

**Testimony to the Joint Committee on the
Master Plan for Higher Education**

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California State Capitol

John Tarjan

Chair, Academic Senate of the California State University

I would like to express the sincere gratitude of the 23,000 faculty members of the California State University for the opportunity to address the committee today. As I sit here, I reflect upon the fact that my faculty office for 16 years at CSU Bakersfield was housed in Dorothy Donohue Hall. Perhaps 50 years ago to the day, Assembly Member Donohue and her colleagues may have been sitting in this very room putting the finishing touches on the plan that has not only served California well for the past 50 years, but has been viewed as an ideal to which other states, and even nations, have aspired.

The most important point I can communicate to this distinguished group of policymakers, citizens, and policy experts, is the deep and abiding commitment to, and belief in, the Master Plan for Higher Education by the faculty of the CSU. Indeed, as you look at this panel of faculty members assembled before you today, I doubt you could find a group of leaders anywhere who represent individuals more committed to the educational opportunity and equity embodied in the Donohue Higher Education Act.

California is a better place because of its commitment to higher education. Very likely, many of the Senators and Assembly Members present today developed their commitment to public service at a California college and/or university. Despite current hardships, you would be hard pressed to find an economist who does not believe higher education has fueled California's incredible economic growth. California is also more culturally vibrant, more responsive to its citizens' needs, and more committed to social justice and equity because of higher education.

As you review the Master Plan, I encourage you to view it as a vision statement for California. Please, make it possible for California to continue to fulfill its promise to all of its citizens by reaffirming a commitment to this vision. Of course, as elected representatives, you have the responsibility to review legislation, to ensure that it still serves the state and to update it as

necessary. I have several suggestions in that regard.

Eligibility and Access

- a. The faculty of the CSU remain committed to the Master Plan commitment to make higher education opportunity available to every Californian who can benefit from that opportunity.
- b. Cutting access due to funding shortages is one of the most difficult things we have done. It goes against our culture. Cutting access is in painful contradiction to our commitment to educational equity. However, access should not be at a level that would diminish quality below an acceptable threshold.

Affordability and Financing

- c. The segments need predictability. It is hard for colleges and universities to adjust efficiently to abrupt and unpredictable levels of funding in the short run when we make long term commitments to students, employees and communities.
- d. Current segment workload levels are unsupportable without additional funding. All three segments may be at a “tipping point” from which recovery may be decades away unless funding and/or workload change dramatically.

Accountability

- e. We welcome accountability—just remember that we serve many stakeholders and face many constraints and that accountability measures often convey conflicting priorities.
- f. Please do a cost-benefit analysis before imposing new accountability measures without deleting old ones. The benefits of additional data collection and reporting expenses should be weighed against their value to the public and policy makers for making informed decisions.

Coordination and Efficiency

- g. Please base conclusions about the need for changes in coordination mechanisms upon documented evidence rather than anecdotal data.
- h. Coordination of academic programs and curriculum is very difficult without providing faculty the means to meet and consult.
- i. As the capabilities of the CSU and the needs of the state evolve, minor adjustments to the Master Plan, such as authorization for the CSU to offer professional doctoral degrees, should be considered. However, overall, the complementary missions of the three segments of public higher education are appropriate and continue to serve California well.
- j. Discussions about efficiency should also include considerations about the potential effects of initiatives upon quality. When current students and graduates (recent and not-so-recent) are asked about their most meaningful educational experiences, they almost always refer to experiences outside of the classroom and to one-on-one interactions with faculty members. A developmental collegiate experience involves more than just passing classes. Important student outcomes include such things as a passion for lifelong inquiry, an appreciation of diversity, a commitment to community engagement, demonstration of personal and professional ethics, and the ability to work with others to accomplish goals, in addition to the mastery of content and the development of basic and applied skills.

The faculty of the California State University are eager to partner with you to help keep the vision of the Master Plan alive for the citizens of California. Please feel free to call upon us to assist in any way as you embark on this important initiative. Thank you.