

**ACADEMIC SENATE**  
**of**  
**THE CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY**

AS-2598a-03/AA

January 23-24, 2003

Recommendation on the Report from the Joint Provost/Academic Senate, California State University Task Force on Facilitating Graduation: *Facilitating Student Success in Achieving the Baccalaureate Degree*

RESOLVED: That the Academic Senate of the California State University (CSU) receive the report and commend the collaborative process by the Joint Provost/Academic Senate CSU Task Force on Facilitating Graduation that produced: *Facilitating Student Success in Achieving the Baccalaureate Degree*; and be it further

RESOLVED: That the Academic Senate CSU endorse the principles and recommendations of the Joint Provost/Academic Senate CSU Task Force on Facilitating Graduation with the following stipulations:

- Given that many of the factors that affect graduation rates are outside the control of the CSU, only incremental improvement in graduation rates can be expected.
- Any plan to improve graduation rates must be constrained by Principle 1 of the report: "The primary goal of the academic enterprise is to provide a high quality, productive, meaningful academic experience for students."
- The implementation of the Task Force recommendations will be severely constrained by the lack of funding necessary for faculty, staff, degree audit, and improved advising processes.
- That the California State University Board of Trustees
  - (1) review, in consultation with the Academic Senate CSU and the Chancellor's Office, the data on improving graduation rates and determine what further research, if any, should be engaged. Any additional policy options that may be considered, based upon this review, should be developed through ongoing consultation with the Academic Senate CSU and the campus senates; and
  - (2) ensure that individual campuses of the California State University system, through the shared governance process, retain autonomy in their efforts to design institutionally

tailored programs guided by the principles and recommendations articulated in the Report from the California State University Task Force on Facilitating Graduation, to facilitate student success in achieving the baccalaureate degree.

*RATIONALE: The committee structure and process that developed the report, Facilitating Student Success in Achieving the Baccalaureate Degree, was a model for shared governance. It was a joint committee of provosts and faculty, selected by the Senate, and supported by staff from the Chancellor's Office. Members of the Board of Trustees were involved in early drafts of the report and the final report is a product of all three groups. The report is being presented to the Board of Trustees on a time line that allows the Academic Senate CSU and the campus senates to respond.*

*The Joint Provost/Academic Senate CSU Task Force on Facilitating Graduation has produced a report grounded in a large data set, with a good review of the literature, that provides a wide range of policy options. The principles recommended by the report emphasize that facilitating student success toward achieving the baccalaureate degree must be achieved within a framework of academic excellence and program quality. Moreover, the report recognizes that the CSU has only limited influence over the most important factor determining graduation rates: "exposure to a rigorous curriculum in secondary school." In addition, the diversity of our student body and its "priorities of family, work, and school" are not within system control. Because of this, we can expect to have only limited impact on graduation rates by focusing on those things which the system can control.*

*At the local level, the recommendations emphasize campus autonomy by asking each campus to develop a plan "based on local institutional research, to improve graduation rates." Many of the Task Force recommendations for CSU campuses require increased faculty, staff and equipment resources. "Developing a plan, based on local institutional research," requires that campuses have the resources to conduct this research. Developing "graduation roadmaps" and "improving advising practices" requires additional time by the permanent faculty whose numbers are steadily diminishing. Assuring that courses will be available "during specified terms" requires that campuses have the budgets to offer these courses.*

*It is important that the California State University Board of Trustees both recognize and acknowledge the need for individually tailored campus efforts to facilitate student success in achieving the baccalaureate. The diversity in*

*institutions, programs, campus cultures, and student populations within the CSU makes it doubtful that any single formula or programmatic structure will address the needs of students on all campuses.*

*At the system level the California State University Board of Trustees is asked to “assess improvements in graduation rates, and to consider if more incentives and disincentives are needed for both students and institutions.” Because graduation rates are affected by a wide variety of complex issues, it is important that the California State University Board of Trustees and the Chancellor’s Office work closely with the campuses, through the shared governance process, and the Academic Senate of the California State University in developing further policy options.*

**APPROVED – March 6-7, 2003**

have returned to school after a long absence and earned degrees as septuagenarians. The CSU embraces the tenacity, the complexity, and the richness in the lives of these people who take unusual or roundabout routes to a college degree. Similarly, the CSU welcomes the young prodigy who graduates with a bachelor's degree at age 16. Most people, however, do not fall into either one of these extremes on the continuum. Most enter college in their late teens or early 20s intending to get a degree. What that degree will be and how it will be earned—these are sometimes mysteries to entering students who have uncertain direction, who need to be inspired to intellectual curiosity, or who have dreams too vast or too uncircumscribed to be realized. The job of CSU faculty, staff, and administrators is to provide direction, give good counsel, balance the interests of students with the interests of the citizens of California, and help students achieve what most of them want when they enter college: a university degree of high quality.

