Comments on Access to Excellence Draft from CSU, East Bay Academic Senate

On October 23, the Academic Senate at CSU, East Bay held a general discussion of the Access to Excellence draft. Although no resolutions were approved or votes were taken, a clear consensus of the Senate emerged around the following concerns:

1) The plan in important respects reads as if it were two different and differing documents. The first, more substantive part presents a relatively clear vision of the context in which the plan unfolds and the challenges that the CSU must address. Although there was much concern that this section does not adequately address faculty and staff workload issues and the critical and desperate need to invest in new faculty and staff and in their development, its general approach did not engender opposition and senators complimented those sections that situated the CSU in a broader societal context. However, the section on “Core Performance Goals and Accountability Measures” and the “Strategies for Implementation” that follow this were highly criticized and deemed seriously inadequate. The Senate was concerned that these sections read only like a “laundry list” of goals of varied importance, with little or no attempt to outline genuine plans to achieve them and clear priorities among them. In other words, the goals are accompanied by “accountability measures” but not by any substantive indications as to how, when, and by whom such measures will be reached.

2) Many senators noted as well that the “accountability measures” are far too numerous and too vague. The measures repeatedly talk about “increases” or “strengthening” but never set clear, measurable goals. Moreover, the “strategies” at the end are in the main not strategies at all but statements of intent, with no clear plans for achievement. The frequent references to assessment and accountability also convey an impression that the CSU is not already using evidence to improve student learning and increase efficiency. One senator noted that the disproportionate emphasis on accountability and assessment threatens to become interminable, with both campus-based and system planning goals and measures; national accountability projects like the VSA and CLA; and WASC, AACSB, NCATE and other accreditation efforts all combining redundantly to place increasing burdens on faculty, staff, and administrators to the detriment of what we’re actually supposed to be doing. In this light it could be noted that the statement in the draft that “the challenge ahead will be to implement regular assessments of effectiveness” in meeting educational goals is simply wrong. The real challenge is not doing the assessments but actually meeting the educational goals.

3) There was a broad sense in the discussion that both parts of the document, but especially the Performance Goals/Accountability Measures, place too much emphasis on Access and not enough on Excellence. While the document clearly articulates the need to expand access to the CSU, its measures of quality do not fundamentally address what is meant by excellence and how we will achieve it. In particular, notably lacking were such widely accepted measures of genuine excellence as student-faculty ratios, average class size, teaching and advising workloads, and ratios of full-time to part-time faculty. While it is true that investments in quality are not by themselves guaranteed to produce results, the Senate was united in the belief that without a measurable increase in resources any talk of “excellence” is merely an empty public relations gesture.
4) The strongest consensus in the Senate was that the plan does not sufficiently address the issue of obtaining adequate funding for the CSU, principally through state support. Senators appreciated the document’s explicit refusal to go down the “privatization” path and its strong stance for increased state funding. However, many recalled that this was an important component of Cornerstones as well, but it was never achieved. It was the unanimous feeling – to put it bluntly – that the entire Access to Excellence project will be worthless if the plan does not forcefully spell out clear fiscal goals and, in particular, clear and specific plans for achieving those goals. The statements under Goal 3 on funding are in this respect inadequate. It is not sufficient simply to “increase state funding through marginal funding increases for all enrollment growth attained.” In fact, the consensus was – and this was also articulated by our campus earlier in the process at our “campus conversation” – that state funding based solely on growth (Access) is not nearly enough; funding must also be based on financing quality improvements (Excellence). Under “strategies,” the paragraph under “grow public resources” was widely criticized as vague and weak. Many senators asked how we would “build and market a plan to increase educational attainment” and what such a plan would entail. Similarly, senators were forceful in asking how we would develop “a comprehensive communication effort to marshal public support for funding needs” and how we would “hold elected officials and CSU officials accountable,” especially if there are no clear measures of success by which we might judge that accountability. Several senators noted that the CSU leadership has not engaged in any such efforts at all in recent years, and they were openly skeptical that without a clear plan and visible commitment to it, this goal would go the way of similar Cornerstones goals and thereby render the entire thrust of Access to Excellence moot.

5) Finally, there was considerable confusion in our discussion about the audience for this plan. Is the plan itself something directed toward the legislature and the public? Or is it directed internally at faculty, staff, and administration? It seems to try to address both audiences, and succeeds in addressing neither in a fully adequate manner. In either case, we agree with the conclusion of the Fullerton Senate: “What is lacking in this document is a strong voice for higher education in California: a voice that can create a sense of mission internally and that can mobilize the public to turn out in droves to support higher education.”
November 1, 2007

To: Trustee Roberta Achtenberg, Chair, Access to Excellence Steering Committee  
Trudy Hernandez, Academic Affairs, Office of the Chancellor  
Executive Committee, CSU Academic Senate  
Campus Senate Chairs  
Executive Committee, California Faculty Association  
Executive Committee, California State Student Association  
Campus Presidents

From: Diana Guerin, Chair  
Academic Senate, CSU Fullerton

Subject: Campus Senate Response to Access to Excellence Draft

The Academic Senate discussed the Access to Excellence (hereafter referred to as A2E) draft dated September 2007 at its meeting on October 18, 2007. We appreciate the opportunity to comment on the strategic plan during the drafting phase and the process used to solicit input last year. We are hopeful that these comments and suggestions will contribute to a final A2E plan that will serve as a roadmap to the high-quality, affordable, and accessible higher education that is our mission. The synthesis of our Senate discussion follows.

Voice/Tone

We understand that A2E has multiple audiences, both internal and external to the CSU. As members of the internal audience, we find the vision depicted in A2E for the future of the CSU neither inspiring nor motivating. Indeed, the frequent reference to expanding access without a similarly strong advocacy for matching resources gives the impression that quality will be sacrificed for access, whereas the repeated references to increasing student fees force us to conclude that affordability will also be compromised for access: quality and affordability are sacrificed for access.

