



**League of Women Voters of San Luis Obispo County
Higher Education Study Committee 2015-16**

Responses to Consensus Questions and Comments

PURPOSE:

1. Among the purposes of public higher education listed below, indicate your rating of each item's importance:

- a. to provide educational opportunities that serve the personal, professional and/or occupational goals of students. VERY IMPORTANT
- b. to provide and maintain a steady stream of leadership from all sectors of society. LESS IMPORTANT
- c. to promote upward economic mobility across all population groups. LESS IMPORTANT
- d. to advance the economic and civic goals of local communities and the state. IMPORTANT
- e. to continue to emphasize the dual values of access and excellence that were embedded in the Master Plan and are still relevant and important today. VERY IMPORTANT

COMMENTS:

- The true value of education is providing an educated citizenry, inclusive of a liberal arts education.
- The focus of California higher education should prioritize educating California students.
- The Master Plan appropriately recognizes distinctions in roles between CC, UC and CSU systems.
- Education is a life-long opportunity and links students to career “pathways”--- re-entry programs for mature students reflect the life-long value of education.
- “Town-gown” relationships are important because colleges are an essential part of the community.

EQUITABLE ACCESS:

2. Equitable access in public education is evidenced by:

- a. an increase in the diversity of enrollment and completion rates in the CCCs, CSUs, and UCs that reflects the diversity of the state's population: AGREE
- b. an increase in the initial freshmen enrollment in both CSU and UC of qualified high school graduates from low income and under-represented minority groups: STRONGLY AGREE
- c. the provision of specialized services for at-risk students in higher education to facilitate their successful certificate or degree completion: AGREE
- d. a transparent and seamless transfer path from the CCCs to four-year colleges: AGREE

COMMENTS:

- The criteria for eligibility reflected in the CA Master Plan have continuing merit and value.
- “Learn by doing” and collaborations with business/community help prepare students for careers. More post-secondary credentialing programs for trades are needed.
- Specialized services are necessary for some students to succeed---examples include foster youth and veterans.
- Establish a culture of helping instead of competition; tutoring programs set up by faculty an example of a helpful practice.
- Tools to help challenged students include mentoring, tutoring, remedial classes.
- General remedial courses belong at community colleges, not the UC and CSU systems.

FUNDING & AFFORDABILITY:

3. In funding California's system of higher education:

- a. the state should pay for all higher education tuition and fees: STRONGLY DISAGREE

- b. government and students or their families should share the full cost of attendance in public higher education based on their ability to pay: AGREE
- c. the state should provide additional services for students with specified needs, such as students with disabilities, aged out foster care students and veterans: STRONGLY AGREE
- d. the state should provide stable and predictable funding that is sustainable, adequate, and timely to support higher education. STRONGLY AGREE
- e. the state should develop additional funding streams to support public higher education. DISAGREE
- f. a broad based tax should be levied to specifically increase state funding for public higher education. DISAGREE

4. California's financial aid policies should:

- a. ensure that higher education attendance, including tuition, fees, housing transportation, books, or other educational materials, is affordable for all students regardless of their family's financial circumstances. STRONGLY AGREE
- b. provide that student and family share of the full costs of attendance be reasonably proportionate to their discretionary income. AGREE
- c. include effective counseling to enable students to plan and access financing for their higher education. STRONGLY AGREE

COMMENTS:

- To save money and expedite graduation, many CA students go out of state.
- The transfer rate from CC to UC and CSU is inadequate.
- Short-term funding streams create problems; stable, predictable funding is essential for planning and continuity.
- Higher education should be affordable or the means to afford it made available, but it should not be a "free ride" for students.
- The "full cost" of education includes books, housing, food, transportation, etc.
- All systems should look for efficiencies; unsustainable pension and health care costs contribute to funding problems for higher education.

