

RATIONING ACCESS TO CREATE STUDENT SUCCESS

By Kris Fertel



By now you have probably heard of the California Community College (CCC) Student Success Task Force (SSTF); if you haven't, the door to weigh in is closing swiftly. In brief, in 2010 SB1143 (Liu) was passed creating the SSTF. Originally, this bill proposed to implement completion-based funding for CCC; however, it was rewritten into a task force with the idea that if CCC didn't take the initiative to define student success from within, it would be defined for us through legislation. Since then, the SSTF has created a plan for rationing access to a community college education with the focus on increasing student success: accountable success.

So why does it matter? The argument is being made that we are already rationing access due to budgetary constraints, so why not do it rationally? Well, it all depends on what it looks like in terms of access, success and equity.

If you are non-classroom faculty, the recommendations seek to help students create success plans and increase contact between students and support services. What concerns many, however, is whether colleges will receive adequate staffing and funding to implement such recommendations. On a related note, if you are part of a categorical program, it has been recommended that we create a few clusters of funding to give local campuses more freedom to allocate funding where most appropriate. If this remains in the final task force recommendations, what will its impact be on student support?

At the heart of it all is the core recommendation that we align funding to help promote student suc-

cess. The task force recommends restricting BOG waivers, incentivizing full-time enrollment and tying funding to the aforementioned success plans. The vision is that by doing so students will realize their goals more quickly. However, this could also negatively impact faculty who teach something that might not be included in a success plan and result in students paying differing amounts to take the same courses.

Moreover, in terms of finishing more quickly, the buzz in basic skills is that it is time for us to accelerate and intensify our basic skills courses; fewer levels of remediation should be promoted. The recommendations mention alternate methods of providing basic skills, including professional development to scaffold them better within mainstream classes so that no students are left behind. Most agree that scaffolding is a good idea, but not to replace classroom instruction. In fact, some have questioned why increasing full-time faculty ratios and program funding are not core components of success within this plan.

Make no mistake, what is being suggested is to reframe community college education in terms of successful outcomes.

To make sure we stay on track, it is proposed that success be measured with institutional scorecards and that such success be tied to institutional funding, particularly for basic skills.

All this being said, there is a good measure of local control and our local is very open to reasoned input. To that effect, the SSTF has also been open for input and significant changes have been made through swift and organized advocacy.

As a final note, keep in mind there is a rather lengthy timeline for implementing the recommendations. But, if the recommendations are approved by the BOG and then mandated by the legislature in 2012, prepare for the future as change will be coming. Find out more at FACCC.org. ■