For external audiences, we believe the tone of this draft of A2E fails to convey the significant and ongoing accomplishments of the CSU and instead insinuates that the CSU is part of a failed educational system. Higher education is very different from primary and secondary education, and we find the use of the terms “P-16” and “P-20” inappropriate. We are concerned about language such as “educational pipeline,” which dehumanizes students and frames them as a commodity.
Frequent references to both assessment and accountability throughout the document give the impression that CSU faculty, staff, and administrators do not currently use evidence to improve student learning or campus productivity. Additionally, statements such as the following challenge the quality of our work without providing evidence to support the inference:

- **Page 6:** …More than 1.2 million CSU students have engaged in a variety of community service activities since 1999. Yet these successes have yet to be translated to education for effective political participation, in government and in other forms of civic life that is so critical to the health of our democracy…This is a national issue, not confined to California and the CSU…

- **Page 9:** …Concern about the quality of skills and learning of graduates is growing—and not only in the CSU: the issue is a national one…

- **Page 10:** …Additionally, the few available national assessments of college-level learning results unfortunately suggest that basic literacy and numeracy skills for college graduates have declined over the last decade. Surveys and focus group work around the country show that employers want more than the knowledge and skill levels of recent college graduates…

What is lacking in this document is a strong voice for higher education in California: a voice that can create a sense of mission internally and that can mobilize the public to turn out in droves to support higher education. The CSU is the country’s largest university system, and it contributes in innumerable ways not only to the state of California and its citizens, but also beyond California’s borders. The teaching, scholarly/creative work, and service generated on its 23 campuses and the work of its two million alumni stand as testament to the extraordinary vision of those who created the CSU in the Master Plan for Higher Education in 1961. We concur that there are urgent and critical issues facing the CSU, but we also believe that the impressive contributions and accomplishments of the students, faculty, staff, and administrators in the CSU are not reflected in A2E.

**Funding**

We think that funding is the most critical issue facing the CSU, and the “dwindling share of state resources” for higher education is acknowledged on page 7 in A2E. However, we believe this challenge should be more prominently stated. We are concerned that the compact (page 8), rather than a “welcome baseline,” has placed the system in jeopardy. Indeed, an article recently published in the *Los Angeles Times* notes that the compact did not provide adequate funding to preserve, much less increase, academic excellence (Richard C. Paddock “Less to bank on at state universities,” *Los Angeles Times*, October 7, 2007).

Adequate funding will require a comprehensive effort that mobilizes the entire CSU constituency to persuade the state of the importance of higher education. The strategies to address funding shortfalls listed on page 16 (developing a communications plan, preparing a long-term plan for modest growth in student fees, and holding public officials and CSU leadership accountable for success in meeting funding goals) are reasonable starting points. However, the accountability indicators seem too nebulous to be useful:
• “Funding adequacy sufficient to grow enrollments and degree attainment to meet state needs for civic and economic growth” fails to mention access to quality programs. What is the level of funding that is sufficient to meet our state’s needs and provide access to quality programs? Is there a benchmark or metric that can be used to ascertain what adequate funding is? Later, we suggest considering using student-faculty ratio (SFR) as a metric to reflect quality.

• “Increasing state funding through marginal funding increases for all enrollment growth attained” is an improvement to our current situation, but results in the CSU continuing to take in more students than it is funded to handle. Although this indicator is measurable, marginal funding is not sufficient to provide a quality educational experience.

• A2E is vague in terms of describing increases in student fees (“modest,” “moderate” vs. specific percentage, for example). We concur that any increases in student fees, if needed, must be predictable. We are concerned that the fee increases coupled with the other expenses students and families pay for higher education may have a detrimental impact on middle class families whose students are ineligible for financial aid.

• Finally, what is meant by “reducing unmet financial need” among all student groups? How would attainment of this indicator be determined?

Adequate funding will require a comprehensive effort that mobilizes the entire CSU constituency to persuade the state of the importance of higher education, perhaps via a ballot initiative or other tax increase, but CSU leadership on these sorts of strategies is not mentioned. Given the many initiatives cited in A2E (growth, assessment, technology, recruitment/retention of faculty and staff, etc.), the strategies for improving funding appear scant and too vague to assess.

As will be addressed below, on our campus and many others, full-time faculty face heavy workloads because of the failure to replace faculty who have left the CSU or because of the rapid enrollment growth in recent years. The hiring of staff has also failed to keep pace with enrollments. We are aware that taking on new initiatives, such as CMS, without eliminating other activities creates both financial and environmental pressures on an already stressed system.

**Research/Scholarly and Creative Activities**

The role of scholarly and creative activities by faculty and students in the CSU is mentioned in A2E, and we agree that these activities are central to our mission. Additionally, we concur that expanding CSU research efforts can increase funds to our campuses through overhead. However, campuses need appropriate laboratory space, instrumentation, start-up funds, and seed money to be successful. Aside from the potential to bring funding to campuses, scholarly and creative activities contribute to improved teaching in our faculty and increased retention of students. Student involvement in research projects provides them with opportunities that contribute to their personal and professional development. We are concerned, however, that applied research seems to be valued more highly that basic
research in the A2E document (pages 6 and 13). Applied research does not come about without the fundamental front end called basic research. Support of scholarly research and creative activities is essential to a high-quality learning environment for all students, including those in the STEM disciplines, and contributes to the CSU and California.

**Growth and Quality**
A central theme of the A2E is growth: CSU enrollments are projected to grow by 10,000 new students per year due to demographic trends. Also, California needs to double its current rate of degree production (an increase of 130,000 over the next 15 years) to meet workforce needs. Yet, in spite of these compelling data, there is no mention in A2E of how this growth will be met with existing campuses or of the need for new campuses. Failing to plan for predictable growth is detrimental to a quality educational experience. Campus infrastructure is stressed by constant growth. Heavy faculty and staff workloads threaten quality. Failing to advocate for reducing the student-faculty ratio (as outlined in the response to ACR 73 jointly formulated by the CSU, CFA, and ASCSU) is also a major omission in A2E.

