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## California: Our Future? A Future Without Latino Students

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-According to the California Master Plan For Higher Education, the CSU's mission is to provide access, equity, and affordability to its people: hence, its common appellation, "*the People's University*."

-Over the last 50 years, the CSU has addressed its mission in many interesting ways, changing to adapt with the times, but never wavering from its commitment to the people of California. It has remained accessible to all, equitable in its distribution of resources, and until recently, affordable to even the poorest of California's citizens.

-By providing educational opportunities to a segment of the state's population that heretofore had not had them, CSU opened the doors to the middle class for succeeding generations by providing a quality education for them, their children, and their grandchildren.

-The CSU became a champion of countless first-generation, poor, lower-middle class, and minority students.

-I stand before you, a product of the California Master Plan: a first-generation University graduate, from the working class, a Chicano and proud member of the tax-paying middle class.

-I am the father of two children, both of whom are UCLA graduates. Both are professionals, and tax-paying members of the middle class. My three grandchildren each have their own college fund, and I predict, will graduate from college... if they don't, I'll break their legs.

### PAUSE

-Today, unfortunately, that pathway is in danger of closing. The minority middle class is in danger of shrinking dramatically, and California's economic future is threatened.

**-I've argued elsewhere that if the CSU closes its doors to minority students, we will lose a generation of college graduates in the Latino community. We can't afford this; California can't afford this.**

-The CSU is about to renege on its commitment to the very students it championed a half-century ago.

-Three converging issues lead me to this. I'll discuss each briefly.

### **1. The State budget crisis: its impact on the CSU, its students, and faculty.**

-As many of you know, the CSU budget has lost \$1 billion, or about 20% of its budget since 2007. The results have been devastating.

-2,500 faculty have been terminated since then. Even more terminations are projected for this coming fall.

-There is a projected decline in student enrollment of 40,000 students over the next two years. This, after a 10,000 student decline this past fall. That's 50,000 fewer students in the CSU.

-CSU enrollment fees have increased 182% since 2002.

-The elimination of thousands of class sections is preventing students from enrolling in the classes they need to graduate, thereby prolonging graduation and extending time and cost toward finishing.

-If students are lucky enough to find the right classes, they are encountering class size increases of 25% or more.

-All this leading to increasing debt load upon graduation.

### **2. The changing demographics of California and threats to Access, Equity, and Quality.**

-50,000 fewer students admitted to the CSU; at least half will be Latino. Why do I say that?

-It shouldn't be surprising that Latinos are the largest ethnic group in California--at 35% of California's population, we are already the largest ethnic minority group;

-42% the Latino population is between the ages of 15-18, and 43% are between the ages of 18-24.

*-We are larger; we are younger, and we are growing.* (State of California, Department of Finance, Appendix 2);

-Latinos are the largest ethnic/racial group enrolled in public high schools (40%); we are the largest ethnic minority group of Californians to graduate from our public

high schools (34%); and Latinos constitute a significant portion (22%) of high school graduates meeting UC/CSU requirements (California Department of Education, Appendix IV);

Looking at enrollment trends, we see that:

-Increasing Numbers of **Applications** to CSU for first time Latino freshmen. It was 15,550 in 1998, and 57,730 in 2008. This is an increase of 214% in a decade. For African Americans it was up 154%.

**-Yet, Admissions Rates** for both groups has actually fallen in the same time: from 73% to 69% for Latinos, and 64% to 58% for African Americans.

And, according to CSU's own data, **Actual Enrollment** declined from 7,574 to 7,469, in the same decade.

-So, we have increased applications to the CSU; lower admissions rates; and, lower enrollment of Latino and African American students between 1998 and 2008.

-This trend will not only continue, but actual enrollment will fall far short of the actual application and admissions rates.

This fall there were 5,300 fewer course sections; there were 2,200 fewer students than in 2007.

### **3. CSU's "Graduation Initiative"-a seriously flawed experiment.**

-A recent program rolled out by the Chancellor's Office, called the '*graduation initiative*,' has serious flaws whose consequences will hurt CSU's standing as the "People's University", especially as it impacts access, equity, and affordability.

-This, the CFA believes, profoundly imperils CSU's mission.

-In spite of their upbeat public pronouncements, the administration has made no mention of the overall decline in the CSU's ability to adequately serve the state.

