

# FACT SHEET—RECOMMENDATIONS FOR STUDENT FAILURE

By John Rizzo, President of the San Francisco Community College Board of Trustees

The California Community Colleges Student Task Force recommendations are meant to radically defund the community college system, which has already had \$1.75 billion in cuts during the past three years. This has resulted in programs eliminated, tens of thousands of students turned away, and overcrowded classes. The Task Force recommendations would cut education further.

Partially funded by the Lumina Foundation, with ideas from the right-wing American Legislative Exchange Council, the Task Force recommendations do not effectively address student success, but instead aim to shrink government-sponsored education. The recommendations would force tens of thousands of California taxpayers to pay out-of-state tuition (which the report calls “full-fare” tuition).

Here are the main problems with the Task Force recommendations

- The Student Success Task Force doesn’t address the accepted measures of successful learning, such as Student Learning Outcomes, which are used by the accrediting bodies that evaluate the quality of public and private learning institutions. The Task Force does not consider the number of students who transfer to private and out-of-state colleges and universities, the successes of students who maintain work and family life while attending college, or the number of students who complete a single course to upgrade skills for employment. By including these measures, it would be clear that community colleges are doing well.
- Removes funding for retraining unemployed or degreed workers. California residents with degrees returning to college to retrain or upgrade skills could be required to pay out of state tuition if they’ve used a certain allocation of community college units. However, new California residents who went to college in other states before moving to California would still be eligible for in-state fees.
- Drastically reduces local control of community colleges, creating a larger bureaucracy at the state level. Community colleges throughout the state serve vastly different student populations with different issues; urban and rural, middle- and low-income students. Priorities for admission and for class offerings at local colleges would be set at the state level, not at the local level based on local needs. A one-size-fits-all approach does not serve local communities nor is it accountable to local communities.
- Turns needs-based fee waivers into performance-based waivers, affecting the poorest and most disadvantaged students, including immigrants and native born.
- Locks first year community college students into a major and prevents them from exploring other options. California residents would be required to pay out-of-state tuition for courses not listed in their education plan. This idea would be devastating because community college is often where students discover in what areas they excel through exploratory coursework.
- Focuses on increasing the number full-time students at the expense of students who choose to be part-timers. A majority of community college students attend part-time while working, and many have families to support. Becoming a full-time student will require additional financial aid and student loans, leaving most students with significant student loan debt when they complete their studies.
- Rations education by focusing primarily on 18-24 year-old students, and would place significant limits to basic skills preparation. After students reach that limit, they would be required to pay out-of-state tuition for further coursework in basic skills. Many current students would no longer have access to community college classes.
- Discourages colleges from serving the most needy and educationally disadvantaged by switching to performance-based funding mechanisms for basic skills students.
- California residents and taxpayers taking single courses to upgrade technical skills, or students enrolled for purposes of lifelong learning, would pay out-of-state tuition.
- Takes away the ability for local districts to do placement tests. The recommendations would have a single centralized test created by a private company (contracted by the California State Chancellor’s Office) with one statewide cut score to determine eligibility to take college-level

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courses. This doesn't take into account local circumstances. Today's tests are state-approved local placement tests, which takes into account demographic factors.

This would be the first step towards an admissions process, ending California's 50-year-old, open-access policy for community colleges. ■