Although not explicitly stated, it appears that technology is the central strategy to handle growth in the CSU:

- **Page 7**: “…Advances in technology have also helped to redefine traditional understandings of campus “space,” which is no longer confined to the physical parameters and buildings of a campus…In the future, effective use of technology will be central to the CSU’s capacity to increase learning effectiveness while at the same time meeting growing demand despite capacity limits on campus-based enrollments…”

- **Page 9**: “…CSU faculty, whatever their terms of employment, will need to be recruited, and trained, for willingness to experiment with new modes of teaching and learning…”

Expanding the use of non-traditional instructional delivery methods will require professional development for faculty and enhanced technology support, perhaps available 24 hours per day, 7 days per week, for both students and faculty.

Related to growth and quality, the A2E draft places too much attention on the classroom (the 40 courses with well defined learning outcomes) while ignoring the other needs for a quality educational experience. For example, we concur with the strategy of “stronger advisement” (Goal 1). It is not clear what the strategy is to strengthen advisement, nor is there mention of the resources required to implement the strategy.

Campuses need to provide the physical environment to learn and study outside of the classroom: library space, eating spaces, informal meeting spaces, spaces to work in groups etc. We know that we need to strengthen students’ engagement with the campus, the other students, and the faculty to improve learning outcomes, but this is challenging to do without the physical environment to support these activities; some campuses simply do not provide the environment to keep students on campus where they can interact with other students who are undergoing similar experiences. If we do not have those spaces, then we become little different from our for-profit competitors: classrooms and offices.
Faculty and Staff
The recognition that faculty and staff are CSU’s “most important strategic asset” is appreciated (page 9). However, we believe that the failure of the system to reinvest in faculty and professional development (page 1) called for in Cornerstones is a continuing threat to academic quality in the CSU. The CSU has a high proportion of temporary faculty, troubled labor relationships, and salaries and workloads that undermine its attractiveness as a workplace not only to faculty, but also to many employee groups. As accountability indicators relating to faculty and staff, we note that in Cornerstones the goal was to close compensation gaps, whereas in A2E the goal is merely to reduce them. We encourage a “laser focus” on replenishing tenured and tenure-track faculty and suggest the accountability indicators must include a specific goal to move the proportion of tenured/tenure-track faculty to 75% over a short period of years, such as the plan formulated in response to ACR 73 (http://www.calstate.edu/AcadAff/docs/ACR73_07222002.pdf; see also the ASCSU resolution, “Monitoring and Supporting Progress in the Implementation of ACR 73,” at http://www.calstate.edu/AcadSen/Records/Resolutions/2006-2007/2780.shtml).

Although recruitment is specifically mentioned in A2E, improving retention is an additional strategy. Obviously the need to hire is lessened if retention is increased. The building of faculty and staff development programs is one strategy cited, and accountability indicators with specific targets (such as funding for sabbaticals, scholarly and creative activities, etc.) are important metrics to consider. The university needs to be a place where an academic community can thrive. It needs a physical and social environment that supports and enriches that community in order to promote academic excellence, which will not occur in a vacuum. The work environment for faculty, staff, and administration is directly related to the learning environment for students. Strategies for providing competitive salaries, status and recognition to employees, and a culture that communicates a clear and purposeful mission for the organization are essential for retaining a quality workforce, and yet they are woefully absent in this document.

Assessment
The repeated references to assessment and accountability make measurement the driving force behind A2E. Rather than offer a clear and ringing voice for higher education and what it does, the impression is that A2E seeks to address the accountability critics, playing a defensive rather than offensive game.

As mentioned above, we believe that the emphasis on assessment and accountability leads readers to infer mistakenly that these activities are not already taking place. What A2E fails to address is the high cost of increasing our implementation of assessment and accountability processes. One need only look at the amount of money spent by school systems on the accountability measures in response to the No Child Left Behind federal legislation to understand how much money is diverted from other functions of the institution. Quality assessment for continuous improvement requires additional resources in terms of assessment instruments as well as faculty and staff to administer, analyze, maintain records, and act upon the results. The increased costs associated with these activities are evident in our many programs with external accreditation by organizations such as the National Council for...
Accreditation of Teacher Education or the Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business, for example.

Aside from the expense of both assessment and accountability processes, we have grave concerns about accountability measures mentioned in A2E as “value-added assessments” or “assessment-driven accountability for results.” We are concerned that the simplistic assessment approaches of the “one size fits all” nature will lead to (1) the narrowing of the curriculum; (2) standards that must be set to the lowest common denominator so as to allow for acceptable retention and graduation rates; (3) a focus on outcomes that can be easily measured (Gresham’s Law at work: “Work that produces measurable outcomes tends to drive out work that produces unmeasurable outcomes” [James Q. Wilson, Bureaucracy, Basic Books, 1989, p. 161].) This could reduce education to mere training. Indeed, we believe the liberal arts are underemphasized in A2E and are concerned that mission of the CSU is being too narrowly cast as workforce preparation.

Additional Concerns about Accountability Indicators
As noted above, we have concerns that some of the accountability indicators are too nebulous to be useful. Questions were raised as to the selection of some of accountability indicators, for example:

Goal 1
- Increase high school graduation rates: Is this really a key metric of the CSU mission?
- Increase proportion of population with college degrees: This is an indicator that is affected by not only the work of the CSU, but also the (far greater number of) colleges and universities that California students attend. It also overlaps with indicators focusing on increasing the number of community college transfer students and number of degrees we award.
- Improve level of academic preparation among CSU entering freshmen: Again, is this an indicator over which we have primary control, or one that is controlled by others?
- Increase retention, reduce excess credits: We are concerned about how “excess” credits are defined. Some degree programs require more than 120 units to complete. Related to this, what is meant by “removing barriers to degree completion” in the strategies for Goal 1?
- Strengthen CCC-CSU transfer transition: This seems a strategy rather than an outcome indicator.
- All campuses participate in VSA: Does participation equate to successful accomplishment of this indicator?
- Conduct regular assessments of employer satisfaction with CSU graduates: There are other ways to try to judge the success of our enterprise. Surveys of alumni satisfaction and monitoring alumni accomplishments would also be important indicators of quality. The New York Times recently surveyed alumni five years after they left their institutions: 93% described their undergraduate experiences good or excellent (Jacques Steinberg: “Don’t Worry. Be Students.” The New York Times Magazine. September 30, 2007 p73ff. Also at nytimes.com/magazine).
• Refresh general education learning goals to incorporate goals for international literacy, civic capacity, and improved workforce skills: How were these particular outcomes selected?