-The Chancellor and his folk are out attending Black churches, a program called 'Super Sunday', extolling the virtues of the CSU.

-While the effort is to be commended, it is also misleading. They don't talk about fewer available courses, changes in graduation requirements, larger class sizes, and fewer faculty.

-They don't talk about increased costs; and if history is any indication, yearly fee increases will continue.

-Somehow, administration has gotten it into their collective head that improved graduation rates implies that they can actually do more with less.

-Any initiative that makes better funding appear less than urgent, and then takes no responsibility to improve that funding, is not acceptable to CFA.

-There are several funding initiatives moving in the state legislature that CFA supports, but none have found support from the Trustees or Chancellor.

**-Let me name just one: AB 656-the Torrico Bill. This bill would charge an oil extraction fee in California; it would compensate oil producing counties for tax losses, and would still generate over \$1 billion per year for the CSU, the UC, and CC's. Yet it has found no support in the Chancellor's Office.**

-CFA is not against 'improving graduation rates'—indeed, we would welcome that. However, we do object to the singular focus on 'graduation rates' at the expense of access, equity, affordability and quality.

-CFA believes that the Chancellor's focus on a single metric for success--the percentage of enrolled students who actually graduate--is extremely narrow and will lead to unintended and serious consequences.

Consider two others:

**1) Graduation percentages versus total number of graduates.**

PPIC (Public Policy Institute of California) projects a need for one million more college graduates than we already produce by 2025.

- By focusing only on the matriculated students who actually graduate, it is possible to improve CSU's graduation rate yet still actually produce fewer numbers of graduates.

**2) Graduation rate improvement without access and equity.**

An unintended consequence of exclusive focus on graduation percentages is that it can mask and exacerbate problems of access for first-generation, low-income, racial and ethnic minority students.

- This opens the door to actions that harm access: In other words, the CSU will be able to improve graduation rates by *excluding* students who face challenges to graduation.

-This smacks to me of '*educating the top 10%*'--a 'skimming' of the best and brightest, leaving everyone else behind.

**PAUSE**

\*It is surprising to CFA that the Chancellor's plan focuses on graduation rates in isolation because this approach is explicitly criticized in the Access to Success document.

\*In a report entitled Charting a Necessary Path, authors Jennifer Engle and Mary Lynch of the Education Trust emphasize that the nation cannot reach President Obama's goal of returning the US to its premier world status in higher education without large increases in both access to college enrollment and success in graduating.

\*The authors stress the importance of tracking and reporting a more complex set of data that answers three questions:

1. **Access**--Does an institute of higher education's entering class reflect the socioeconomic and racial/ethnic profile of the state's high school graduates?
2. **Success**--How does the success rates of low-income and underrepresented minorities compare with those of other students within the system?
3. **Access+Success**--Do the system's graduates reflect the diversity of the state's high school graduates?

-The CSU's plan focuses on only one part of the equation--SUCCESS. Success without inclusion, without access, and without affordability is not success at all. That is this program's fatal flaw.

-In conclusion, I leave you with this question:

*"How can the CSU, 'The People's University', contribute to 1 Million NEW graduates when its only focus is on improving graduation rates without appreciable concern for first-generation, poor, working class, and minority students?"*

-Thank you.

## ADDENDA

### Threats to Access, Equity and Quality

#### Threats to Access:

- Plans to declare impaction on more campuses while raising admission standards, excluding students historically guaranteed admission, especially those from low-income and minority schools with the poorest preparation for college.
- Moving remediation programs to the more expensive summer sessions, and requiring students to begin their remedial work before matriculating, will hinder access for many.
- Requiring freshmen to live on campus poses serious social and cultural problems with many groups.

#### Threats to Equity:

\*Proposals under discussion include: increased fees for 'excessive units;' decreased financial aid for units over those required for graduation, and limitations on repeating courses.

\*Reducing /eliminating majors and minors that attract low income, first generation and minority students, such as Chicano Studies, Ethnic Studies, African American Studies, Spanish.

#### Threats to Quality:

- *Lowering* the number of students who need remediation by lowering the cut-off scores to bypass remedial classes. This does not provide for better prepared students--they would lack vital skills necessary for success in college.
- *Decreasing* the number of required writing courses while increasing the number of students in other courses that are writing intensive.
- *Decreasing* general education requirements. There is evidence of discussions across the CSU of reducing class offerings, consolidating and eliminating some general education classes and programs.