

February 2, 2011

Stuart Drown  
Executive Director  
Little Hoover Commission  
925 L Street, Suite 805  
Sacramento, CA 91814

Mr. Drown:

The opportunity to address the Commission is much appreciated. I have structured my remarks around the points you have identified that the Commission is pursuing with respect to the California Community Colleges.

#### Competing Missions

- With four separate missions laid out for the community college system in the Master Plan for Higher Education, as a state, are we asking too much from our community colleges?

No, not in the slightest. Community colleges are ideally suited to all four tasks: basic skills, career technical education, university transfer, and economic development.

Adult basic education in English and mathematics is most relevant in the community college context because students in these programs can directly connect with vocational training and college level academic pursuits. We work hard to assure that the RIGHT skills are learned, that students are ENCOURAGED to continue into college level vocational training or an academic subject, and often students take occupational training or beginning college courses as they are finishing their basic skills acquisition.

Career Technical Education (CTE) is significant to deliver in the community college context because we understand and react to local employment needs, integrate soft skills with training in each occupation, and provide an avenue for the most talented students who may start in an occupational path like Industrial Maintenance to blossom and move to an academic track such as Engineering. We can balance the high cost of many CTE programs with the more productive classroom courses such as Social Science, making local decisions reflecting local priorities.

The competitive performance of community college transfers to the universities is direct evidence of the quality and effectiveness of the academic preparation we provide to those seeking a baccalaureate degree. The geographic accessibility coupled with the low cost of the first two years of a BA degree just cannot be replaced.

The newest mission of community colleges, economic development, is close to my heart. Here in Tulare County, I sit on our Workforce Investment Board, Economic Development Corporation Board, and Chamber of Commerce. In this time of recession, particularly in the hard-hit Central Valley, the assistance our college provides to training new and incumbent workers and attracting new business and industry is a key factor in our economic recovery.

Can we do better at accomplishing these missions? Certainly. But these four activities work in tandem for community colleges—and the state of California—to provide a range and quality of education that is essential to the economic well-being of our citizens, the economic vigor of our state, and the decisions that an informed citizenry must make about our future.

- Are some of the functions more important for community colleges to fulfill than others and if so, what are they?

No, these four missions are mutually supportive and synergistic. Our communities cannot function without these four missions being accomplished by a single, locally responsive educational institution. Can you imagine providing vocational education without integrated reading, writing, and computational education or totally without the opportunity to upgrade to a BA track without changing institutions? We have enough dislocation between high school standards in English and math without totally severing these skills from the college curriculum.

- As superintendent and president of College of the Sequoias, how do you work with your board of trustees and faculty to prioritize the various missions? Do the system's existing governance structure or fiscal mechanisms limit your ability to prioritize among the missions?

There are several functions of the college that must be prioritized in order to balance the needs generated by the drive to accomplish the four missions. The major functions are facilities, staffing, program development, and course scheduling. Each must be considered to be sure the college has the resources to effectively offer education in basic skills, CTE, academics, and in training for business and industry.

*Facilities.* Each college develops an Educational and Facilities Master Plan that takes a long range look at the needs of the community and matches them to the educational programs needed to meet these needs. The plan then lays out the facilities that will be needed to house these programs—or expansions of existing programs. Each college then produces a series of Five Year Facilities Plans that are updated annually. This document consists of specific projects—new buildings, replacement buildings, or modernization of buildings—that meet the needs of the Master Plan. Each such project goes through an Initial Project Proposal and a Final Project Proposal, approved by the state Chancellor's Office. This drives both the allocation of state educational facilities bond money and the offering of local general obligation facilities bonds. All college stakeholders participate in the development of these plans with ultimate approval by the governing board. I have been intimately involved in many such facilities planning processes in several districts and can assure the Commission of the high degree of involvement of key stakeholders in the prioritization of the elements of

these plans. Fiscal realities do limit the growth of facilities, but in my opinion, the passage of Proposition 39 lowering the voter approval for local bonds to 55% has largely remedied this post-Prop 13 problem.