Goal 2
• Increase enrollments in STEM fields: There is not a clear strategy linking to this indicator; perhaps it is another of the accountability indicators: incorporate STEM goals into early outreach goals? Additional strategies? As one of our STEM faculty members stated: “The objective is to produce students who are scientifically literate and skilled, who can deal with STEM in the broader sense, whether they go post-baccalaureate, biomedical, pharmaceutical, law, government, whatever. The goal here is more to resurrect the kind of education and training push the US implemented post-Sputnik, from which many of us benefitted.”
• Conduct regular assessments of employer needs and incorporate these assessments into curriculum planning: We must keep in mind, with respect to workforce development, that we are preparing students for a workforce of the future. To focus on current workforce needs without regard for future workforce needs is short sighted.
• Identify opportunities for student placements in government roles: That seems to be the strategy; the indicator is how many students were placed in what kinds of roles.
• Environmental sustainability: Is articulating the policy the strategy, whereas the results of the policy (courses, institutional practices, dollars saved, etc.) would be the measurable outcomes?
• Expand funding for research and development: the accountability indicators listed seem to be strategies; the accountability indicator would be the amount of funding, grants, projects funded, etc.

Goal 3
(Many of these indicators were addressed above.)
• Build faculty and staff development programs: Measurable indicators?
• Develop CSU leadership program: Number of individuals trained? Satisfaction with training? Satisfaction with performance of those trained?
• Strengthening message and documenting cost-effectiveness seem to be strategies rather than outcomes. Conducting assessments of public opinion (also policymakers?) might be an important indicator.
• Under enhancing the image of the CSU, both accountability indicators seem to be strategies rather than outcomes.
In sum, as is clear from our comments synthesized above, we are disappointed in the initial draft of A2E for the following reasons:

- This document does not read like a strategic plan. A true strategic plan has a vision with creative strategies linked to measurable desired outcomes (see, for example, the strategic plan for Boston University, http://www.bu.edu/president/strategic-plan/).

- This document does not have engaging vision. It is a response (at times with a defensive tone) to chronic problems and criticisms of which we are all too painfully aware.

- It falls short of offering a real plan to resolve these problems, and it does not identify what we already do well.

A2E should be a visionary document with clear goals for excellence, a roadmap of how to get there, and benchmarks to determine our success. As such, it could provide a rallying point to mobilize our constituencies and the electorate to help us out of the current funding crisis.
November 7, 2007

TO:  
Trusted Roberta Achtenberg, Chair, Access to Excellence Steering Committee  
Trudy Hernandez, Academic Affairs, Office of the Chancellor  
Executive Committee, CSU Academic Senate  
Campus Senate Chairs  
Executive Committee, California Faculty Association  
Executive Committee, California State Student Association  
Campus Presidents

FROM:  
Edith Benkov, Chair, SDSU University Senate

SUBJECT: SDSU SENATE’S RESPONSE TO THE CSU ACCESS TO EXCELLENCE DRAFT DOCUMENT

The strategic plan for the CSU, embodied in the “Access to Excellence” document, correctly identifies the demographic, fiscal, and political challenges faced by the CSU, including the changing demographics and shifts in population patterns in the state, diminishing public support for higher education, and the need for greater accountability. Given the changing physical and economic environment, changes in technology and the market, as well as the changing public and legislative attitudes toward higher education, a strategic realignment and recommitment to a set of core values on the part of the CSU is both necessary and inevitable. However, both the general assumptions underlying the draft strategic plan as well as many of the specific steps it recommends bear questioning in light of the environment described and the experiences of the CSU institutions as articulated in many prior documents and statements by CSU administrators, faculty, staff, students, and university and Academic Senates. The SDSU Senate’s response to the plan focuses on six major issues.


A CSU that is Mission-Centered and Market-Smart

- The document lacks a conceptual center. Such a center could be provided by a set of core values, while leaving room for the creative potential of university administrators, faculty, staff, and students to respond to changing conditions in light of these values.

In an important study of the American university on the brink of the 21st century, Zemsky et al suggest that confronted with exactly the kind of environment the CSU faces, universities, especially public ones, need to become “mission-centered” and “market-smart.” Being market-smart and mission-centered means focusing on a set of agreed-upon core values and then pursuing the appropriate means to realize these values in light of the “understanding [of the institutions’] real strengths and capacities as honed by market competition” (Zemsky et al 194).

The draft “Access” document is focused on outcomes and performance indicators rather than values, thus constraining rather than releasing the creative potential of CSU universities, its faculties, administrators, staff, and students. The university’s core values revolve around education; accountability, while desirable and necessary, is the outcome of a commitment to such values and of smart strategies in their realization, not a goal in itself. The current document makes accountability the goal rather than the outcome.

More Focus on Creativity, Flexibility, and Problem-solving

- As acknowledged in the draft document, the CSU is a tremendous public resource. Making the best of this resource in the face of current challenges requires, above all, maximizing flexibility and independence. The System Office needs to recognize that imperative and develop strategies to allow the universities in the CSU to be creative, flexible, responsive, and problem-focused in responding to challenges in its diverse and ever-changing environments.

