

Senate Chair's Report – May 2012

I don't want this to sound like a farewell address since I'm only leaving the chair position, not the Senate, but I can't help but be a bit sentimental at such a time and I hope the Senate can benefit from a bit of a chance to look back with the purpose of looking forward.

I've been fairly busy the last two months without much time to report on my various interactions, so I will take this opportunity to give brief reports from several fronts.

The Graduation initiative

I attended a Systemwide meeting on the Graduation Initiative on April 16. This project, with its twin goals of improving the graduation rate and closing the "achievement gap" has not involved faculty in significant ways but has involved substantial participation from student affairs staff and administration. The initiative involves tracking of and attention to the key transitions in our students' lives where attrition occurs and attempts to identify and mitigate problems that lead to this erosion.

It is difficult to draw significant conclusions at this time as the first cohort that has been tracked is just starting to graduate and the tumultuous environment that the State's budget has created creates a lot of "noise" in the data. It appears that the overall graduation rate has improved a bit (possible due to these efforts) but the "gap" has persisted. More attention will be devoted to those issues that impact underrepresented students differentially, but many of these require resources that are not readily available.

I know that faculty are a significant factor in students' graduation success, but these aspects are not really being tracked in any systematic way as part of this project. Financial pressures have led to a significant reduction in the involvement of permanent faculty in the key first- and second-year GE and majors' courses along with larger class sizes and reduced student-faculty contact. I encourage the Senate to continue to offer advice and ideas on behalf of the faculty.

Early Start

April included a meeting of the Early Start Task Force. The dominant work of this committee has been to oversee the immense number of logistical issues involved in the Program in order to minimize the impact on students' time, budget, and hassle. (Note that I said "minimize" the impact; starting college with remedial needs is a major problem involving time, money, and aggravation.)

The dominant issues for faculty have occurred on the campuses as the curriculum has been designed for the effort. For the most part, coursework consists of successful models that have been used in the CSU for years, adapted to the force schedule of the ESP. In particular, the "bridge" approach in English that has been developed by many of our campuses is being retained and expanded fit the goals of the initiative.

The Senate has passed resolutions that highlight the expectation that this project receive a thorough analysis and appropriate critique of the various efforts, with the clear understanding that the program will be modified (and even reconsidered) based on its results. I encourage the Senate's commitment to this vigilance. It is very easy to conflate the problems caused by the need for remediation with those

caused by the ESP approach to a solution. Senators have the unique background and perspective to ensure an honest evaluation.

From my perspective, the real success of the Graduation Initiative and the Early Start Program will be a consequence of the publicity that the underlying problems receive and the attention that is generated in the K-12 community (students, teachers, parents, and administrators) which leads to remedies that are instituted in these settings. I think the Senate can be a leader in these needed reforms if it devotes its time and energy to the task in a proactive way.

Calstate Online

The Calstate Online Board met in April as well. Its focus at the moment is the array of services needed to mount such an effort. A request for proposals has gone out and in May these will be evaluated and vendors will be chosen. As I've noted previously, the business plan is still embryonic, but I am proud of the efforts of the Senators on the Board to steer the structure toward one that recognizes the policies and commitments that maintain the CSU's reputation for quality. You can read the RFP as well as the growing list of commitments from Calstate Online at its website, <http://www.calstateonline.net/>. While the various Katz reports laid out a wide range of possibilities for Calstate Online, I believe that you will find the "Guiding Principles" and the commitments listed on page 3 of the "Open Letter" begin to define Calstate Online in ways that are consistent with faculty and Senate values.

STAR Act Implementation

The SB 1440 Oversight Committee met in April as well. I was quadruple-booked that day but we were ably represented by Senator Boyle. The CSU curriculum efforts in evaluating the fit of the 18 TMCs continues smoothly and in ways that protect the integrity of our curriculum and faculty control of such. The Senate has earned a significantly positive reputation from this project among legislators, their staff, the Legislative Analyst's Office, the CSU Board and campus presidents. The corresponding work in the CCCs to design AA and AS degrees from the TMC templates seems to have bogged down, as I reported previously. The necessary course review processes to accompany the degree work (the C-ID project) has also been sluggish, in some cases due to lack of CSU faculty who are willing to perform these reviews (in spite of extra, though minimal, remuneration.)

