” noted Shulock in an analysis of California’s governance structure.

**Underachieving Reforms**

Against that backdrop, even the reforms since the mid-1990s that might have addressed some of the systemic problems appear to have had marginal effects at best. For instance, the UC system embarked on various admissions reforms and outreach programs aimed at mitigating the effects of the 1997 prohibition on affirmative action. But the enrollment of the increasing black and Latino student population remained far below their percentage of the state’s 18-year-olds. Controversy over UC admissions re-emerged in early 2009 when Asian-American leaders protested UC’s new policy to expand the pool of students considered for admission. While likely to increase black and Latino enrollment, the new rules are projected to result in significantly reduced admission of Asian Americans.

Over the same period, Cal State has sought to reduce the need for remediation by various means, including requiring students to take remedial courses as soon as they enroll and by adapting an 11th-grade standards test to provide early information to students about their readiness for college-level work. Though the assessment program has been considered a model K-16 policy by organizations such as Achieve, the results of the entire remediation effort have been modest to date, hardly approaching the original 1996 goal of eliminating remediation. “We have made progress in the math skills, but not in the English,” said Reed. “The single biggest challenge in California education is to get people to be able to read with comprehension.”

Though it may be one of the state’s greatest challenges, the challenge of serving large numbers of students who aren’t college-ready is one that has only belatedly become a priority for the state’s community colleges. More than 70 percent of community college students who take a placement exam are assessed as performing below college level—the combined result of poor K-12 preparation and delays in college attendance. Of those who take remedial courses in English, only 41 percent attempt a transfer-level class within three years. Even fewer—just 14 percent—do so in math.

Under a new strategic plan, the community college system has heightened attention to remediation. The success of the new “Basic...
In spite of the state’s budget challenges, early 2009 brought a few signs of movement. An effort to align college-readiness expectations across the systems got underway: the three systems joined with K-12 in the American Diploma Project, and the community colleges signed on to CSU’s college-readiness test for 11th graders. A three-way agreement was also reached about the need to boost community college transfer, and a “Yudof Education Imperative” focused on improving the education pipeline. Observers who have watched such initiatives come and go to little effect wondered whether this time, as the Master Plan’s 50th anniversary approached, something would be different. Legislators remained suspicious of higher education’s motives—particularly those of the UC system, which was still recovering from the executive compensation scandal. A measure to revoke UC’s constitutional autonomy was introduced by a bipartisan group of legislators in both houses. With that backdrop of deep mistrust and a fiscal predicament that threatened to consumer the entire policy agenda, some observers were skeptical that any positive movement was possible.

Early in the year, before voters held a budget deal together, CSU’s Reed was more optimistic. Inspired by President Obama’s goal of having the best-educated workforce in the world, Reed set a goal of increasing CSU graduates from 92,000 a year to 150,000 by 2020.

“People are just beginning to wake up,” he said. “The general public, policymakers, legislators—everybody—has realized in the last couple of years that if California is going to reclaim its spot as the sixth or seventh largest economy in the world, if Californians are going to have a quality of life, it will take a major increase in the number of college graduates. It will depend on what I call a new workforce. This workforce is coming from a pipeline that is filled with students of color. California’s economic future, its cultural and community future, is tied to how well-educated its citizens are going to be. California needs to once again serve as a national model this time in partnering with our schools to help students of color prepare for postsecondary education and attain college degrees.

“Can California continue to reinvent itself every decade or so?” Reed asked. “Higher education has always played a role in every decade that that has happened.” As a worsening fiscal environment imperils all of education in California, it is a story that the rest of the nation will want to follow. After all, the saying has it, as California goes, so goes the nation.
CALIFORNIA HIGHER EDUCATION,
THE MASTER PLAN, AND THE
EROSION OF COLLEGE OPPORTUNITY

By Patrick M. Callan

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The National Center for Public Policy and Higher Education
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Introduction

California higher education was one of America’s great public policy and educational success stories in the second half of the 20th Century. The post–World War II era introduced several decades of robust population expansion, and California led the nation—and indeed the world—as it achieved almost phenomenal growth of college opportunity. Sharp increases in student enrollments and campuses were paralleled by the rising quality and reputation of the state’s public and private colleges and universities, of its advanced research, and of higher education’s support of a vibrant state economy.

California’s private colleges and universities have made vital contributions to the state throughout its history and they continue to do so. The principal story of the postwar era, however, derives from the growth of the nation’s largest array of public colleges and universities of all kinds—research universities, regional state colleges and universities, and community colleges. This expansion reflected national trends at the time, but California was unique in its commitment to access and in the influence and continuity of a core public policy framework that was articulated in the 1960 California Master Plan for Higher Education. The Master Plan’s early successes in expanding college access created momentum that was sustained for decades. Yet despite the remarkable durability of this venerable framework, the Master Plan’s relevance and utility have become problematic as California confronts the impact of educational, economic, and demographic change.

Two convergent themes are central to the modern history of California higher education: the public policy framework that enabled and supported broad college opportunity for most of the post–World War II era; and the expansion of access through a massive and diverse array of colleges and universities. In the following pages, I will describe these themes and then turn to three changing conditions facing higher education that have emerged over the past three decades:

1. Unstable, constrained public finance combined with political volatility;
2. Demographic shifts; and
3. A decline in the effectiveness of public schooling.

A concluding section draws these themes and conditions together while presenting several challenges confronting California in the first decade of this century.
The Struggle for Policy-Driven Growth

In virtually all states, veterans benefiting from the G.I. Bill after World War II created public pressure to expand the enrollment capacity of colleges and universities. This pressure intensified in California in the late 1950s as population growth accelerated, and the first “tidal wave” of Baby Boomers approached college age. In 1960, the state responded by creating a 15-year Master Plan for Higher Education. That plan, the values and policies it reflected, and the growth that it envisioned are the context for the questions and challenges that confront California higher education almost 50 years later.

During the three decades after World War II, California did not differ from most other large states in seeking to plan and support enrollment growth of higher education. In fact, these issues became the dominant public policy themes for higher education in this era. California distinguished itself, however, through its path-breaking commitment to higher education opportunity, through the size and scale of its higher education systems, and through its development of the Master Plan, the state’s comprehensive policy framework to expand capacity and manage growth.

Whether California higher education would expand was never at issue during this period. What was perceived as problematic, however, was the extent to which conflicts among local, institutional, and political interests would impede realization of an overarching policy goal: universal educational opportunity through planned and coordinated growth. Efforts to address these conflicts trace back at least to the Depression era. In 1932, a legislatively commissioned study conducted by the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching found that problems of policy and organization in higher education had resulted in overlapping functions, waste, and inefficiency; lack of unified policy; and inequitable distribution of state funds. In addition, the study found:

There is a lack of articulation among the various units of the educational system. This has resulted in vigorous controversies over admission requirements, transfer regulations, and curricula. These controversies are aggravated by regional rivalries and local ambitions.

The problems identified by the Carnegie report persisted despite the Legislature’s creation of an advisory and ineffectual State Council for Educational Planning and Coordination. In 1945, a joint committee called the Liaison Committee was formed by the state Board of Education (which at that time had statewide jurisdiction over the junior
colleges and state colleges) and by the University of California (the University). The Liaison Committee was a voluntary effort to manage campus growth and program expansion and to deter legislatively imposed coordination. The principal policy vehicles of the Liaison Committee were *ad hoc* studies commissioned by it and the Legislature, studies that addressed such issues as: the degree-granting authority of junior colleges, state colleges, and the University; admissions standards; the needs and locations for new campuses; and the necessity and requisites of a state scholarship program.⁴

In the absence of an overarching policy framework, the Legislature could implement, ignore, or even augment the smorgasbord of recommendations presented by these studies—and it did all of these. For example, at the urging principally of the Santa Barbara Chamber of Commerce and despite initial opposition by the University, the state college at Santa Barbara was transferred to the University in 1943. (In 1946, a state ballot proposition prohibiting such transfers in the future was enacted.) New state college campuses were authorized in 1946 at Los Angeles and Sacramento, in 1948 at Long Beach, and in the late 1950s at Fullerton, Hayward, Northridge, and Stanislaus County. The University of California added medical and engineering schools at its Los Angeles campus and colleges of letters and sciences at its Davis and Riverside campuses. In 1955, the Legislature established the first state scholarship program.