PREPAREDNESS:

5. To increase student success:

- a. when students graduate from high school, they should be prepared for college-level coursework or career/occupational employment. STRONGLY AGREE
- b. the state should support programs that foster coordination between and among school districts and colleges, with a focus towards better utilization of the senior year of high school, to ensure that more students graduate from high school prepared for college-level work without needing remediation. NO CONSENSUS
- c. California should expand opportunities for more high school students, especially students from under-represented groups, to begin earning college credits in high school, for example by taking Advanced Placement (AP) International Baccalaureate (IB) and/or dual or concurrent enrollment classes. AGREE
- d. services should be available to ensure that at-risk, low income and under-represented minority students are advised about the wide range of appropriate career and college opportunities. STRONGLY AGREE
- e. outreach to disadvantaged, low income, minority and first generation students is needed to encourage college applications for admission and financial aid. STRONGLY AGREE

COMMENTS:

- Increased collaboration with K-12 to improve preparedness is needed; mentoring and tutoring are effective for addressing remediation.
- Preparing students for college before or during the senior year is recommended; HS counselors should guide students towards college prep classes.
- Grade inflation and AP classes can pose problems and distort achievement levels.
- Targeted remediation for weak areas should be available to students.
- State Dept. of Education should study K-12 performance and its impact on students, higher education; CA needs a K-12 Master Plan.

OPPORTUNITIES/BARRIERS TO SUCCESS:

6. **California should utilize multiple strategies and models to increase baccalaureate degree attainment and coordination of the 3 sectors, such as:**
- a. increase CSU and UC enrollment capacity to serve more transfers and entering freshmen. NO CONSENSUS
 - b. allow more CCC's to offer 4-year programs with BA/BS attainment. AGREE
 - c. promote the implementation and evaluation of evidence-based improvements in curriculum, instruction, and placement to enhance student success and degree attainment. AGREE
 - d. promote greater flexibility among the three sectors' eligibility requirements to increase student access for transfer and completion of four-year degrees. NO CONSENSUS
 - e. develop university centers and/or university branches to increase access to baccalaureate degree attainment. AGREE
 - f. increase articulation among the three higher education sectors to construct curriculum pathways helping students to transfer smoothly to four-year colleges, or degree attainment of baccalaureate degrees. STRONGLY AGREE
 - g. develop a longitudinal student database to track enrollment, transfer, and completion rates across all three sectors and provide feedback to high schools. STRONGLY AGREE
 - h. expand the use of new technologies, including on line education, to the extent that they expand access and success for students. AGREE
 - i. provide credit and non-credit adult education courses that support life-long learning and provide opportunities for training/retraining that can lead to better jobs and/or postsecondary education. AGREE
 - j. provide programs leading to Certification in Career Technical Education to fulfill labor needs and enable people to be trained/retrained for meaningful jobs that do not require a bachelor's degree. STRONGLY AGREE
 - k. create a mechanism, such as an oversight body, to provide coordination and articulation among the three sectors, to continuously evaluate the functioning and efficacy of higher education as a system, and to provide non-partisan analysis and recommendations for improvement. STRONGLY AGREE

1. maintain a comprehensive system of post-secondary education/higher education that will have viable access points for all adult Californians, including such populations as disabled students, incarcerated students, veterans, Dreamers, those seeking to re-train or change careers, and older adults. AGREE

COMMENTS:

- The enrollment policy limits set in the Master Plan for UC and CSU should be reexamined and campus space used more effectively.
- Higher education advisory groups to the Governor and Legislature have been disbanded, but advisory groups have potential value.
- Transfers from CCs to universities often don't occur, even for students identified as "transfer directed".
- Pre-college testing and application costs are barriers for many students.
- On-line courses promote access, but may diminish quality of learning.
- The State's Master Plan should be updated to encourage/support a gap year before college to help students focus their interests and gain life experience.

GENERAL COMMENTS:

The Committee identified a number of recurring themes and/or strongly supported the following concepts and recommendations:

- The true value of education is providing an educated citizenry, inclusive of liberal arts education.
- Review and update the Master Plan to renew a vision of access, affordability and excellence.
- Stabilize funding of higher education and avoid categorical aid programs to improve planning and allocation of resources.
- Reconvene higher education nonpartisan advisory groups to guide the governor, legislature and education leaders towards needed reforms with CA higher education.
- Improve the attainment of baccalaureate degrees through curriculum "pathways" at CC, UC and CU systems.

- Create more post-secondary credentialing programs for trade professions.
- To promote success, make academic counseling and other support services available to all students, especially students with disabilities and low-income, at-risk, minority, ESL, foster youth and veteran students.