The document is too focused on a standardized list of goals and requirements that may not be applicable to all the universities in the CSU system. It also valorizes existing programs at the expense of allowing for creativity and innovation in addressing the changing quality of civic and economic life in California. The CSU should not be conceived of as a centrally steered behemoth, but as a problem-focused, creative, responsive, and flexible resource. While the business metaphor is clearly implicit in the “Access” document, the assumptions of centralization, standardization, and uniformity run contrary to principles widely accepted as imperative for business success today. In relation to the CSU, a decentralized, responsive, entrepreneurial, just-in-time philosophy embraced by successful businesses, but one, in the case
of the University, centered on core values focused on education would appear most appropriate. Such as philosophy emphasizing flexibility and problem solving may in turn encourage problem-focused collaboration among the universities in the CSU system.

**Emphasize the Relationship Among Research, Creative Activity, and Learning**

- The draft document reflects too little emphasis on the contribution of faculty research and creative activity to student learning.

In the statement and recommendations “The Role of Research, Scholarship, and Creative Activities in the CSU,” CSU provosts emphasize that “these activities enhance student learning, help us recruit and retain high-quality faculty, develop new knowledge, and contribute to scholarly dialogue”—all of which “serve California and strengthen the economy” (1).

The statement further notes that “there are highly valued synergies between teaching and research” and that “the ability of the CSU and the state of California to maintain and build economic capacity so that its citizens can compete in the global marketplace can only be achieved if the CSU actively pursues excellence in both teaching and research.” The provosts recommend that the CSU emphasize the role of research and creative activity of both faculty and students and the scholarly expectations of faculty in internal and external advocacy messages. The “Access” document needs to reflect this role and, quoting again from the provosts’ statement, to “actively articulate the role, significance of, and benefits deriving from research [as well as scholarship, and creative activity] in the CSU system today” (6).

Research and creative activity may include a wide variety of faculty work, much of which is closely related to student success. Such work includes projects related to the environment and/or to the various communities with which CSU universities are involved. They not only constitute the universities’ involvement with various communities, but they also involve students in ways that both prepare them for their careers and constitute a form of civic engagement and of “giving back.”

The CSU boasts (and rightfully so) about the achievements of its faculty (as in the recent case of Prof. Jeff Price’s participation in a Nobel-prize project), but the “Access” document provides neither the resources nor the explicit recognition of the need to support a broad variety of faculty work beyond the classroom. The document should demonstrate a commitment to building increased support for research, scholarly, and creative activities of faculty and students. Increased investments are needed to recruit and retain high quality faculty and to grow the research and scholarly activity required to enhance the state, national, and international image of the CSU as a leader, innovator, and model public university.
More Focus on Excellence

- In spite of its title, the document focuses on access but offers little in the way of excellence.

Of the twin poles bridged by the title “Access to Excellence,” the document ultimately focuses only on access, in spite of its initial lip service to student success. That success is ultimately predicated on the excellence of CSU faculty and of the quality of the education it provides. The document initially mentions the “integrative dimensions of quality in the CSU,” such as teaching and scholarship or faculty and student research, but does not subsequently build on these dimensions. It also acknowledges that “[a]ccess and success can not be genuine unless the postsecondary education that is available to California’s students is of high quality” (2). These are noteworthy sentiments; unfortunately, they appear only in the introductory part of the plan; the rest focuses mostly on access without attention to the dimensions of quality that make access meaningful in the first place.

For instance, in Goal 1, “Access with Success,” success is understood largely in quantitative terms: high school and college graduation rates, numbers of degrees granted, relative proportions of student groups, retention, and so on. Non-quantitative measures of success are articulated only in terms of assessment measures. But to measure something, one must first provide it; to account for student learning, one must first teach. Student learning is also faculty teaching, as well as the resources on which both depend. Learning occurs a variety of ways: in large, small and one-on-one settings, by low-tech or high-tech means. Recognition of diverse learning is therefore needed to maintain and promote teaching excellence. Student knowledge is also, ultimately, faculty knowledge; student currency in issues, problems, technologies, and solutions that give an edge in the fast-changing global environment is dependent on faculty currency. For students to learn, faculty members need to continue to develop professionally. The CSU has to provide the resources for such continuous professional development through research and creative activity.

Goal 3, Sustain Institutional Excellence also fails to deal with the substance of excellence. All of its accountability indicators, save for the second, focus on external measures rather than substantive content of excellence. Item 2, besides mention of reducing compensation gaps (certainly one important way of attracting and keeping excellent faculty), contains only vague language but no specific plans.

To present a responsible and “accountable” plan of action to the people and the legislature of California, the plan needs to develop both of its twin and interdependent poles: access and excellence. The latter also implies other components of student success: the various forms and sources of student support in the form of appropriate programs (for instance, programs that help students in need, that help students graduate successfully and in a timely fashion, or that
provide scholarships) and the staff necessary to run such programs. Such forms of support also need to be part of the CSU’s plan for increasing student success and have to be provided for in any funding plans.

**More Attention to Funding**
- The plan includes no funding mechanisms to pay for itself.

The document pays little attention to funding, beyond promises (which may turn out to be impossible to keep) to keep fees low and cautionary statements about the state budget. In this way, it avoids making the hard choices that may become necessary, such as raising student fees or limiting enrollment if no additional state funding is forthcoming, or having to put resources into providing competitive compensation to sustain faculty excellence rather than increasing investment in technology. The plan cannot detail such potential choices, but it can and should provide a set of core commitments (related to core values) that would provide the foundation and rationale for making such choices when they have to be made, for asking for resources when resources are limited, and for making choices in the commitment of the resources that exist (the plan’s commitment to measure and report everything is itself a costly investment).

**More Leadership, Less Management**
- To make the best of its potential, the CSU needs leadership, not management. The current document implicitly treats faculty and administrators at individual universities as employees, rather than as partners in responding creatively to challenges. The document envisions the Chancellor’s Office as the agent of accountability, rather than as the agent for creative, problem-focused change.