By the late 1950s, the lack of what the Carnegie report had termed “unified policy” had created a planning vacuum in which initiatives and aspirations for growth and change were scattered widely across communities and institutions, and ultimately were controlled by the Legislature and the governor. The “problems of policy and organization” found in the 1932 report had not only persisted but had been exacerbated by the G.I. Bill, the increase in birth rates after World War II, and in-migration. In the 1957 legislative session, the scramble for new campuses intensified: bills authorizing 17 new state colleges were considered and 4 were approved; none of the 4 had been on the list of priorities recommended in the Liaison Committee’s 1957 planning report. Several were placed in sparsely populated areas represented by powerful state legislators.

Academics and politicians alike recognized that reform was needed to bring order to the chaos and uncertainty. Clark Kerr, who had assumed the presidency of the University of California in 1957, took the initiative. In 1959, Assemblywoman Dorothy Donohue, at his encouragement, introduced a resolution calling on the Liaison Committee to prepare a master plan for higher education and to present it to the Legislature at the beginning of the 1960 session. It also called for a two-year moratorium on legislation affecting higher education. The resolution was adopted by both the Assembly and the Senate.
The major concerns of the educational leaders who initiated and then wrote the Master Plan were immediate ones. In his memoir of this period, Clark Kerr reflected that:

The plan looked to us who participated in its development more like a desperate attempt to prepare for a tidal wave of students, to escape state legislative domination, and to contain escalating warfare among its separate segments. . . . And the preparation, the escape and the containment in each case was barely on time and barely succeeded. The Master Plan was a product of stark necessity, of political calculations, and of pragmatic transactions.\(^5\)

Eight months after the adoption of the resolution, a proposed Master Plan was presented to the Legislature, and its major provisions were enacted into statute. It became the state policy structure that resolved the immediate challenges to higher education. Reaffirmed many times, the Master Plan remained in place long after the emergency described by Kerr had passed. Each sector of California higher education gained immediate benefits:

- The junior colleges (subsequently designated “community colleges”) gained acceptance as an integral part of higher education, and were given the largest mandate for expansion.
- The state colleges, which ultimately became the California State University (the State University), were removed from the public school system and were given degree-granting authority through the master’s level as well as an independent governing board.
- The organization of the University of California was not affected, but its monopoly on state-funded, advanced graduate and professional programs and research was confirmed.
- The Legislature was relieved of the increasingly controversial political pressures for new campuses by delegating initial approval of these decisions to a new coordinating council.

Rarely do all parties to a negotiated plan achieve not only their own individual goals, but, in so doing, benefit the overarching public interest—as reflected in this case in greater college opportunity and controlled institutional competition. The Master Plan framers were able to accomplish this feat because they advanced institutional aspirations in the context of a common policy goal: the commitment that every California high school graduate who was able to benefit from college could attend a college or university. California became the first state or, indeed, governmental entity to establish this principle of universal access as public policy.\(^6\) It was this principle that made the Master Plan a major innovation in social as well as educational policy. Its specific provisions
established an organizational and policy framework for meeting the state’s commitment to access and for balancing what Kerr later characterized as the egalitarian and meritocratic imperatives.\(^7\)

The organizational provisions of the Master Plan were straightforward. College opportunity would be provided by grouping public colleges into three statewide “systems” organized according to their missions, each with designated enrollment pools. The junior colleges would offer instruction up to the 14th grade level and would include courses for transfer to baccalaureate-granting institutions as well as vocational and technical programs. These colleges would be open to all Californians who were capable of benefiting from attendance. The state colleges, now the California State University, would offer undergraduate education and graduate programs through the master’s degree and could participate in joint doctoral degree programs with the University of California. Students were to be admitted from the top third of high school graduates. The University was to draw its students from the top eighth of California high school graduates. Within public higher education, the University was to have sole authority to offer doctoral degrees (except for joint doctoral programs offered with the state colleges), as well as professional degrees in medicine, law, dentistry, and veterinary medicine. The University was also designated the state’s primary agency for state-supported academic research. Selective admissions at the state colleges and the University restricted the growth of four-year institutions, and this meant that most students would enroll, at least initially, in junior colleges. Californians who enrolled in junior colleges for academic or financial reasons could qualify for transfer to a state college or University campus after two years, and all qualified students were to be accepted. These provisions for transfer, along with the promise of college access to all who could benefit from it, connected and balanced the egalitarian and meritocratic dimensions of the plan.

The Master Plan recommended and the Legislature established a governing board for state colleges, separating those institutions from the State Board of Education. To replace the Liaison Committee, a state board to coordinate higher education was created by statute. This new board was made up of representatives of the public systems of higher education and the private nonprofit colleges and universities. The Legislature expressed in statute its intention to establish new campuses only upon recommendation from this board. The state scholarship program for eligible undergraduates in public and private institutions was expanded. This program served the dual function of providing students with the option of attending private colleges and universities and enabling the private institutions to absorb a portion of the projected enrollment growth. Public higher education was to be low-priced, and California residents were not to be charged tuition, reflecting the state’s commitment to access.
The Master Plan pioneered the concept of universal access to education and training beyond high school. It was also unique in establishing mission differentiation as the basis of organization and governance for all of the state’s public colleges and universities, including the explicit delineation of eligibility criteria for admission to each of the three public systems. The plan sought to recognize, balance, and institutionalize the values of competitive excellence and egalitarianism, selectivity and open admissions, and growth and efficiency. Costs were controlled through constraints on the mission and enrollment of each of the three public sectors and through concentration of growth in the community colleges. In short, the plan constituted the policy and organizational framework for both the expansion of college opportunity and for the University’s high national and international ranking.

Since the Master Plan’s adoption in 1960, formal revisions to its framework have included: the creation of a statewide Board of Governors for community colleges in 1967; the transformation of the statewide coordinating board into the California Postsecondary Education Commission (CPEC) in 1973; the imposition of student charges (still not called “tuition”) in all three public sectors; and the legislative authorization for the State University to offer its own doctoral degree, the Ed.D., in 2005.
After World War II, California’s dramatic growth and the state’s response to its population increases provided the context and the impetus for higher education policy. In the early 1960s, California became the nation’s most populous state with 17.5 million residents and by 2000 that number had nearly doubled. Expansion of higher education in California was inevitable because of the pressure of its rapidly growing population compounded by public demand for college access. As in other states, public demand for higher education rose to political saliency as local communities pressed their legislators for action. California responded to this pressure by increasing college enrollment at a rate that exceeded the state’s rapid population growth (see table 1).

Table 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>California Population (thousands)</th>
<th>Population Growth</th>
<th>Total Growth in Public Higher Education Enrollment*</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1960</td>
<td>15,727</td>
<td>49%**</td>
<td>67%**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1970</td>
<td>20,038</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>300%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1980</td>
<td>23,780</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>36%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1990</td>
<td>29,828</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000</td>
<td>34,099</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2005</td>
<td>36,154</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Enrollment data are for fall full-time-equivalent students.

** Increases are for decade ending in 1960.

Note: Population and enrollment growth figures are for the previous decade, except for 2005 figures, which are compared with 2000.