The CSU's enrollment impaction has raised the perceived value of the STAR Act degrees but also has increased the difficulty of adding structures to accommodate the admission guarantee/priority that SB 1440 promised. The automated systems needed to execute these types of CCC-CSU transfers are not yet in place and the CCCs are lagging in their commitments to develop these structures as well.

The CSU Alumni Association

One of my April weekends was spent with the CSU Alumni Association at Sonoma State. I always enjoy these interactions which allow me to interact with a large group of alumni (and campus staff) who are very committed to the CSU and its mission. They had asked me to give a brief presentation on the CSU's major initiatives: Graduation, Early Start, SB 1440, and Calstate Online, and the alumni seemed appreciative for the information. The bulk of their meeting was devoted to ways of promoting the CSU

and raising funds on our behalf. I encourage you to get to know your campus's alumni association personnel, especially the community volunteers.

As an added bonus, I was able to join the tour of the nearly-completed Green Music Center. All I can say is, "Wow!" If you have the chance, take in a concert there.

The Senate's Budget

The reduction in assigned time for Senators has significantly hampered Senate operations and participation the past two years and created special hardships for the committee chairs. It will be such a relief to return to a bit of normalcy (though not complete) and I am glad to have been a part of the success that we had in making the case for the role of the Senate and the need for a base level of support.

Legislative Advocacy

I spent a few days in April in Sacramento as part of various advocacy efforts for the CSU. I participated in Higher Education Advocacy Day with presidents, chancellors, board members, alumni, and faculty from the UC, CSU, and CCC. (I believe that our three Senate representatives were the only faculty participants.) ICAS (the 3 State Systems' Senate executive committees) also spent a day interacting with legislators, legislative staff, and Legislative Analyst staff.

I've taken a bit of flak for supposedly overreaching my Senate role by testifying (nominally opposed) to AB 2497 (Solario) on the Early Start Program. I've responded to those who have challenged me directly about the situation but have heard that there are others who have spread the accusation, so I thought I should address the issue.

I did testify during the Assembly Higher Education Committee hearings on this bill (the session included 17 other bills.) It appeared that the CFA had organized the "in support" session of the hearing and they did not ask me to speak. The CSU's Office of Governmental Relations (Karen Yelverton-Zamarripa) had organized the "opposition" section and I had responded to this invitation. Being naive about the legislative hearing process, I did not know until I observed the hearings for the other bills that the testimony session was scheduled in such discreet "pro" and "con" blocks.

The draft of the bill that was posted on the website contained one major requirement: that the CSU could **not** continue the Early Start Program without an explicit appropriation by the Legislature. By the day of the hearing the bill had been modified to include **only** a requirement that a report on the ESP be made to the Legislature.

I think I would have been on solid ground in opposing the bill by representing the Senate's long-standing opposition to Legislative intrusion into the CSU's programs. Because the bill had been so significantly altered, it was awkward to be labeled as "opposed" while my testimony consisted of support for the bill and its requirement for a report to be prepared (and acknowledgement that such would happen with or

without Legislative requirement.) I am guilty of the charge of testifying in the “opposed” section without an explicit Senate resolution supporting that opinion. But my actual testimony highlighted the Senate’s call for a thorough report on the Early Start Program.

In Closing

I have greatly enjoyed the role of Senate Chair and have found it educational and stimulating. I believe that I have achieved some level of success in putting forth the values and opinions of the Senate and the CSU faculty and this has provided most of the satisfaction I’ve received from serving. I’ve joked that my main legacy will be described as, “well it could have been a lot worse” but I believe there is more to show for the efforts than just that. Time will tell.