The process of generating “Access to Excellence” was an example of a flawed process of shared governance, as described in the Mach 2001 report by the CSU Academic Senate “Shared Governance Reconsidered: Improving Decision-Making in the California State University.” The report notes that administrators often view the shared governance as “a process that seeks faculty input and uses that feedback to craft the final documents,” rather than “jointly conceive and birth” initiatives and documents such that the “input” should affect the key features of the resulting document (6). It is the question, the report points out, of who sets the agenda. The agenda for the “Access” process, as well as for the draft document, was set by the CSU administration. Had the administration begun the process with an attempt to define the problem or problems to which the initiative was to constitute a response, the process would have been more genuinely collaborative and, in the final resort, more effective. Imposed bureaucratic “solutions” more often produce the appearance and rhetoric of a solution rather than the solution itself.
Concluding Remark
The draft “Access” document emphasizes “the need for improved communication at all levels” (7). We submit this response in the spirit of improved communication and hope that it may be considered, in the spirit of shared governance, not as an afterthought or an inconvenient voice but as fundamentally constructive to the project of making the CSU system the best it can be in responding to the challenges it faces and in continuing to serve the people of California.

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ii As emphasized by Zemsky et al, p. 13.


TO: “Access to Excellence” Strategic Plan Steering Committee Members

FROM: Dr. Rona T. Halualani, Steering Committee Member, Director of Institutional Planning and Inclusive Excellence, San Jose State University

This document represents the response from San Jose State University to the CSU-wide Strategic Planning Steering Committee regarding the first draft of the “Access to Excellence” (hereafter referred to as A2E). I have solicited feedback from the following constituencies on my home campus:

- Academic Senate members
- Academic Deans
- President’s Staff (President, Provost, Executive Assistant to the President, Vice President of Advancement, Vice President of Administration and Finance, Vice President of Student Affairs, Athletic Director)

Our campus members greatly appreciate the hard work put into this important document. Based on feedback from the above constituencies, I outline several key recommendations for improving and reshaping the A2E draft into the significant, visionary, and transformative plan that it should be for the California State University system.

**Recommendation #1: Need to Establish the Vision for Our Identity as the CSU and Where We Want To Go**

The A2E draft clearly defines three goals (“Access with Success,” “Meet Needs for Economic and Civic Development,” and “Sustain Institutional Excellence”) as the anchors of the systemwide strategic plan. However, when reading the document, there is no semblance of a vision for who we are as the California State University. More specifically, a vision for our identity as the CSU and where want to go as a key higher education institution in California, is nowhere to be found. Indeed, the draft specifies goals we need to reach, accountability factors we need to meet, and the daunting fiscal reality we face in the wake of diminishing state and public support. But there is no vision laid out for who the CSU is and wants to be in the face of such great challenges and growing demands. My campus members at San Jose State University pointed out that the goals of the CSU seem at odds with one another: to educate more students and to provide an education that better prepares them for important professions to serve the state. This is all to be done with limited state investment in higher education. Given this challenging context, the CSU can no longer “ride the wave” of “education as usual” or “education as done in years past”; instead, we must speak to this challenge and rethink the kind of university we need to be in order to accomplish the delineated goals and strategic context. If the context is changing around us as stipulated in the A2E draft, then why is the CSU standing still and not adapting and transforming to such change?

Thus, to do things differently, we have to answer the more difficult questions such as: How do we educate an ever-increasing number of students **well** and **with high**
How do we proffer high-quality education with limited resources and support? How might we engage educational work and institutional capacity and management differently (in creative and unexplored ways) to accomplish all that we can with more to do and less resources? The A2E draft glaringly avoids the revisioning conversation that needs to take place to make the CSU a leader in higher education. Without such a conversation, this document will never be a strategic plan that has any traction to make the CSU the best university in the country. Let us rise to the challenge that we face as the CSU and not be afraid to move into the strategic direction that we need to go. (If we establish this vision, we will then specify our notion of “excellence” and towards what end goal we are moving and striving.)

**Recommendation #2: Need to Establish the “Audience(s)” of the A2E Document**

As other campuses (Fullerton and East Bay) have expressed in their responses, there is confusion as to who the audience is for this strategic plan. To what extent is the audience an internal one (for campus leaders, faculty, staff, and students)? To what extent is the audience an external one (for the taxpaying public, public leaders and officials, business professions, and CSU stakeholders)? The problem stems more from the possibility that the CSU does not know whom the audience is for this strategic plan. As one moves through the draft, it becomes clearer that the audience is likely an external one (the public). If this is so, the CSU needs to make sure that the document clearly articulates a compelling case for that audience. It would be useful for the system to consider writing an internal iteration of the strategic plan for campus members and a separate external one to present our public face to the state (leaders, employers, stakeholders). The kind of language, argumentation, and leverage used in a strategic planning document will be shaped principally by whom it is written for (for e.g., an external audience will want to see more instrumental language and terms such as “cost-effective” and “accountability”). Again, the A2E draft should decide which audiences it is targeting and this will help shape the argumentation style.

**Recommendation #3: Need To Connect Our Goals and Implementation Strategies to Speak to the Outlined Strategic Context**

The A2E features a solid and detailed strategic context (environmental scan) to outline the present and future reality of higher education (the demands and pressure points). However, the outlined goals and implementation strategies do not address or emerge from the strategic context presented at the beginning of the document. It is not clear how our goals are closely tied to the strategic context. These linkages need to be more powerfully argued by A2E to give our strategic plan the “relevant” and “responsive” punch that it needs. If not, it seems that our goals randomly emerge out of thin air and with no sense of prioritization by the CSU. The draft needs to answer the following questions: What makes up CSU’s set of key goals for the future and why? Why these goals and not others? What part of the strategic context does the CSU find most urgent to address and commit to for the next few years? Why? How do these identified goals reveal our identity as a CSU (as pointed out in the first recommendation)? This change needs to be made or else our strategic plan risks appearing as a merely descriptive, “surface-level” document with no sense of urgency or prioritization.
As a more specific point, the A2E goals would stand out more if these were discussed in more detail and then followed by a discussion of implementation strategies. Once this discussion is set and grounded (meaning that you have made your case for these goals), then accountability indicators can be delineated and justified. The way these goals with attached accountability indicators, is presented in the document truncates and trivializes the goals that make up the foundation of the strategic plan.