In purely quantitative terms, the transformations of higher education in the last half-century have been staggering, even after considering population growth. Total enrollment of undergraduate and graduate students in public and private nonprofit higher education increased from about 163,000 in 1950 to 250,000 in 1960, and to 1.8 million in 2005 (see table 2). Public higher education accounted for most of this enrollment growth:

- Community colleges absorbed the greatest share of growth, from about 56,000 students enrolled in 1948 to 98,000 in 1960, to over 1.1 million in 2005.
- Enrollment in the State University grew from just under 23,000 in 1948 to 61,000 in 1960 and to more than 324,000 in 2005.
- The University enrolled about 43,000 students in 1948, some 44,000 in 1960, and over 201,000 in 2005.
- Private colleges and universities accounted for approximately 41,000 students in 1950, 47,000 in 1960, and 202,000 in 2005. Even with this substantial growth, however, the independent institutions’ share of all California college enrollments dropped from about 25% in 1950 to about 11% in 2005.

Table 2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>CCC</th>
<th>CSU</th>
<th>UC</th>
<th>Independent*</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1948</td>
<td>55,933</td>
<td>22,787</td>
<td>43,469</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1950</td>
<td>56,624</td>
<td>25,369</td>
<td>39,492</td>
<td>41,036</td>
<td>162,521</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1960</td>
<td>97,858</td>
<td>61,330</td>
<td>43,748</td>
<td>47,000</td>
<td>249,936</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1970</td>
<td>526,584</td>
<td>186,749</td>
<td>98,508</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1980</td>
<td>752,278</td>
<td>232,935</td>
<td>122,761</td>
<td>133,313</td>
<td>1,241,287</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1990**</td>
<td>818,755</td>
<td>272,637</td>
<td>152,863</td>
<td>145,375</td>
<td>1,389,630</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000</td>
<td>999,652</td>
<td>279,403</td>
<td>165,900</td>
<td>173,341</td>
<td>1,618,296</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2005</td>
<td>1,121,681</td>
<td>324,120</td>
<td>201,403</td>
<td>202,035</td>
<td>1,849,239</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* “Independent” includes only those institutions that are members of the Association of Independent Colleges and Universities.

** Data for independent institutions are for 1991 rather than 1990.

Note: Enrollment data are for fall full-time-equivalent students.

N/A = Data are not available.

Public and private four-year baccalaureate-granting institutions enrolled two-thirds of California’s college students in 1950 and 39% in 2005. In terms of numbers of students served, the community colleges became the predominant sector of California higher education, enrolling substantially more students than the other sectors combined. This distribution followed from public policy decisions concerning access, institutional mission, capacity, and student eligibility in the 1960 Master Plan.

The framers of the Master Plan encouraged access by prohibiting tuition for California residents at any public campus, but this provision, which eroded as the institutions increasingly levied “fees,” was finally abandoned. Even though tuition remains relatively modest at the community colleges and the State University, college attendance is expensive in California because of the state’s high cost of living.9

The initial state scholarship program was created in the mid-1950s primarily to enable academically high-achieving students to attend in-state private colleges and universities. As the public institutions raised tuition and fees, the original program was modified and grew into a constellation of Cal Grant programs. In 2006, these grants were awarded to about 277,000 students at a cost of over one billion dollars (see table 3). In addition, each of the public systems of higher education administers its own financial aid programs. In the University and the State University, set-asides from student fees are the principal source of support for these programs.

Table 3

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Institution</th>
<th>Total Number of Awards</th>
<th>Total Award Amount (in millions)*</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>UC</td>
<td>49,655</td>
<td>$308</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CSU</td>
<td>67,952</td>
<td>$216</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CCC</td>
<td>114,163</td>
<td>$162</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Independent</td>
<td>27,239</td>
<td>$249</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private Career Colleges/Other</td>
<td>17,624</td>
<td>$166</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>276,633</strong></td>
<td><strong>$1,100</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Total award amounts represent total value of awards offered, not reconciled payments. The total does not match sum of column due to rounding.

Source: California Student Aid Commission, *Preliminary Grant Statistics Report 2006*, provided by the commission through email communication.

Increases in college participation in California were made possible by massive increases in capacity as existing campuses were expanded and new campuses were built (see table 4). The number of California Community College campuses, where the largest
growth was concentrated, increased from 43 in 1945, to 64 in 1960, and to 108 in 2005; the State University added 14 campuses from 1945 to 2005, for a total of 23; and the University had ten campuses by 2005. Including all three systems, the number of public college and university campuses totaled 141 in 2005.

Table 4

Number of Campuses by Sector, 1945 to 2005

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>CCC</th>
<th>CSU</th>
<th>UC</th>
<th>Independent*</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1945</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1950</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1960</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1970</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1980</td>
<td>105</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>115</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1990</td>
<td>106</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>120</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000</td>
<td>107</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>126</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2005</td>
<td>108</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* “Independent” includes only those nonpublic colleges and universities accredited by the Western Association of Schools and Colleges (WASC).

N/A = Data are not available.


The 15 years from 1945 through 1960 reflect the uncoordinated building of new campuses that led to the enactment of the Master Plan. In the 1960s and 1970s, growth followed the Master Plan’s guidelines: New community colleges brought higher education within commuting distance of students; and for the four-year systems, new campuses recommended in the plan were built. As described in the next section, however, institutional and community pressures in the 1990s began to replace planning based on demographics and projected regional needs, as decision-making about the placement of new campuses reverted to the politicized approach that had dominated the decades prior to the Master Plan.

The spectacular growth of California higher education cannot be explained simply by population increases or market forces. Rather, the growth of colleges and universities in the state is directly attributable to public policies and state financial support of those policies over more than half a century. The operating revenues from state and local sources for public higher education from 1960 through 2005 are summarized in table 5.
## Table 5

### State and Local Operating Support for Public Higher Education, 1960 to 2005 (in millions)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>CCC (in millions)</th>
<th>CSU (in millions)</th>
<th>UC (in millions)</th>
<th>Total (in millions)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1960</td>
<td>$58</td>
<td>$55</td>
<td>$99</td>
<td>$169</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1970</td>
<td>$366</td>
<td>$285</td>
<td>$330</td>
<td>$741</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1980</td>
<td>$1,276</td>
<td>$814</td>
<td>$902</td>
<td>$2,749</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1990</td>
<td>$2,489</td>
<td>$1,632</td>
<td>$2,077</td>
<td>$5,498</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000</td>
<td>$3,986</td>
<td>$2,175</td>
<td>$2,716</td>
<td>$7,293</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2005</td>
<td>$4,806</td>
<td>$2,476</td>
<td>$2,699</td>
<td>$8,225</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>CCC (in millions)</th>
<th>CSU (in millions)</th>
<th>UC (in millions)</th>
<th>Total (in millions)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1960</td>
<td>$384</td>
<td>$363</td>
<td>$653</td>
<td>$1,115</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1970</td>
<td>$1,843</td>
<td>$1,435</td>
<td>$1,661</td>
<td>$3,730</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1980</td>
<td>$3,025</td>
<td>$1,929</td>
<td>$2,138</td>
<td>$6,513</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1990</td>
<td>$3,719</td>
<td>$2,439</td>
<td>$3,104</td>
<td>$8,217</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000</td>
<td>$4,520</td>
<td>$2,467</td>
<td>$3,080</td>
<td>$8,271</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2005</td>
<td>$4,806</td>
<td>$2,476</td>
<td>$2,699</td>
<td>$8,225</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Notes:** CCC data are for State General Fund and Local Property Taxes. CSU and UC data are for State General Fund. Inflation adjustments are based on U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, and are in 2005 dollars.