*Staffing* decisions involve hiring faculty, support staff, and administrators. Undoubtedly, the highest level of participation is in faculty hiring. In fact, the hiring process as dictated by Education Code must be developed in partnership between the college and the faculty senate. In reality, support staff and administrator hiring priorities are driven more by senior management than by input from others. It is in the hiring of full-time faculty that the most tension arises with respect to balancing the four missions. Teaching basic skills is not seen as a professionally admired task. It has been my observation over many years that the faculty hiring process—driven heavily by existing faculty—greatly undervalues the hiring of faculty to teach basic skills. This is one of the major reasons that colleges generally lack the capacity to offer enough courses in basic math, English and English-as-a-Second-Language (ESL). Do fiscal restraints limit hiring? Well, of course. At almost every community college the number of full-time faculty is equal to the state mandated number, the infamous Faculty Obligation Number established through AB 1725 in 1988. Reforms in the hiring and employment status of faculty would make a tremendous improvement in the ability of community colleges to meet the four missions, particularly basic skills and economic development. Examples abound: removing the limit on adjunct faculty now restricted to teach only 67% of a full load, allowing those with high school credentials to teach basic skills, allowing these with industry certification to teach our business-site incumbent worker training, removing open access rules for contract education, and several other smaller potential changes.

*Program Development.* The development and modification of instructional programs is a very structured and participatory process. The state Chancellor's Office produces a handbook on the process that is detailed about the criteria and steps to take—including the need for the courses in new or modified programs to be approved by the college's Curriculum Committee—by Title 5 a group that is primarily faculty.

*Course scheduling* is a key decision in enrollment management. College schedule courses both to meet the four missions and to maximize “butts in the seats,” that is, to generate the student contact hours that drive our revenues from the state. Frankly, it is in course scheduling that the greatest tension among the four missions arises. Again, it has been my observation over many years that faculty would rather teach the more academically challenging courses and so schedule too few courses in basic math, English, and ESL.

Is the low priority given to basic skills a function of the governance process? Yes, I would have to say so. There should be some way for local governing boards to mandate that faculty hiring and course scheduling be based on the demand for courses rather than just a participatory governance decision.

#### Shared Governance Structure

- Has the governance structure of the community college system, divided between the Chancellor's Office and Board of Governors, the districts' boards of trustees and individual

college presidents and CEOs, been able to evolve sufficiently to meet the system's evolving missions?

The focus of my answer to this question is on the division of governance between the Chancellor's Office/Board of Governors and the local districts. A later question addresses the matter of district CEOs in multi-college districts and the presidents of those individual colleges.

In theory, the Board of Governors and the Chancellor's Office lead the community college system. Five key elements are necessary for that leadership: vision, strategic planning, advocacy, resource allocation, and accountability. Vision, strategic planning, and resource allocation are not being carried out sufficiently to assure the advancement of the system. I would give the system an 'F' grade for these. Advocacy is, at best, done in partnership with key stakeholder groups—from whom most of the innovations arise. I would give the system a C- grade here. Accountability in the form of regulatory compliance and mission appropriate behavior is spotty at best. This component would also be a C-. Not a pretty picture.

*Vision.* Where is the vision for the future of community colleges? I think about this a lot. I see a system focused on access when the state needs college graduates. I see a system driven by enrollment funding when what is needed are resources to support student success. I see a system constantly in defensive mode, insisting on workload reductions instead of enrollment priority reform. I see innovation coming from the strangest avenue of all, private foundations like Gates and Lumina. We literally seem afraid of change. In CEO meetings we talk of legislative reform “giving us cover” to make changes on our local campuses.

*Strategic Planning.* The system did have a strategic plan for a while. I sat on the System Oversight Committee for that strategic plan. Actually, the goals and objectives of the plan were not too bad. But what is a plan without implementation? Staff in the Chancellor's Office would give us reports regarding on-going activities that related to the goals and objectives. But the plan did not drive these activities. After about two years, the committee stopped meeting. The Board of Governors does develop a Legislative Agenda each year. In my opinion, these proposals do not reflect an overall direction for the system. There are some units within the Chancellor's Office that are good examples of strategic planning. I do not pretend to know all the inner workings of the office, but I am involved with the technology unit. For a number of years the system has had a “Tech Plan” now in its third iteration. This plan has driven several system technology and telecommunications initiatives and accompanying funding.

*Advocacy* for the system is primarily in the legislative arena and the related budget issues. The Chancellor's Office works well with the Community College League of California (CCLC) to lobby the legislature and the governor's staff. Less so for cooperation with the unions and faculty senate. It is interesting to note that key legislative reforms tend to come from outside the Chancellor's Office and the Consultation Council (the body through which all major items must go to reach the Board of Governors). For example, AB 1725 in 1988 (from a group known as The Californians), SB 361 in 2006 (led by San Diego Chancellor

Constance Carroll and Foothill-DeAnza Chancellor Martha Kanter working with Senator Jack Scott), and SB 1440 in 2010 (from the Campaign for College Opportunity).

*Resource allocation* is done through statute and the annual budget act.

