

**ACADEMIC SENATE
OF
THE CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY**

AS-3383-19/APEP

May 16, 2019

**IN SUPPORT OF “THE STRATEGIC ADVANTAGE OF THE DISTINCTIVENESS
OF THE TWENTY-THREE CAMPUSES OF THE CALIFORNIA STATE
UNIVERSITY SYSTEM”
(BOARD OF TRUSTEES, NOVEMBER, 2008)**

RESOLVED: That the Academic Senate of the California State University (ASCSU) express its continued support for the CSU Board of Trustees commitment to “the strategic advantage of the distinctiveness of the twenty-three campuses of the California state university system”; and be it further

RESOLVED: That the ASCSU express its concern to the Board of Trustees that this core value is being undermined; and be it further

RESOLVED: That the ASCSU request that system leadership acknowledge and honor the commitment of the Board of Trustees and the advice of the ASCSU when considering system conformity versus campus individuation trade-offs in matters pertaining to academic functions and practices; and be it further

RESOLVED: That the ASCSU distribute this resolution to the Chair of the CSU Board of Trustees, Chancellor Timothy P. White, CSU Board of Trustees, Loren Blanchard - Executive Vice Chancellor of Academic and Student Affairs, CSU campus Presidents, CSU campus Senate Chairs, Math Council, English Council, CSU Provosts/Vice Presidents of Academic Affairs, Vice Presidents of Student Affairs, and Campus Senate Executive Committees,

***RATIONALE:** At its core, this resolution is about “systemness” versus campus distinctiveness. There has been a recent shift to reduce campus distinctiveness through top-down directives requiring deep uniformity. While acknowledging that there are some functions and desirable aspects that can come from a campus being part of a system (cf., library resources, purchasing power, broad outlines for General Education structures, the ability to share best practices that have worked with various campus populations, etc.), there are many strengths to campus distinctiveness that appear to be in danger (e.g., the ability to appropriately evaluate course transferability vis-à-vis outcome expectations for the campus programs; the ability to guide curriculum development; the ability to*

respond to the needs of specific student populations) [cf., the development of Executive Order 1100 (Aug., 2007); Executive Order 1110 and the subsequent implementation of both].

The proximal event that triggered the writing of this resolution was a value statement included in the [CSU Office of the Chancellor response to AS-3367-19/APEP/AA: Supporting CSU Mathematics and English Council requests for Flexibility in the Implementation of Early Start Program Changes](#) (value statement emphasized in bold):

*“... One goal for the Early Start program is to provide a systemwide opportunity for students to earn college credit while developing their skills in the summer before their first term.... **As a university system it is important to avoid significant policy variations that create dissimilar academic opportunities and requirements based on where a student enrolls in the CSU.** It is also important to create equitable opportunities for students to participate in Early Start Programs at service and destination campuses.”*

The bold section questions the very foundation of campus independence and governance. The CSU CO response quoted above can be contrasted with the [CSU CO response to AS-2820-07/FGA/AA \(Rev\) Distinctive Universities and Campuses: The Autonomy of Individual Institutions in a Multi-Institutional System](#), namely:

“Thank you for this restatement of principle concerning the importance of autonomy of individual institutions in the CSU. As you know, the Access to Excellence Steering Committee has been made aware of this resolution, and the revised draft of the plan includes strong reference to this principle.”

It is also worth noting that the follow-up did include “the value and importance of individuality among the universities comprising the CSU to meet the needs of California” (see [AS-2821-07 Response to Access to Excellence Draft](#)) and the ACCESS TO EXCELLENCE ACCOUNTABILITY PLAN (as adopted by the CSU Board of Trustees in Nov., 2008). The executive summary of the plan clearly calls out this important principal (emphasis in bold added):

The Access to Excellence strategic plan recognizes as a key CSU strategic advantage the distinctiveness of the twenty-three universities: “each have distinct strengths, serve distinct communities, and meet the broad missions of the institution in

ways tailored to community needs.” This Accountability Plan, too, values the distinct and diverse strengths of the individual institutions in the CSU. While Access to Excellence includes clear system-level goals, for which the system will stand accountable, the individual universities have their own strategic plans, which — while aligned with the system strategic plan — will necessarily affect the patterns and details of regional implementation of Access to Excellence. Individual institutional priorities and goals are also influenced by regional needs and by outcomes from accreditation reviews. Accordingly, this Accountability Plan calls for only a limited number of mandated indicators, the data for most of which can be gathered and reported to the Board of Trustees by the Chancellor’s Office. In addition, recognizing the distinctive characteristics of the individual universities, while also holding each accountable for helping to achieve broad system-level goals, this Accountability Plan suggests a menu of possible indicators from which institutions may choose to demonstrate progress toward the broad system-level commitments (Section III).

We are unaware of any Board Action that has moved the CSU away from this core value. We do, however, see a pattern of action — e.g., the development of Executive Order 1100 [Aug, 2017 revision] and Executive Order 1110 [Aug, 2017] as well as the subsequent implementation decisions (many of which reversed long-standing campus practices and previously permissible substitutions/modifications), the commentary in CSU response to AS-2820, etc. — that suggest an ascendant supremacy of “systemness” over campus autonomy without regard to the distinctive characteristics of the individual universities, their histories, their students, and the broader population they serve. We believe this trend is not in the best interests of serving students, serving the CSU, nor serving the State of California.

Approved Unanimously – May 16-17, 2019