Altered State Realities:
Constrained Public Finance and Political Volatility;
Demographic Shifts; and the Public Schools

The Master Plan for Higher Education was developed to meet the challenges that California faced in the second half of the 20th Century. In the 21st Century, California and its colleges and universities must adapt to new economic, political, demographic, and educational changes that have reshaped the state and its public sector. This section identifies and explores these altered state realities.

UNSTABLE, CONSTRAINED PUBLIC FINANCE COMBINED WITH POLITICAL VOLATILITY

The 1960 Master Plan was the product of the optimism of the post-World War II era, an era characterized by massive expansion of public services to meet the needs of a growing population. In addition to its support of higher education, California made and implemented major commitments to public schools, highways, parks, and extensive water and irrigation projects. This expansion took off in the mid-1940s and early 1950s under the gubernatorial administrations of Earl Warren and Goodwin Knight, peaked during the administration of Edmund G. Brown from 1958 to 1966, and was sustained under his successor, Ronald Reagan.

In 1978, however, the California electorate brought an abrupt end to the era of public sector expansiveness by overwhelmingly adopting Proposition 13, an initiative that reduced property taxes by about 60% and severely constrained future tax increases. In addition to inaugurating an era of reduced public spending, Proposition 13 ushered in an era of “government by plebiscite,” in which the initiative, sparsely used prior to 1978, was increasingly commandeered to “legislate” on a broad spectrum of issues. Such issues included but were not limited to: minimum spending on public schools (1988), legislative term limits (1990), mandated prison terms (1994), affirmative action (1996), and Native American casinos (1998). One effect of the extensive use of initiatives has been directly or indirectly to mandate specific expenditures, even as Proposition 13 and other tax-cutting measures constrained revenue growth. The consequence has been a reduction of the discretionary funds available for appropriation—that is, funds that support higher education and other expenditures that are not legal mandates or entitlements.10
Higher education has not escaped the harsh realities of the diminished public sector in the 30 years since 1978. Another effect of Proposition 13 has been the state’s increasing dependence on income, capital gains, and sales taxes—the revenue streams most sensitive to economic conditions. As a result, during periods of recession and state revenue shortfall, higher education has faced harsh fiscal restraints. On the other hand, the economic dynamism of California has also enabled several years of generous state support when the economy has been flourishing. It was fortuitous that Proposition 13 and the reversal of public sector fortunes did not begin until after the Baby Boomer college enrollments had peaked and after most of the new campuses and campus expansions envisioned by the 1960 Master Plan were completed or well underway.

The most significant, and apparently permanent, departure from the Master Plan has been the abrogation of its foundational public policy commitment to college opportunity—that is, its commitment to make higher education available for every Californian who can benefit from college. This historic obligation undergirded the differentiated missions and admissions policies of the three public sectors. There has never been a formal retraction or revision of the commitment, and it continues to enjoy the rhetorical support of most political and higher education leaders. But it is a promise that the state honors only in the best of economic times, and subtly sacrifices in years of budget problems. Between 1960 and 1980, the Master Plan commitment to access was California’s most fundamental public policy. But since the 1980s, this commitment has eroded steadily, often without public discussion or deliberation.

Recessions bring state financial stringency and in California they have brought severe restrictions in college access, principally at the broad-access institutions—the community colleges and the State University:

- Community college enrollments were reduced by more than 250,000 students in the recession of the early 1980s.
- In the recession of the early 1990s, enrollments decreased by over 170,000 in the community colleges and 50,000 in the State University.
- The recession early in the current decade brought enrollment reductions of nearly 150,000 in the community colleges.¹¹

What is particularly noteworthy in the context of the Master Plan’s commitment to college opportunity is that the broad-access institutions—the State University and the community colleges—have been the locus of enrollment reductions. In each recession, the community colleges have responded to state budget cuts with reductions in faculty, courses, and class sections, and tuition has been increased.
The broad-access institutions of California higher education, particularly the community colleges, enroll most of the low-income, first-generation, and Latino college students. Many of these students work and support families, attend part-time, and depend on evening and weekend classes. Scheduling changes and the elimination or reduction of part-time faculty, courses, and class sections reduce capacity, and this reduced capacity, along with tuition increases, results in lower enrollments. This subtle form of rationing of higher education opportunity has occurred without formal changes in policy or state priorities. Despite the Master Plan’s commitment to access, the suppression of enrollments at the broad-access institutions for over three decades is de facto state policy in difficult budgetary times.

An analysis of the impact of the 2004–2005 community college budget reductions and enrollment losses by the Institute for Higher Education Leadership and Policy observed that:

The greatest impact has been felt by the less well-prepared students who are not as savvy to deadlines, fees, financial aid, and ways to navigate the system. . . . Many of the colleges we studied primarily serve first-generation students who have limited understanding of the educational system. Students who are somewhat uncertain about attending in the first place or about their ability to succeed are those most likely to be discouraged by the reduced access to classes and services, according to campus officials. Some respondents were very concerned that this will shut down the pipeline to the diverse clientele that the community colleges aim to serve.  

After enrollments in broad-access institutions are reduced, the enrollments do not recover immediately when economic conditions and state appropriations improve, instructional capacity is restored, or even when tuition is frozen and financial aid is increased. These experiences from the 1990s are illustrative:

- The State University experienced budget cuts and raised tuition substantially in 1991, 1992, and 1993. Student fees increased by 103% during this period. Enrollments decreased each year from 1992 and 1995 and did not recover to the 1990 level until 2001, even though state funding was fully restored (and more) by 1997 and a multi-year tuition freeze was instituted.

- At the community colleges, state and local funding was cut in 1993 and 1994 and was restored to its pre-recession level in 1996. But enrollments were depressed for the remainder of the decade; they reached and surpassed the 1991 level in 2000.  

It is reasonable to conclude that the college aspirations of students or potential students may have been dampened when they were confronted with precipitous fee increases or
denied access to college courses or services such as counseling and child care.

The state’s failure to plan for predictable enrollment growth has been at least as problematic as its response to financial downturns. By the early 1990s, it was widely expected that the numbers of high school graduates in California would increase substantially during the first decade of the 21st Century. Projections in 1995, based on the continuation of established trends, set the impact on college enrollments at an additional 450,000 students by 2005. In the late 1950s, it had been these types of projections that had evoked the planning and policy response embodied in the Master Plan. In contrast to the foresight of that era’s leaders, however, California did not develop a state plan to accommodate its growing numbers of high school graduates. Political pressure for such a plan was lacking, the influential Legislative Analyst’s Office argued for an incremental rather than a comprehensive approach, and no higher education leader stepped forward to press the case for planning, as Clark Kerr had done in 1959. In 1994, Kerr, by then in his eighties, urged that the state adopt a comprehensive approach, arguing that “the course of facing-the-future-all-at-once” in 1960 had helped California create the best system of higher education in the nation in terms of both access and quality.

Compounding the failure to plan, state and higher education leaders regressed, in effect, to the practices of the 1950s that the Master Plan was designed to remedy. In the 1990s, each sector, with the support of communities, local boosters, and their legislators, put forward its own aspirations for new campuses. Policy leaders gave in to local and regional political pressures and ignored demographics in the placement of new institutions. New campuses were established by the University at Merced and by the State University at Monterey, both in sparsely populated locations and far from the areas where projected growth of high school graduates was concentrated. For the first time since the enactment of the Master Plan, pork-barrel politics dominated decision-making processes for campus placement. California’s capacity for comprehensive higher education planning was nonexistent and the vacuum created by the absence of a statewide plan helped open the door for the politicized approach to increasing higher education capacity.

