

The Executive Committee of the CSULA Academic Senate
Comments on
Access to Excellence: A Draft of the CSU's Strategic Plan

Domain #1: Assuring Access

1. While each campus has a responsibility to assist its own students, the CSU, the largest system of higher education in the country, should facilitate access to the academy by providing user-friendly information to all prospective students about non-campus-specific financial aid and scholarships.
2. The CSU should also use its influence to push for sufficient new funds devoted to financial aid, such as Cal Grants, in order to keep pace with the financial needs of our students. The CSU should also urge the State to eliminate or raise financial aid age caps that prevent many current and prospective students from obtaining financial aid.
3. The current FTES funding model does not adequately address the students of the 21st century. CSU campus allocation of state funding relies in part on historical funding patterns rather than current campus needs assessment, resulting in differential funding per FTES. The CSU should engage in a systematic review of state funding support by campus to ensure more equitable distribution of state funding per FTES among campuses. In addition, historically underserved students, non-traditional students and part-time students cost more to educate than well-prepared first-time freshmen. The CSU should supplement FTES-based allocations so that the CSU meets the needs of these students. Finally, the total dollars per FTES available to the CSU are grossly inadequate and fall well below spending at similar comprehensive public universities in the U.S. The CSU should urge the legislature and governor of the State of California to address the CSU's funding gap per FTES relative to other four-year public universities in the United States.
4. We believe that the recent and significant student fee increases have adversely and disproportionately affected the ability of historically underserved students attending the CSU. The CSU should research the impact of the recent fee increases. If the evidence confirms our belief, the system should seek additional funds, above and beyond the 25% set-aside for financial aid, which can be used to address this unfortunate outcome.
5. Since the graduate differential applies only to enrollments above the base year levels, the CSU should recognize in its strategic plan the value and expense of graduate education and should seek to extend the revised definition of full-time graduate student to include all graduate students.
6. The CSU should continue to increase affordable housing options for students, including students with families.
7. The CSU should continue to support the Early Assessment Project and other similar efforts of assisting California high schools.
8. Although we know it is controversial, we recommend that the CSU should consider ways to include undocumented students in higher education.

Domain #2: Connecting to P-12 Schools and to Community Colleges

1. The CSU should continue to develop a robust web based system that is easily navigated to facilitate transfer from community colleges to the CSU. The transfer between CSU institutions should also be assisted by the creation of an online system for reviewing articulation agreements.
2. The CSU should foster better relations with P-12 so that the CSU can be a resource for the community. This necessitates the CSU faculty knowing what the P-12 faculty are doing and seeing where we can help. Once better relationships are cultivated, every public school teacher should have the contact information of a local CSU faculty member in their discipline so that the CSU serves as a better resource.
3. The CSU should develop a systemwide lexicon for accessing information on campus web pages, including schedules of classes and catalogs, across the system so that students and stakeholders can easily find the answers to their questions regardless of which campus' website they consult. Further, the CSU should work with community colleges to assure the utilization of this common vocabulary.

Domain #3: Fulfilling Commitments to Multiple Stakeholders

1. CSU faculty cannot fulfill their commitments to multiple stakeholders when the number of full-time, tenure-track and tenured faculty is declining. The CSU strategic plan should explicitly commit to hiring and retaining more tenure-track faculty and the CSU should obtain and devote sufficient resources to this endeavor. This includes providing competitive salaries and more faculty housing or housing assistance. If necessary, the CSU should go to the legislature and explicitly seek the money that is needed to achieve this existing commitment.
2. The CSU needs to resist turning assessment into accountability. Assessment should be developed primarily for internal quality improvement purposes. Stakeholders should also be educated as to the costs of assessment.
3. The CSU should resist federal efforts to standardize outcomes as called for in the Spellings Report. System accountability measures should be selected appropriately and should reflect what campuses are actually doing. Accountability measures demanded by outside stakeholders frequently ignore the diversity of campuses, oversimplify the university education process, degrade the meaning of the degree itself, and could potentially damage the quality of the university system in the long run.

Domain #4: Ensuring Success in Student Learning

1. Since faculty advisement is a key to student achievement, sufficient resources should be provided to campuses to assure appropriate faculty-student ratios. Declining numbers of faculty cannot adequately advise increasing numbers of students. There is also a need to adequately compensate departments and divisions for required increased advisement loads.
2. System placement exams demonstrate that high school students are not adequately prepared for college. Effectively teaching California students necessitates lower student-faculty ratios. The CSU strategic plan should identify lowering these ratios as a strategic goal.
3. The CSU should state in its strategic plan that there are multiple reasons for teaching and learning in higher education. One purpose is clearly to educate students who will join the California work force. But that is not the only purpose. Education is valuable in and of itself. The implied definition of student success as moving students through as quickly as possible to meet standardized employer needs is flawed and should be reconsidered. Students should be encouraged to develop and leverage their unique strengths.
4. The CSU has been overly focused on developing an information system geared to providing centralized data to CSU administration at the expense of providing user-friendly access to data for faculty. Greater emphasis should be placed on more effectively using information technology to provide faculty with efficient access to data for purposes of advisement, program development, and assessment.
5. Communication skills are critical to successfully navigating academia and life after the university. The CSU should give greater attention to clear, civil and effective communication in both oral and written modes.
6. The CSU should retain remedial courses as long as they are necessary.

Domain #5: Faculty/Staff Excellence to Promote Student Success

1. In Cornerstones, the CSU recognized the relationship between research and teaching effectiveness, yet there is currently no recognition in a faculty member's workload that retention, tenure and promotion requirements necessitate research/creative activity. The CSU should provide sufficient support for, and reward to, teacher-scholars and it should redefine the faculty workload to provide time for research/creative activity.
2. Adequate resources should be provided directly to campuses by the CSU in order to promote faculty development.
3. Adequate resources should be provided directly to campuses by the CSU in order to provide staff with meaningful career paths and professional growth.
4. The teacher-scholar model, the vital graduate education we currently provide and the coming expansion of doctorate level programs require up-to-date research/creative activity facilities. The CSU should urge the state to revise its rules to permit building space (e.g., labs) to be designated as research space. This is currently not permitted.

5. The CSU should provide a significant increase in faculty and staff access to affordable (“workforce”) housing for purchase or rent, with integrated childcare facilities whenever possible.

Domain #6: Now and in the Future: Campus/System Identity

1. The CSU is becoming a system of “have” and “have not” campuses. The system should review the FTES based funding model and adjust it to assure the equitable distribution of funds, should augment allocations to provide additional funds for those students that require more dollars to achieve academic success (historically underserved, non-traditional students and part-time students), and, where practical, should redirect enrollment to campuses that have capacity to accept enrollment (as in the UC system) rather than expanding already full campuses.
2. The CSU is not a system; it has unfortunately become a group of competing entities where rewards go to those who most successfully encroach on the service areas of another campus. The system should strive to create an identity for the system. This should include more effectively marketing itself to students and faculty as an institution of first choice.
3. We should have a broader discussion of about what “student success” means. The focus on producing identical cogs for a machine as demonstrated through the achievement of a set of learning objectives misses many essential features of a college education. A definition of student success should include creative thought, a thirst for knowledge, civic responsibility, and a commitment to life-long learning—dispositions not measurable by learning outcomes.