**Recommendation #4: Need to Define Educational Goals in Terms of “Quality” and “Students”**

The A2E draft reiterates the point that the CSU must ensure access and success to a growing number of students in the future. However, the emphasis throughout the document (and mostly in Goal #1) is on improving graduation rates and increasing the completion of college degrees. This begs the question of what the focus is for the CSU: education across the board for more students or more high-quality education for a growing number of students? To educate more students is not the same as to provide more high-quality, engaging, and transformative education for a growing body of students. There is a distinction in terms of **quality**. The A2E draft privileges a discourse of quantity that obscures any standard of quality education. If the CSU is poised to take on the education of most of the state, then what kind of education will it provide? Will it merely be cost-effective or value-added (which echoes the historical lexicon the CSU has used to promote its educational “product” and that has simultaneously weakened the qualitative value of a CSU education)? The A2E draft needs to articulate more of what kind of education the CSU will provide to the state’s college students. We need to argue in the A2E plan that the education we offer at the CSU is high-quality, responsive to societal problems and social needs, relevant to the world, and comprised of multiple skill sets (modes of inquiry, analysis, problem-solving, and application).

Another point here is that Goal #1 and the outlined educational goals rarely discuss the heart of the CSU: our students. Yes, education is framed in terms of access, retention, and graduation rates but what is missing is any discussion of providing a CSU education that helps to develop the personal, intellectual, and professional aspects of our students. The draft also insinuates that education only occurs in the formal classroom environment. There is ample research that concludes that a college education consists of in-class and out-of-class, co-curricular activities and experiences for students. How might the A2E draft speak to the entire educational development of our students as key to achieving our educational goals (i.e., the CSU could argue that we educate and shape well-rounded persons, leaders, and contributors to society)?

**Recommendation #5: Need To Revision the Role of Faculty in Relation to the Strategic Context**

Given the unique context the CSU faces, the A2E draft does not seize the moment to revision the role of faculty. With growing enrollment, a changing student base, fiscal and capacity pressures, and labor demands of the state, the delineated goals of the A2E plan require a reconceptualized role for faculty. Faculty members will need to spend more in and out of class time mentoring and advising a larger number of students from a variety of backgrounds. Likewise, they will have to retool in terms of instructional methods and technology to speak to the needs of a changing student population. All of
this will need to be done on top of the many service obligations and research programs (both basic and applied) that faculty engage in to fulfill the role and expectations of the professorate. Thus, the A2E draft needs to highlight the role of faculty as mentors-teacher-scholars to meet the challenges of the future in higher education. Our students will need more from our CSU faculty and thus, this will require more system investment in faculty in terms of the following: a) reconfiguring faculty workload (a newly conceptualized teaching load and service load to make time for high-quality contact with students and excellence in the professorate); b) making competitive the salary and salary increases to recruit and retain and grow faculty (and making the salaries equivalent in value in different cost-of-living areas – Chico vs. San Jose); c) funding the professional development of faculty (to maintain a strong, adaptive faculty to meet the needs of a changing student population); c) investing in research incentives and programs for faculty members (to help shape instruction, strengthen the competitiveness and applicability of specific departments for their students and alumnae; and d) investing in the classroom spaces, technology, research equipment, and resources needed for faculty to provide high-quality instruction and research. The opportunity to revision the faculty role as directly tied to the strategic plan, is here. The CSU may need to be creative with workload, salary issues, incentives and support for faculty and or re-prioritize this investment in faculty over other goals. Indeed, we can spend a great deal of money and resources on assessment and accountability but if we do not create a context in which all faculty members (tenure track and non-tenure track) are equipped to ensure student success, then there will be no substantial “results” to assess and make public. We must revision the role of faculty particularly as it means that faculty stand as a vital factor to bringing about student success and excellence.

**Recommendation #6: Need to Make a More Compelling Case for Public and State Investment in Higher Education (via the CSU)**

Our campus members appreciated A2E’s discussion of the need for more public and state support in higher education and the CSU system. However, the draft does not specify any strategies by the system to engage public support for the CSU. What is our compelling argument here to state leaders and stakeholders for their “investment” in higher education – in us? The document specifies the “reality” of diminished support (and is overly optimistic about the compact agreement) but does not engage this reality strategically. How will the CSU “grow public resources”? What can compel public interest and investment in the CSU? The draft projects a complacent tone that the CSU will take a passive role and “wait” for the state to “decide” to invest in the system. We must take more action here. There needs to be more space devoted to specifying how the CSU will push the state and public to commit to and invest in our system. If the audience is an external one, then this A2E draft fails to speak to that audience with the omission of the case for public and state investment. Again, the point is to be much more strategic and crafty in our argumentation.

**Recommendation #7: Need to Strengthen Goal #2 (“Meet Needs For Economic and Civic Development”) By Including Teaching, Business, Social Science, Liberal Arts, and Other Professions**
While the A2E draft specifies important professions and sectors that the CSU will need to furnish with employees in the future, it does not possess an expansive and contemporary view of how many disciplinary majors can serve the State of California in different ways (whether it be STEM disciplines, business leaders, social scientists, social workers, artists, filmmakers, actors, writers, entrepreneurs, and so many more). There are several ways we can meet the economic, civic, and social needs of the state through our students and that can occur in the less profession-specific majors and disciplines such as Engineering, Nursing, and or Science. The most glaring omission is that of the Teaching profession that we serve so well in California; we should highlight the importance of public teachers across all levels and how our system has furnished the state with so many and for so long. It would be shortsighted for the CSU to articulate our relevance to the state based on only a few more obvious profession-specific areas; we ought to argue for how our students across many different fields become major contributors and leaders of society. As one campus member put it, “CSU students are everywhere,” prepared to contribute and make a difference in a variety of ways to the state and the world.