It is impossible to ascertain precisely the importance of the Master Plan in the successful expansion of California higher education in the 1960s and 1970s. Assuredly, a robust economy, along with dedicated state and higher education leaders, contributed to the success. By the same token, it is impossible to pinpoint the effect of the lack of statewide planning on recent history. However, by 2006 the community colleges—the point of college access for most Californians—enrolled 120,000 fewer students than had been projected in the mid-1990s. In addition, smaller proportions of high school graduates were enrolling in college, and the likelihood that a California high school student would enroll in college by age 19 was 35%, compared to 53% in the leading states on this measure.
DEMOGRAPHIC SHIFTS

The rate of growth and the sheer size of California’s population is only half of the demographic story. The other half is the transformation of an overwhelmingly white populace—over 90% at the time of the Master Plan’s adoption—to a “majority minority” state in which no population group constitutes a majority (see table 6). By 2000, about 47% of Californians were white; 33% were Hispanic; 11% were Asian/Pacific Islander; and 7% were black. In contrast to the first 25 years after World War II when the state’s growth was fueled primarily by westward in-migration of Americans from other states, the immigrants of the past four decades have been overwhelmingly Asian/Pacific Islander and Hispanic. More than one in four of the 34 million Californians in 2000 were foreign born.

Table 6

<p>| California Population by Ethnic Group, 1960 to 2004 |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>White</th>
<th>Hispanic</th>
<th>Asian/Pacific Islander</th>
<th>Black</th>
<th>American Indian</th>
<th>Total Population</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1960</td>
<td>14,465,000</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>884,000</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>15,727,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1970</td>
<td>15,480,723</td>
<td>2,423,085</td>
<td>671,077</td>
<td>1,379,563</td>
<td>83,838</td>
<td>20,038,286</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1980</td>
<td>15,949,865</td>
<td>4,615,231</td>
<td>1,257,019</td>
<td>1,793,663</td>
<td>164,290</td>
<td>23,780,068</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1990</td>
<td>17,023,502</td>
<td>7,760,598</td>
<td>2,748,810</td>
<td>2,106,060</td>
<td>189,503</td>
<td>29,828,473</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000</td>
<td>16,098,880</td>
<td>11,085,437</td>
<td>3,872,800</td>
<td>2,220,712</td>
<td>184,754</td>
<td>34,098,744</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2004</td>
<td>16,287,111</td>
<td>12,707,737</td>
<td>4,374,758</td>
<td>2,193,043</td>
<td>213,316</td>
<td>36,505,743</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<p>| Percent of Total Population, 1960 to 2004 |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>White</th>
<th>Hispanic</th>
<th>Asian/Pacific Islander</th>
<th>Black</th>
<th>American Indian</th>
<th>Total Population</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1960</td>
<td>92%</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1970</td>
<td>77%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>0.4%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1980</td>
<td>67%</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>0.7%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1990</td>
<td>57%</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>0.6%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000</td>
<td>47%</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>0.5%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2004</td>
<td>45%</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>0.6%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

N/A = Data are not available.

Notes: The total for 1960 includes those who selected “other” and totals for 2000 and 2004 include individuals who selected multiple races. The Hispanic category for 1970 to 1990 equals a sum of Hispanic white, Hispanic Asian/Pacific Islander, Hispanic black, and Hispanic American Indian. Ethnic categories are identified as per source materials.

Not surprisingly, these demographic shifts are more pronounced in the state’s young population (see table 7). Whites accounted for 40% of California’s high school graduating class of 2005, followed closely by Hispanics/Latinos at 37%, with Asians, Filipinos, and Pacific Islanders at 14%, and African Americans accounting for 8%. Public school enrollment reflects the depth and permanence of this profound transformation.

### Table 7

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>White (not Hispanic)</th>
<th>Hispanic or Latino</th>
<th>Asian/Filipino/Pacific Islander</th>
<th>African American</th>
<th>American Indian/Alaska Native</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Kindergarten</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>51%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>0.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grade 1</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>51%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>0.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grade 2</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>51%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>0.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grade 3</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>0.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grade 4</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>49%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>0.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grade 5</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>49%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>0.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grade 6</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>48%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>0.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grade 7</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>46%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>0.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grade 8</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>45%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>0.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grade 9</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>45%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>0.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grade 10</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>42%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>0.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grade 11</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>0.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grade 12</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>0.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>47%</td>
<td>11%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>0.8%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

High School Graduates

40% 37% 14% 8% 0.8%

Notes: The rows of percentages do not add to 100 because individuals who selected multiple ethnic groups or none at all are not reflected. Students who are not associated with a specific grade are also not included. Ethnic categories are identified as per source materials.


In short, California’s higher education pipeline in the early 21st Century bears little resemblance to the homogeneous, preponderantly white Baby Boomer generation of the 1960s and 1970s. Many of the “new Californians”—Chinese and Japanese Americans in particular—enroll in California’s most selective colleges and universities (see table 8). Many others, however, are hampered by barriers of poverty, language, weak public schools, and poor high school completion rates, and the adverse impacts of these barriers...
are reflected in tables 7 and 8. The low high school graduation rates and college enrollment rates of Latinos, even as they approach majority status in the public schools, illustrate that impact.

**Table 8**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>White</th>
<th>Latino</th>
<th>Asian/Pacific Islander</th>
<th>Filipino</th>
<th>Black</th>
<th>Native American</th>
<th>Other</th>
<th>NonRes Alien</th>
<th>No Response</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>UC</td>
<td>37%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>0.6%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CSU</td>
<td>37%</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>0.7%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CCC</td>
<td>37%</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>0.9%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Independent</td>
<td>49%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>0.7%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes: “Independent” includes only those nonpublic colleges and universities accredited by WASC. “NonRes Alien” stands for nonresident aliens. Ethnic categories are identified as per source materials.


**PUBLIC SCHOOLS**

The effectiveness of California’s public schools was not an issue for the framers of the Master Plan. The limited indicators available in 1960 offered no reason for fundamental concerns about the health of public education. For example, the state’s public schools, though not without their critics, consistently ranked high among the leading ten states and above the national average in expenditures per pupil; and its school teachers ranked among the best educated in the nation. At the time, it was reasonable to assume that graduates of California high schools would be able to benefit from the college opportunities that implementation of the Master Plan would create, and its architects made that assumption.

In 1978, the burden of Proposition 13 fell particularly heavily on public schools. Combined with legislative implementation of a court-mandated equalization of district funding, the passage of Proposition 13 set school finance into a downward spiral, one that was marked with only brief spurts of recovery in peak state revenue years. In 2006, California’s spending per pupil was $167 below the national average and well below that of major industrial states ($4,478 below New York, $4,067 below Massachusetts, $2,181 below Pennsylvania, and $842 below Michigan). California ranked next to last among states in class size, and 50th in the ratio of guidance counselors and librarians to students. These declines occurred at the same time that the schools needed more resources to
address increasing ethnic and language diversity and the poverty that afflicted almost one in five of California’s children.¹⁸

Beginning in the 1990s, the National Assessment of Educational Progress has assessed the performance of fourth and eighth grade students in math, reading, and science by state. In 2005, 22% of California’s eighth graders scored at levels of proficient or above in math, compared with 38% in the best-performing states; low-income California eighth graders scored very poorly in reading (21% were proficient compared to 38% in leading states); and in science, 18% were proficient compared with 41% in leading states. In science, the percentage of eighth graders scoring at or above the proficient level had decreased over the previous nine years, at one of the steepest rates in the nation. The poor performance of eighth graders suggests that they are not well prepared for challenging high school coursework in these basic disciplines. One consequence for higher education is that only 25% of high school graduates are academically prepared for college-level work.¹⁹ In 2007, the University reported that more than 28% of its entering freshman, drawn from California’s highest-achieving high school graduates, did not perform at the required level as measured by its analytic writing placement exam. Fifty-six percent of regularly admitted freshmen in the State University needed remediation in either English or mathematics, and 27% required remediation in both reading and math. Although statewide standards for college readiness or placement examinations are lacking, a survey by the community colleges indicates that approximately half of community college students require basic skills instruction.²⁰
Conclusion

The 1960 Master Plan and the expansion of California higher education were not without flaws or critics. By real-world standards, however, they served Californians well in an era of rapid population growth.