## **VII. Principles and Recommendations**

After reviewing local, state, and national information on graduation rates, strategies for helping students achieve the baccalaureate, and the range of additional policy options discussed in the body of this report, the CSU Task Force on Facilitating Graduation identified several principles to which it was committed and which would undergird the recommendations that the Task Force made.

### **A. Principles of the Task Force**

1. The primary goal of the academic enterprise is to provide a high-quality, productive, meaningful academic experience for students.
2. One of the great gifts and strengths of the California State University is the diversity of the student body in terms of age, native language, race, ethnicity, parents' educational levels, socio-economic status, and career and educational goals.
3. While recognizing the diversity of both our students and the campus environments and missions that influence how students progress to a bachelor's degree, the CSU has an overarching commitment to facilitating graduation.
4. Students as well as faculty, staff, and administrators share a responsibility in making sure that students graduate in a timely manner.
5. In undertaking new initiatives to help facilitate graduation, the CSU will focus on things that it can control.
6. The CSU has a responsibility to the state, to its students, and to the taxpayers to make sure that state funds are spent effectively. It is necessary to strike a balance

between the wishes and desires of individual students and the wise use of fiscal resources.

## **B. Recommendations of the Task Force**

In making these recommendations, the Task Force has reviewed the research on degree completion and the many different kinds of policy options listed in “Section II: On the Path to the Baccalaureate Degree.” We understand that we have limited influence over the most important factor: exposure to a rigorous curriculum in secondary school. We understand that, given a diverse student body, imposing standardized requirements—such as full-time enrollment—is not possible. We understand that we cannot markedly affect students’ decisions about the relative priorities of family, work, and school. Hence, in offering these recommendations, we focus on aspects of students’ experiences and aspects of the CSU that are realistically subject to intervention and change and recommend only some of the policy options listed earlier.

### ***For CSU Campuses:***

Develop a plan, based on local institutional research, to improve graduation rates. The plan should include these actions:

1. Develop 4-year, 5-year, and 6-year graduation roadmaps for all academic degree programs. These roadmaps should be term-by-term depictions of the courses in which students should enroll over the entirety of their academic careers (general education and major) and should address both day and evening programs when program size is sufficient to support both patterns. After the plans have been developed, they should be accessible to students at feeder community colleges and high schools.
2. Develop and implement projected campus master class schedules designed to accommodate these roadmaps and ensure that required courses will be available during the specified terms.
3. Require a mandatory progress-to-degree audit at a specific checkpoint (such as when a native freshman accumulates 65 semester units or upon entry for a transfer student), followed by the requisite advising and regular updates on the audit.
4. Improve online and hard-copy university catalogues so that they are well designed, well organized, readable, and useful.
5. Use summer term to promote student progress to degree by analyzing student course needs so as to offer a class schedule that enables students to enroll in bottleneck courses and required courses in GE and the major.

The plan should include other strategies appropriate to the individual campuses. These could include such strategies as:

6. Offer new students an intensive first-year experience.
7. Expand faculty professional development for improved instructional effectiveness.
8. Improve advising practices.

***For the CSU System:***

9. Ensure that there is an infrastructure and funding to allow each campus to establish on-demand, online graduation progress reports and progress-to-degree audits.
10. Sponsor multi-campus workshops for the sharing of effective strategies for facilitating graduation.
11. Convene a group to consider the need for CSU systemwide policies on course drops, withdrawals, incompletes, and repeats.

***For the CSU Board of Trustees:***

12. Review campus plans and progress annually.
13. After four years, assess the improvements in graduation rates, and consider if more incentives and disincentives are needed for both students and institutions. These might include fee surcharges for excess units, fee incentives for students who graduate with close to the minimum number of semester-credits needed to earn the degree, fee rebates for graduating students who attended summer school, mandatory summer school attendance, and performance funding based on campuses' internal improvements in graduation rates.
14. Consider budgetary augmentation to implement recommendations.