*Accountability* has been a hot button issue for a while. The system proposed Partnership for Excellence (PFE) in 1999 as a thinly veiled trade of accountability for money. I was part of the group that designed PFE, and we intentionally used gross measures rather than rates of performance because we knew that the system would, by growth alone, produce better performance numbers. The current Accountability Report for Community Colleges (ARCC) is an advance, using rates instead of gross numbers, but the structure of the report makes it hard to use at the local level to drive real change. (The ARCC system of identifying comparable colleges is very hard to understand and greatly lessens the benchmarking use of the report.) When the Legislature gave the system money to increase funding for basic skills and to increase the funding rate for noncredit courses, an accountability report was required. I sat on the system task force for this accountability reporting along with representatives of the LAO and Department of Finance. Because the colleges differ so much in how they offer these courses and because the Chancellor's Office data reporting system needs to be adjusted for these new measures, and because local colleges have many data entry and data integrity issues, this accountability effort has been quite a challenge. I'm not sure if the committee is still meeting. I have not seen any accountability reports.

- What are the benefits and consequences of maintaining the current governance structure?

Our system tried to reform our state level governance system in 2008 with Proposition 92 which lost, I think, because it was too complex and too ambitious. It did, however, contain some good thinking about the Board of Governors and the Chancellor's Office.

The benefits of the current governance structure at the state level are that the BOG is a representative structure which sets regulations to implement statutes enacted by the state. The Chancellor's Office provides oversight and technical assistance in meeting these regulations. The local governing boards pass policies to provide local solutions to the state mandates. The participatory governance model provides a structured way for constituent groups to have input to key decisions.

The draw backs to the system stem primarily from a weak state level governance system. The Board of Governors does not have fiscal oversight of the system and does not have sufficient meaningful tools to hold the system accountable. The Chancellor's Office is understaffed and, as a state agency, must use civil service employees often with no education experience and rarely coming from a system community college. The local participatory governance structure takes artistry by the college president or district chancellor to make it work. When it works, it works well. Often, the "train conductor" (CEO/President) cannot get the trains to run on time. I myself enjoy working with faculty senates and unions. Done properly, the input is useful and productive. Done properly, important decisions can be made in a timely manner. Done properly, senates and unions can be part of solutions that the administration

cannot do alone. I am certainly an odd duck with these opinions, but I have been shaped by 26 years of being a faculty member and being at the heart of senate and union leadership.

What are the consequences of continuing the present governance system? Without a stronger Board of Governors and Chancellor's Office the community colleges will continue to struggle to make its case to the Legislature and the Governor and to be an equal partner with K-12, UC, and CSU. Without strong system leadership we will continue to be slow to reform, plan poorly for the future, and have difficulty both in acquiring adequate resources and in using those resources well. Without a strong system leadership that has the confidence of the system's colleges, we will not have a meaningful accountability system that guides us to the right vision and the best resource allocation.

Without college and district leaders, both administrators and faculty, who know how to lead our complex dance of senates, unions, and boards, decisions at the local level will be skewed to be self-serving and will be made too slowly to respond even to local needs.

- Does the Chancellor's Office have sufficient authority to oversee the system and establish and enforce statewide goals and standards?

In a word, no. Let's take two of the most contentious laws and regulations, the 50% law (Education Code Section 84362) and the 75/25 law (Education Code Section 87482.6). Compliance with both of these laws is based on self-reported data. The several districts with which I have close familiarity do not all use the same practices to create this self-reported data. Accountability is low when the Chancellor's Office cannot independently verify that colleges are complying with these laws—and others.

There are several other areas in which a stronger Chancellor's Office could supply better oversight such as facilities utilization, financial aid practices, and use of funds.

An important component of establishing and enforcing statewide goals and standards is the provision of technical assistance. For the first few years I was in the system (let's say some 20 years ago), the Chancellor's Office had a structured system of providing technical assistance to the field. When I was in statewide faculty leadership, I was often part of these teams. (I spent a sabbatical in the Curriculum unit in the Chancellor's Office in 1996 and did an inter-district exchange to work in the Articulation & Transfer unit in 1999.) To my knowledge, the level of technical assistance to the field from the Chancellor's Office has not approached this prior level in recent years.

- What are some of the benefits or efficiencies of heading a single college district as compared to a multi-college district? What are some of the drawbacks?

The first bullet asked about the district chancellor/college president structure in multi-college districts, so I will answer that as part of addressing this question.