First, the Master Plan was cost-effective in managing growth—including a 300% enrollment increase in the first decade after its passage. The Master Plan enabled the state to meet its commitments to college opportunity by efficient distribution of campuses and programs. Campuses were situated in population centers, and decisions as to where to locate new campuses were removed from the pork-barrel politics of earlier eras.

By resolving the issues of institutional mission and program allocation and by encouraging each sector, as the Master Plan legislation articulated, “to strive for excellence in its sphere,” California developed a diverse array of colleges and universities to meet the needs of a growing population that had a broad range of abilities, motivations, and educational aspirations. By sparing the Legislature and public the battles over turf that dominated the higher education landscape in other states, the Master Plan contributed to public confidence, which in turn brought state financial support to higher education. The affirmation of the University of California’s franchise in doctoral education and state-supported research positioned the University to maintain and enhance its standing among leading research universities.

The Master Plan and California’s higher education system quickly achieved almost iconic status in California, but California now faces a very different set of challenges than in 1960. The performance of California education has declined substantially, and core provisions of the Master Plan have succumbed to political and budgetary pressures. Although citizens’ commissions and special legislative committees in every decade since the 1960s have consistently reaffirmed the core provisions of the Master Plan, the letter and spirit of these provisions have been set aside when expedient. Reducing opportunity at the community colleges, and, at times, at the State University, has become a standard state response to financial difficulty. In contrast to the first decade of the Master Plan when enrollments exceeded expectations, the community colleges now enroll considerably fewer students than were projected by conservative forecasts less than a decade ago.
Despite these enrollment shortfalls, the community colleges have grown exponentially as their roles in serving local labor markets—and most Californians who aspire to a baccalaureate degree—have solidified. The community colleges enroll the overwhelming majority of college students in California. Relatively few students, however, actually benefit from the transfer opportunities within public higher education that were central to the Master Plan—less than 70,000 transferred in 2007 (13,923 to the University and 54,379 to the State University). One consequence is that California consistently ranks in the bottom third among states in baccalaureate degree production. In short, the egalitarian provisions of the Master Plan commitment—access and transfer—are in serious disrepair.

The diminished college opportunity that exists today in California casts a shadow on the state’s economic future. A 2007 report from the Public Policy Institute of California warned that the state’s workforce would likely fall far short of the level of education and skills needed in the future. The report’s authors estimated that 39% of the jobs in the state’s increasingly knowledge-based economy would require college degrees by 2020, but only 33% of working-age adults were projected to have acquired them by that time. The report warned that it is unlikely that the gap would be filled by immigration of college-educated and trained workers because of California’s high costs of living, particularly housing. The authors recommended higher rates of college participation and graduation among Californians. A separate analysis projected a decline in the educational attainment of California’s adult population and in personal income by 2020, “unless the state can increase the number of Hispanics/Latinos going to college and getting degrees.”

As the indicators of a growing educational deficit accumulate, the state’s financial condition offers little prospect of sustained infusions of new public dollars. Sporadic increases in state appropriations when the economy is growing rapidly can be generous, as in the “dot com” boom of the late 1990s and again as the state economy recovered from the recession of the early 2000s. However, the state budget faces a chronic structural deficit and, in years of weak state budgets, cuts to higher education are likely to continue to be severe.

The adaptability of California higher education and the Master Plan to a radically transformed demographic, fiscal, and educational environment is limited. California has little capacity to set and adjust priorities across its higher education systems and programs in response to changing circumstances, particularly at a time when the state has reneged on its basic commitments to college opportunity. Evidence can be found in the continued and costly expansion of the University of California, particularly the new and poorly justified research university at Merced and the plans for new medical and law schools.
A great strength of the Master Plan was its delineation of distinctive missions and governance of each sector, which proved to be effective in meeting the challenges of the 1960s and 1970s. As the systems grew and matured, however, the organizing principle has come to look more like “each train on its own track” or each higher education sector in its own “silo.” The same structure that has reinforced differentiated missions may also impede needed collaboration and effective distribution of resources across the higher education systems—for example, the need to work collaboratively with public schools to strengthen college preparation; the need to assure adequate funding for the community colleges, which are the first-line responders in adjusting to changing demographics, population growth, and the weakness of public schools; the need to improve transfer and graduation rates; and the need to expand access and capacity collaboratively through electronic technology.26

After the Master Plan resolved the urgent planning issues of the early 1960s, additional measures for assuring statewide planning and coordination were perceived as unnecessary and the mechanisms for these functions have always been weak. The ensuing vacuum in effective statewide policy and planning has contributed to the failure to set statewide priorities. There is a major gulf between the most urgent educational needs of California and the operating and capital priorities of educational and political leaders. This vacuum is partially responsible for the politicization of new campus locations and program allocations. In contrast to the expansion of the 1960s and 1970s, these decisions are not aligned with the educational needs of the state.

When initiatives are launched to address statewide educational needs, they are almost invariably confined to a single sector, which limits their impact even when they are effective. This has been the case with the impressive series of educational improvements initiated over the last decade by the State University under the leadership of Chancellor Charles Reed. These initiatives have included outreach to public schools to raise college aspirations, improve college readiness, and strengthen California’s K–12 teaching force.27

For at least the past three decades, California’s governors and legislators have been reluctant to assert statewide priorities, particularly when confronted with fiscal problems. This deference of state leaders to each of the higher education systems has meant that overall public priorities, such as access, affordability, and the transfer function, have often been inadequately protected in hard economic times and overlooked in good ones.

Unless the erosion of the egalitarian provisions of the Master Plan are reversed, pressures on the organizational arrangements designed in 1960 are likely to mount. Californians may eventually be confronted with issues that have been “off the table” for
the last half-century. If California’s colleges and universities as configured by the Master Plan fail to deliver to the current and coming generations opportunities that are comparable to those provided for past generations, public pressure could demand fundamental changes in the structure and governance of higher education, which, after all, are means and not ends. Options that state and educational leaders have been reluctant to consider in the past may be revisited—for example, regional governance of higher education—in order to find better ways to use scarce state dollars to address California’s most pressing challenges.

The consequences of the reduction of college opportunity are manifested in the declining educational attainment of the young adult population. California’s older population (ages 65 years and above) ranks eighth in the nation in the percentage that has attended some college or obtained an associate degree, and fifth in the percentage with a baccalaureate degree. In contrast, younger Californians (ages 25 to 35 years) are 41st in the proportion with some college or an associate degree, and 22nd in the percentage with a bachelor’s degree. There is also evidence of a growing public awareness of the erosion of college access and its consequences. In 2007, the Public Policy Institute of California found that: almost two-thirds of Californians believe that college is necessary for success in the workplace; large majorities believe that getting a college education has become more difficult and is out of reach for many who are motivated and qualified; and 68% believe the state will need more college-educated workers in the future.

The bold policy blueprint developed for California in the mid–20th Century has become increasingly out of alignment with the state’s educational, economic, and demographic realities of this century. Despite rising public concern, governmental and higher education leaders have shown little motivation or capacity to develop a new framework or master plan better suited to the state’s current needs and aspirations. It is ironic that the state that first put forth the principle of universal college access has reneged on that principle at a time of major demographic and economic transitions. For the foreseeable future, some California colleges and universities will continue to rank highly in national research ratings and other measures of reputational quality and prestige. However, these accomplishment will be small consolation if they exist as islands in a state otherwise characterized by diminishing educational opportunity, declining levels of educational attainment, and reduced standards of living.
Endnotes


2 Officially titled the Servicemen’s Readjustment Act of 1944, the G.I. Bill offered college or vocational education for returning World War II veterans.


