

**Topic: To ensure access and success in higher education for a diverse group of individuals seeking careers in early childhood education. What needs to occur at the program level, the institutional level, the system level, across systems and at the state level?**

The session started off with a discussion of how the CSET exam is driving the curriculum at the CSU and that students of color are often discouraged to pursue careers in teaching because of their concern about passing standardized tests. The focus on testing itself is viewed as a particular inhibitor of access and retention. Various participants brought up a number of issues that need to be addressed in working with diverse populations. Among the issues discussed were: (1) the importance of articulation between the community colleges and the 4 year institutions; often community college students are discouraged when they find that much of their child development coursework is not transferable to the four year institution. Several community college participants mentioned that a similar course at the 4 year institution may be at the upper division level and use the same exact textbook as that used at the community college but that the student will not be given credit for the course by the 4 year institution, (2) the critical nature of advisement that is both timely and appropriate, (3) the need for mentoring, (4) the need for resources for individuals whose home language is not English; may need coursework in their native language; may need language supports such as tutoring to help them with coursework in English, (5) student cohorts as a means of providing focused social support, (6) the use of innovation to address the needs of diverse populations; for example, online classes, video conferencing, using the e-learning vehicles already in place in the CSU, and (7) funding and incentives to keep students in the field (e.g., the CARES program, Investing in Early Educators stipend program---all legislatively mandated supports; forgiveable loan programs mentioned in the legislation).

Some participants voiced the need to identify “best practices” for serving diverse populations and disseminate them among stakeholders.

Because the vast majority of the students who attend the CSU are transfer students, there may need to be more of a focus on meeting transfer requirements at the community college level. This is particularly the case for child development programs at community colleges that were developed as vocational training vehicles whose objective was/is gaining or maintaining immediate employment. Some participants mentioned that we have some other audiences to address as well as transfer students. They are freshmen students and how best to get the message out to high schools that careers in early childhood education are viable careers. Other participants mentioned the students at the community college who do not see themselves as BA material and need encouragement to go further should also be targeted.

After some lengthy discussion about what factors need to be considered for diverse students, there was agreement that instead of thinking about preparing students to pass a “test”, we should instead be thinking about what competencies or proficiencies we seek in early childhood educators (“what makes for a good teacher”). A clear articulation of competencies or proficiencies would help guide decision-making about the content of coursework and the skills and abilities expected. The idea here is that once there is a clearly elaborated enumeration of competencies, the next step is

to figure out what the obstacles are that block certain segments of the population from reaching those expectations and work towards overcoming them. A major advantage of explicating competencies in the field is that it may resolve the question of what constitutes an upper division course from a lower division course that appears in questions of articulation between 2 and 4 year institutions. There was some discussion of the need to provide academic credit for competencies and proficiencies based on practical experience or expertise and not necessarily specific coursework.

Finally, the group discussed various venues for communication in building the higher education pipeline for universal preschool. John Chavez from CSU, East Bay mentioned the professional organization he heads for the California chapter of the National Association for Early Childhood Teacher Educators. Another possibility might be through the statewide First Five Commission who is convening a Blue Ribbon Panel to develop teacher competencies. The First Five Commission may want to also convene a Higher Education Consortium. The state of New Mexico formed a higher education consortium to work on issues related to professional development in early childhood education. California does not need to re-invent the wheel but can learn from what others have done.