The major advantage of a single college district is a flatter organizational structure. Adding the layer of a chancellor, vice chancellors, and a district office creates some challenges as

well as some potential advantages. Let's compare the single college with centers to the multi-college district. My college, College of the Sequoias, is an example of the former; our one college has a main campus in Visalia and centers in Hanford (20 miles away) and Tulare (10 miles away). I was also Interim President for two years and Vice President of Instruction for three years at Modesto Junior College which, with its sister Columbia College (56 miles away from Modesto) make up the Yosemite Community College District. I also taught and was faculty senate president at El Camino College (single college district) and at Chabot College (multi-college district with Las Positas College). And I was a dean at San Bernardino Valley College (sister is Crafton Hills College).

Potential advantages of the multi-college district are more efficient central services, typically fiscal, technology, and human resources. The major disadvantage has to do with decision making being more removed from the site of implementation, both geographically and in terms of layers of administrative hierarchy. My experience has been uniformly that the potential efficiencies were not realized, rather, it was extremely difficult to get good service from the District Office when needs arose at the College. My experience has been that the added layer of decision making made the decisions less responsive to local college needs. This said, there are examples in the state where good leadership has been able to achieve the potential efficiencies and minimize the challenge of decision making. This takes BOTH a good Chancellor AND a good Board. San Diego and Los Rios are examples of good, centralized, multi-campus districts with strong chancellors and solid governing boards.

Do all these colleges in multi-college districts need to be full colleges? I don't think so. San Francisco and Long Beach City College seem to make the one-college/many-sites model work. In my opinion, there are several colleges that would function more effectively as centers of a larger college. This leads to another factor related to this issue: the development of sites to serve remote or fast growing regions of the state. It certainly takes a strong district to develop new centers and new colleges. Could this development stop at the center stage? Certainly not in all cases. If so, and a single college district model was the norm in California, a mechanism would need to be created that would simultaneously allow a center to gain college status AND break off as a separate district. Speaking from my personal experience only, this would be an ideal model.

- What are important tradeoffs to consider in assessing whether the role and function of districts can be consolidated?

Multi-college districts are, without strong leadership, less fiscally efficient and less responsive to governance. The Commission, in posing the above question, may be probing if efficiencies could be obtained by combining districts. Just the opposite—in my experience. However, efficiencies could be obtained by evaluating whether some colleges might just as well be centers.

Finally, I would say that the single college/multi-college issue should not be the main focus of reform. It is not the structure itself that creates challenges but rather the nature of the leadership provided by the chancellor and governing board. That is an issue that does not lend itself to a legislative remedy. In my opinion, the state and the system would be better

served by developing ways for the colleges to serve what I call “mission appropriate students,” that is, students who are seeking to improve their English and math skills to college level, students who are seeking skills to enter the workforce, students who are seeking the first two years of a BA degree, and workers in our businesses and industries who are seeking upgraded competencies in their professions. In my opinion, we are serving too many students who are attending for avocational or recreational purposes or who are gaming the system for personal gain. More on this later.

## Complex Finance System

- How do the state's finance policies influence resource allocation decisions at the district and college levels?

The answer to this question is quite straightforward. The state’s finance policies reward colleges for attendance at the 20% point of each course. Not for moving students through English and math to get to the college level, not for employment and wage gains of workers, not for transfer to the university. In other words, we are paid for something other than achieving our statutory mission. The only way to increase revenues is to grow enrollment. And for many years that is exactly what we did, any way we could. As a Department Chair, as a Dean, as Vice President of Instruction, as President, and now as Superintendent/President I have done the enrollment chase for many years. If time permits in my testimony, I would be glad to share some of the creative ways we did just that—perhaps going in the gray area of the regulations—bending them but not breaking them.

- What are some of the challenges for the community college system associated with the state's current funding mechanisms and, without additional resources, are there measures that could be taken to address some of these challenges?

A two-pronged finance system that fit our mission would show better results. The first prong would be enrollment eligibility requirements and the second would be enrollment accounting changes. Enrollment eligibility requirements should emphasize student behaviors that lead to course and program completion. A combination of enrollment priorities and disqualifications should require us to accept only students who do the following:

- apply early,
- take assessment tests,
- apply for financial aid,
- participate in orientation, get advisement leading to an education plan that specifies an educational goal and the classes needed for that goal,
- be rewarded for or limited to taking classes on that education
- plan, make satisfactory progress toward that educational goal,
- pass a reasonable percentage of classes, and
- have a low rate of dropping classes.

Going forward, such a system should be funded by directing future growth funds to these mandated services. We don’t need growth. Research on patterns of course taking show that around one-quarter of our students take nothing but physical education and fine arts courses.

Another one-quarter never take more than one class per semester. Are these mission appropriate students? Are these students making satisfactory progress toward an educational goal? I think not. The reasonable solution would be to prioritize our scarce resources to serve those who really are within our mission and really are serious about their education.