8 The paucity of historical data precluded the inclusion of the private for-profit sector, which plays an increasingly important role in California and elsewhere.


15 Clark Kerr, Preserving the Master Plan (San Jose, CA: California Higher Education Policy Center, 1994).

16 See David W. Breneman, Leobardo F. Estrada, and Gerald C. Hayward, Title Wave II: An Evaluation of Enrollment Projections for California Higher Education (San Jose, CA: California Higher Education Policy Center, 1995) for the mid-1990s projections, which were conservative. Community college enrollment for 2006 was more than 206,000 below projections of a 2000 study by the California Postsecondary Education Commission.


28 U.S. Census Bureau, 2007 American Community Survey, Table C15001: Sex by age by educational attainment for the population 18 years and over, American FactFinder Downloadable Tables, www.factfinder.census.gov (accessed December 17, 2008).

29 Public Policy Institute of California, Californians and Higher Education (San Francisco: 2007).
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California Higher Education, the Master Plan, and the Erosion of College Opportunity
(February 2009, #09-1). This occasional paper describes the development of the 1960 Master Plan for Higher Education and the current statewide challenges that make the plan ineffective today in preventing the erosion of college opportunity.

Measuring Up 2008: The National Report Card on Higher Education. Measuring Up 2008 consists of a national report card for higher education (November 2008, #08-4) and 50 state report
cards (#08-3). The purpose of *Measuring Up* is to provide the public and policymakers with information to assess and improve postsecondary education in each state. *Measuring Up 2008* finds that despite modest improvements nationally, large disparities in higher education performance persist, and the nation’s global competitiveness is eroding. Visit www.highereducation.org to download *Measuring Up 2008* or to make your own comparisons of state performance in higher education.


**The Iron Triangle: College Presidents Talk About Costs, Access, and Quality** (October 2008, #08-2). This report by Public Agenda explores how college and university presidents view higher education today. Researchers surveyed the presidents on topics including cost, access, and quality, and found a disconnect between the presidents’ perspectives on higher education and that of the general public.

**Partnerships for Public Purposes: Engaging Higher Education in Societal Challenges of the 21st Century** (April 2008, #08-1). This report summarizes the discussion from an invitational roundtable that engaged 15 leaders in higher education. The essay finds that colleges and universities have become preoccupied with advancing their prestige instead of achieving publicly defined purposes, and calls for the restoration of a greater sense of public purpose to learning in ways that directly meet the country’s educational needs for the 21st Century.

**Good Policy, Good Practice: Improving Outcomes and Productivity in Higher Education: A Guide for Policymakers**, by Patrick M. Callan, Peter T. Ewell, Joni E. Finney, and Dennis P. Jones (November 2007, #07-4). This report describes a wide range of successful strategies that states can draw from to increase the educational attainment of their residents while holding down higher education costs. The report also identifies five policy levers that state leaders can use to achieve their overall goals for higher education and, more specifically, to implement the strategies for increasing educational attainment levels.

**Investigating the Alignment of High School and Community College Assessments in California**, by Richard S. Brown and David N. Niemi (May 2007, #07-3). This study, in examining the math and English expectations for high school students entering California’s community colleges, reveals the degree of alignment between what students master in high school versus what is expected for college-level work.

**Squeeze Play: How Parents and the Public Look at Higher Education Today**, by John Immerwahr and Jean Johnson (May 2007, #07-4). This report by Public Agenda explores how the American public views higher education. Funding for the research was provided by Lumina Foundation for Education as part of its Making Opportunity Affordable initiative.

**“Informed Self-Placement” at American River College: A Case Study**, by Jonathan E. Felder, Joni E. Finney, and Michael W. Kirst (May 2007, #07-2). This case study of American River College in Sacramento, California, examines replacing the traditional mathematics class placement test with “informed self-placement.”

**California Community Colleges: Making Them Stronger and More Affordable**, by William Zumeta and Deborah Frankle (March 2007, #07-1). This report examines the effectiveness of
statewide policies in assisting the California Community Colleges in meeting their mandate for affordability, and makes recommendations in light of today’s public needs.

*Measuring Up Internationally: Developing Skills and Knowledge for the Global Knowledge Economy*, by Alan Wagner (September 2006, #06-7). In comparing the performance of the United States in higher education with that of advanced, market-economy countries across the globe, this report finds that the United States’ leadership position has eroded.


*Checks and Balances at Work: The Restructuring of Virginia’s Public Higher Education System*, by Lara K. Couturier (June 2006, #06-3). This case study of Virginia’s 2005 Restructured Higher Education Financial and Administrative Operations Act examines the restructured relationship between the commonwealth and its public colleges and universities. The act gives more autonomy to the public colleges but checks it with new accountability targeted directly to the needs of the state.

*American Higher Education: How Does It Measure Up for the 21st Century?* by James B. Hunt Jr. and Thomas J. Tierney with a foreword by Garrey Carruthers (May 2006, #06-2). These essays by former Governor James B. Hunt Jr. and business leader Thomas J. Tierney lay out in succinct fashion the requirements of both our nation and our states for new and higher levels of performance from America’s colleges and universities.

*Claiming Common Ground: State Policymaking for Improving College Readiness and Success*, by Patrick M. Callan, Joni E. Finney, Michael W. Kirst, Michael D. Usdan, and Andrea Venezia (March 2006, #06-1). To improve college readiness and success, states can develop policies that better connect their K–12 and postsecondary education systems. However, state action in each of the following policy areas is needed to create college-readiness reform: alignment of coursework and assessments; state finance; statewide data systems; and accountability.

*Measuring Up on College-Level Learning*, by Margaret A. Miller and Peter T. Ewell (October 2005, #05-8). In this report, the National Forum on College-Level Learning proposes a model for evaluating and comparing college-level learning on a state-by-state basis, including assessing educational capital. As well as releasing the results for five participating states, the authors also explore the implications of their findings in terms of performance gaps by race/ethnicity and educating future teachers.

*The Governance Divide: A Report on a Four-State Study on Improving College Readiness and Success*, by Andrea Venezia, Patrick M. Callan, Joni E. Finney, Michael W. Kirst, and Michael D. Usdan (September 2005, #05-3). This report, supported by case studies in Florida, Georgia,
New York, and Oregon, identifies and examines policy options available to states that are interested in creating sustained K–16 reform.


*Borrowers Who Drop Out: A Neglected Aspect of the College Student Loan Trend*, by Lawrence Gladieux and Laura Perna (May 2005, #05-2). This report examines the experiences of students who borrow to finance their educations, but do not complete their postsecondary programs. Using the latest comprehensive data, this report compares borrowers who drop out with other groups of students, and provides recommendations on policies and programs that would better prepare, support, and guide students—especially low-income students—in completing their degrees.

*Case Study of Utah Higher Education*, by Kathy Reeves Bracco and Mario Martinez (April 2005, #05-1). This report examines state policies and performance in the areas of enrollment and affordability. Compared with other states, Utah has been able to maintain a system of higher education that is more affordable for students, while enrollments have almost doubled over the past 20 years.

*Measuring Up 2004: The National Report Card on Higher Education* (September 2004). *Measuring Up 2004* consists of a national report card for higher education (report #04-5) and 50 state report cards (#04-4). The purpose of *Measuring Up 2004* is to provide the public and policymakers with information to assess and improve postsecondary education in each state. For the first time, this edition provides information about each state’s improvement over the past decade. Visit www.highereducation.org to download *Measuring Up 2004* or to make your own comparisons of state performance in higher education.