Recommendation #8: Need to Reshape Goal #3 (“Sustain Institutional Excellence”)

Goal #3 (“Sustain Institutional Excellence) reads as if it is a “hodgepodge” of different areas (funding for enrollments and capacity, funding for faculty and staff, evidence-based advocacy, and the improvement of the image of the CSU). These areas do not seem to be equivalent in scope, urgency, or needed resources. For example, accountability indicator #3 (“Improve evidence-based advocacy to public audiences about the importance of CSU capacity and excellence to meet state needs”) is made up of low-level tasks such as strengthening the messaging system while the indicators for funding adequacy for faculty and staff quality are noticeably high level and vague. Hence, this entire goal needs to be more clearly defined and discussed more consistently across different (and unevenly positioned) areas.

Recommendation #9: Need To Establish the Value of Internationalism and Globalism for Higher Education, Students, and the State of California

The strategic context establishes the importance of the internationalized and global focus of the world. The A2E draft does not take up this important notion in its goals or implementation strategies. This is odd given that the rapidly changing nature of education and social life through globalized and internationalized dimensions will change how CSU embarks on its mission. As such, internationalism will undoubtedly alter how we educate our students, how our faculty will fulfill their roles, and how the CSU will prioritize its goals. The absence of this issue in our strategic plan and commitments makes the A2E draft stagnant and non-responsive to a significant shift in societal formation in the 21st century.

Other specific points:
- Graduate programs are not featured in this plan; why is that?
- Why so much focus on evidence to improve learning without a major discussion of how learning will be improved for students (in terms of investment in educational resources, tools, environments, and faculty)?
• Important section on sustainability – strong commitment by CSU here; should be commended!
• The importance of campus autonomy in bringing to life A2E on individual campuses and by localized campus inflections, needs to be discussed. How much “leeway” does each campus have to bring about A2E?
• Why did the draft not discuss WHY specific aspects of Cornerstones I was not achieved and what will be done about this in the A2E plan? This deserves much more treatment.
• Which goals and implementation strategies are more urgent and long-term? The scope and duration for each goal (or a timeline) should be specified.
• What is the CSU promising to different audiences?
• What will be done with the amount of remediation for our incoming and newly arrived students? How can this be addressed as this impacts the educational experiences and outcomes of our students?
Comments/Feedback on Current Iteration of the CSU Strategic Plan.
Teacher Education and K-12 Relations Committee

MOTION: TEKR approves the following comments/feedback and recommends including these comments/feedback in the Senate’s resolution.

Approved unanimously (November 7, 2007).

The statement that “California’s future will hinge on its success in transitioning growing numbers of low-income, immigrant, and first generation families into productive roles in society” is an inappropriate and pejorative characterization of these families. A better expression of our intent might be to speak to increasing opportunities for the children of low-income, immigrant, and first generation families. (Page 2, 4th paragraph)

The impression given is that the Compact and marginal cost funding for growth above the 2.5% is the goal. The CSU should be clear about the specific impacts that the substantial cuts in the early 90’s and again in 2003-04 and 2004-05 have had. The re-engaging of “state policy makers and community leaders” needs to provide for a clearer understanding of these impacts. (Page 8 – Discussion of Compact and funding)

“Today’s students… are multi-tasking, oriented to visuals more than print, like to work in groups, and learn best through hands-on experiences.” What research verifies these assertions – especially as it relates to learning? Multi-tasking has not been linked to learning, and there certainly is no evidence that students currently matriculating “like” to work in groups. At least these two assertions have become popular myths. (Page 10, last paragraph)

The pejorative association relating increased productivity with higher education has more to do with the perceived “industrial” use of the term. Typically productivity is associated with producing the same output with fewer resources or the existing resources producing more output. Our output does not come off an assembly line and is not put together from parts. Strategic planning might be more “productive” (that is, produce results) if we were to define productivity in terms of increased retention and student success. Why waste time using inappropriate language? (Page 11, first paragraph)

The reference to “laser focus on clearly defined and readily measurable indicators”. This reads as if what is quantifiable is what we should be measuring and using to evaluate performance. There are qualitative assessments that, in some cases, are more valuable assessments. (Page 11)

Editing suggestions… The three goals are described as having goals. Suggest either restating as goals having subgoals or goals having objectives.

The CSU cannot directly improve the level of academic preparation of entering freshman. However, the CSU can and should continue to work with K-12 partners (with support from the state) to do so. Also, the subgoals should be statements of desired results and
not prescriptions for what should be done. For example, “alignment of policies and marketing of transfer core curriculum” might be effective in the transfer transition, but there also might be more effective and more cost effective approaches. In general, the strategic plan sets the subgoal(s), and the CSU then identifies approaches that produce the results. (Page 12. Subgoal 2)

The reference to fees and financial need is also referred to in subgoal 3 of Goal 1 (page 12). Aren’t these references more appropriate under Goal 1 than Goal 3? (Page 14. Subgoal 1)

References here (and throughout the document) to “accountability for performance” and “performance metrics” do not include the role and responsibilities associated with effective leadership. Shouldn’t the CSU, with a mission rooted in teaching and learning, strive to model at all levels Peter Senge’s vision of a learning organization? (Page 16 d))

One area of concern was the oversight of the important role that the CSU plays in educating teachers, who in turn are responsible for preparing and motivating students to continue their education and ultimately, contribute to and receive benefits from their participation in the civic and economic life of California. The following additional strategy could be added at the end of section 3) Sustain institutional excellence: on page 16 was suggested:

f) One of the primary roles of the CSU has been and continues to be teacher preparation. The results of CSU’s efforts in this area are central to California’s Economic and Social well-being. In fact, given the magnifying effect a good teacher has in facilitating student success, the role in, and responsibility for high quality teacher education that campuses of the CSU are expected to shoulder is truly a critical element of both the social and economic well-being of the State. Well prepared and effective teachers enhance significantly the opportunities for their students to contribute to and receive benefits from participation in the civic and economic life of California.

(Page 16)