*Ensuring Access with Quality to California’s Community Colleges*, by Gerald C. Hayward, Dennis P. Jones, Aims C. McGuinness, Jr., and Allene Timar, with a postscript by Nancy Shulock (May 2004, #04-3). This report finds that enrollment growth pressures, fee increases, and recent budget cuts in the California Community Colleges are having significant detrimental effects on student access and program quality. The report also provides recommendations for creating improvements that build from the state policy context and from existing promising practices within the community colleges.

*Public Attitudes on Higher Education: A Trend Analysis, 1993 to 2003*, by John Immerwahr (February 2004, #04-2). This public opinion survey, prepared by Public Agenda for the National
Center, reveals that public attitudes about the importance of higher education have remained stable during the recent economic downturn. The survey also finds that there are some growing public concerns about the costs of higher education, especially for those groups most affected, including parents of high school students, African-Americans, and Hispanics.

Responding to the Crisis in College Opportunity (January 2004, #04-1). This policy statement, developed by education policy experts at Lansdowne, Virginia, proposes short-term emergency measures and long-term priorities for governors and legislators to consider for funding higher education during the current lean budget years. Responding to the Crisis suggests that in 2004, the highest priority for state higher education budgets should be to protect college access and affordability for students and families.

With Diploma in Hand: Hispanic High School Seniors Talk About Their Future, by John Immerwahr (June 2003, #03-2). This report by Public Agenda explores some of the primary obstacles that many Hispanic students face in seeking higher education—barriers that suggest opportunities for creative public policy to improve college attendance and completion rates among Hispanics.

Purposes, Policies, Performance: Higher Education and the Fulfillment of a State’s Public Agenda (February 2003, #03-1). This essay is drawn from discussions of higher education leaders and policy officials at a roundtable convened in June 2002 at New Jersey City University on the relationship between public purposes, policies, and performance of American higher education.


Technical Guide Documenting Methodology, Indicators, and Data Sources for Measuring Up 2002 (October 2002, #02-8).

State Policy and Community College-Baccalaureate Transfer, by Jane V. Wellman (July 2002, #02-6). This report recommends state policies to energize and improve higher education performance regarding transfers from community colleges to four-year institutions.

Fund for the Improvement of Postsecondary Education: The Early Years (June 2002, #02-5). The Fund for the Improvement of Postsecondary Education (FIPSE) attained remarkable success in funding innovative and enduring projects during its early years. This report, prepared by FIPSE’s early program officers, describes how those results were achieved.

Losing Ground: A National Status Report on the Affordability of American Higher Education (May 2002, #02-3). This national status report documents the declining affordability of higher education for American families, and highlights public policies that support affordable higher education. It provides state-by-state summaries as well as national findings.

The Affordability of Higher Education: A Review of Recent Survey Research, by John Immerwahr (May 2002, #02-4). This review of recent surveys by Public Agenda confirms that Americans feel that rising college costs threaten to make higher education inaccessible for many people.
Coping with Recession: Public Policy, Economic Downturns, and Higher Education, by Patrick M. Callan (February 2002, #02-2). This report outlines the major policy considerations that states and institutions of higher education face during economic downturns.

Competition and Collaboration in California Higher Education, by Kathy Reeves Bracco and Patrick M. Callan (January 2002, #02-1). This report argues that the structure of California’s state higher education system limits the system’s capacity for collaboration.

Measuring Up 2000: The State-by-State Report Card for Higher Education (November 2000, #00-3). This first-of-its-kind report card grades each state on its performance in higher education. The report card also provides comprehensive profiles of each state and brief states-at-a-glance comparisons.


Some Next Steps for States: A Follow-up to Measuring Up 2000, by Dennis Jones and Karen Paulson (June 2001, #01-2). This report suggests a range of actions that states can take to bridge the gap between state performance identified in Measuring Up 2000 and the formulation of effective policy to improve performance in higher education.

A Review of Tests Performed on the Data in Measuring Up 2000, by Peter Ewell (June 2001, #01-1). This review describes the statistical testing performed on the data in Measuring Up 2000 by the National Center for Higher Education Management Systems.

Recent State Policy Initiatives in Education: A Supplement to Measuring Up 2000, by Aims C. McGuinness, Jr. (December 2000, #00-6). This supplement highlights education initiatives that states have adopted since 1997–1998.

Assessing Student Learning Outcomes: A Supplement to Measuring Up 2000, by Peter Ewell and Paula Ries (December 2000, #00-5). This report is a national survey of state efforts to assess student-learning outcomes in higher education.

Technical Guide Documenting Methodology, Indicators, and Data Sources for Measuring Up 2000 (November 2000, #00-4).

A State-by-State Report Card on Higher Education: Prospectus (March 2000, #00-1). This document summarizes the goals of the National Center’s report-card project.

Great Expectations: How the Public and Parents—White, African-American, and Hispanic—View Higher Education, by John Immerwahr with Tony Foleno (May 2000, #00-2). This report by Public Agenda finds that Americans overwhelmingly see higher education as essential for success. Survey results are also available for the following states:
Great Expectations: How Floridians View Higher Education (August 2000, #00-2c).
Great Expectations: How Illinois Residents View Higher Education (October 2000, #00-2h).

State Spending for Higher Education in the Next Decade: The Battle to Sustain Current Support, by Harold A. Hovey (July 1999, #99-3). This fiscal forecast of state and local spending patterns finds that the vast majority of states will face significant fiscal deficits over the next eight years, which will in turn lead to increased scrutiny of higher education in almost all states, and to curtailed spending for public higher education in many states.

South Dakota: Developing Policy-Driven Change in Higher Education, by Mario Martinez (June 1999, #99-2). This report describes the processes for change in higher education that government, business, and higher education leaders are creating and implementing in South Dakota.

Taking Responsibility: Leaders’ Expectations of Higher Education, by John Immerwahr (January 1999, #99-1). This paper reports the views of those most involved with decision-making about higher education, based on focus groups and a survey conducted by Public Agenda.

The Challenges and Opportunities Facing Higher Education: An Agenda for Policy Research, by Dennis Jones, Peter Ewell, and Aims McGuinness, Jr. (December 1998, #98-8). This report argues that due to substantial changes in the landscape of postsecondary education, new state-level policy frameworks must be developed and implemented.

Higher Education Governance: Balancing Institutional and Market Influences, by Richard C. Richardson, Jr., Kathy Reeves Bracco, Patrick M. Callan, and Joni E. Finney (November 1998, #98-7). This publication describes the structural relationships that affect institutional effectiveness in higher education, and argues that state policy should strive for a balance between institutional and market forces.


The Challenges Facing California Higher Education: A Memorandum to the Next Governor of California, by David W. Breneman (September 1998, #98-5). This memorandum argues that California should develop a new Master Plan for Higher Education.

Tidal Wave II Revisited: A Review of Earlier Enrollment Projections for California Higher Education, by Gerald C. Hayward, David W. Breneman, and Leobardo F. Estrada (September 1998, #98-4). This review finds that earlier forecasts of a surge in higher education enrollments were accurate.

Organizing for Learning: The View from the Governor’s Office, by James B. Hunt Jr., chair of the National Center for Public Policy and Higher Education, and former governor of North
Carolina (June 1998, #98-3). This publication is an address to the American Association for Higher Education concerning opportunity in higher education.

*The Price of Admission: The Growing Importance of Higher Education*, by John Immerwahr (Spring 1998, #98-2). This report is a national survey of Americans’ views on higher education, conducted and reported by Public Agenda.

*Concept Paper: A National Center to Address Higher Education Policy*, by Patrick M. Callan (March 1998, #98-1). This concept paper describes the purposes of the National Center for Public Policy and Higher Education.