

Remarks to the California Community Colleges Student Services Conference
“Today’s Issues, Challenges and Opportunities in Student Services”

April 9, 2003 LA Westin Hotel 8:30-9:30am

Good morning! Thank you for your kind introduction. It is wonderful to see all of you here and ready to go first thing this morning!

This is the start of what I know will be an enlightening and invigorating conference.

You are going to hear about some of the best approaches to supporting student success that have been developed in our colleges and elsewhere.

You will be able to share your experiences and challenges and hopefully learn from each other... and from the many wonderful presenters who will be here during the conference.

Opportunities like this for professional development are *so* valuable and *so* important to help us understand and overcome the very real challenges we face every day.

Thank Linda and Staff

Finding the time and resources to organize an event like this is a big challenge.

I would like to begin by thanking Linda Michalowski for all of her hard work in putting on this conference. Linda is simply the best Vice Chancellor we could possibly have in this role. She helps me every single day understand student services issues from your point of view. Linda, would you please stand up so this group can join me in saluting you for your years of dedication and effort?

I also want to thank all of the dedicated student services staff in the Chancellor’s Office for their hard work in organizing this conference and in supporting you. Would the Chancellor’s Office staff please stand so we can thank and acknowledge you for your hard work?

Commend Student Services leaders

I also want to commend the Chief Student Services Officers for sending such excellent people to Sacramento to represent the Student Services perspective

on the Consultation Council...In the last few years, I have had the good fortune to work with Mandy Davies, Lynn Neault, Robin Richards, Linda Lacy and Dick Robertson. These are such wonderful people and such articulate spokespersons for the student services perspective. You could have not chosen better people to represent you. I want to particularly commend Mandy Davies for her passionate and vocal opposition to the proposed cuts to categorical programs this year. I understand Mandy will be arriving at the conference a little later today and I hope you will take a minute to thank her when you run into her for her advocacy on behalf of student services programs.

Thank Student Services Staff at the Colleges

It is a real pleasure to have this opportunity to talk to you today. I have really been looking forward to it because I think that your role in providing student services to our students is one of the most important roles in our community colleges.

As Linda said, I was President of Napa Valley College for 10 years. I saw first-hand every day what a difference you make with students.

I saw student services staff perform miracles with the students they worked with year after year and I know that you do the same thing at your colleges.

I worked with wonderful counselors and student services staff who would do *anything* to help a student get over that next hurdle to keep them in school and moving toward their goal.

I will never forget the EOPS graduations and scholarship ceremonies I attended and the look of pride and accomplishment on students' faces at those ceremonies.

And I worked with many wonderful teaching faculty as well, who could communicate their subject matter in a way that turned lights on for students...students who may have had nothing but failure in their prior academic experience... and I saw those faculty go the extra mile to make sure students who were struggling got connected to the tutoring or counseling or financial aid resources they needed.

Those memories remain emblazoned in my mind and on my heart and I carry them with me in this new role that I have in the Chancellor's Office.

Before I begin my formal remarks I want to thank you for what you do to serve students. I am in awe of what you do.

Every one of you in this room is on the front lines every day,

- **meeting with students, assessing students, advising students, and tutoring students;**
- **You often are the first people to see new students and you provide the welcoming introduction to the college that makes the difference in whether or not students decide to enroll at our colleges.**
- **Many of you also tell students about the financial aid resources that make it possible for them to enroll and persist;**
- **And you make sure they have their books when their classes begin;**
- **You let them know that they *can* afford college, that they *are* college material. You tell them about the impact that going to community college can have on their families and their futures.**
- **You help them define their career and educational goals and help them find the classes they need;**
- **You make sure the campus is accessible and that students have accommodations to overcome their physical or learning challenges.**
- **Many of you spend time in the high schools and at shopping malls and at community events to let people know that college is an option even if they have no one in their family who has been to college.**
- **Many of you make connections with the county caseworkers and administrators – and no matter how hard that is -- you clear the path for single parents on public assistance and foster youth to enroll and persist.**
- **Many of you take students who never thought they would be in college to visit four-year universities to raise their sights and make the connections so that they can transfer and achieve their fullest potential.**

- **Many of you have traveled that path yourselves; from being students with no sense of or hope for the future to being someone who opens those doors for the next generation.**

Yes, I am in awe of you and what you do for our students.

Our student population brings extraordinary challenges to our campuses and there is no way we can overcome those challenges without looking at what goes on *in* the classroom and strengthening those services we provide *outside* the classroom and linking the two to keep our students on track.

It does indeed take a whole college to enable an under-prepared, unconfident and needy student to overcome *all* of those barriers and become a success.

You create those success stories every day and I want to say *thank you* for what that means to the instudents you touch and what that means for our communities and our state.

So I am grateful that you will all go back to your campuses after this conference is over and you will keep doing what you do to make these miracles happen and hopefully some of what you learn here over the next couple of days will enable you to do it even better.

I have been asked to speak this morning on the topic of “Today’s Challenges, Issues and Opportunities”. I want to do 4 things in my talk this morning:

- 1. First, I want to update you on the budget challenge we are facing in Sacramento and ask for your help;**
- 2. Second, I want to talk to you about what I think is our biggest challenge in California community colleges and my highest priority;**
- 3. Third I want to tell you about some programs that I think are making a difference and are wonderful opportunities for you to explore.**
- 4. Fourth, I want to tell you about some hopeful new directions in working with high schools that will help students come to us better prepared to do college level work.**

Update on Budget Situation in Sacramento

First, let me give you an update on the budget situation in Sacramento....As many of you have heard, the state is facing a massive \$16 billion deficit and so

the governor and legislature have been making cuts in all areas to try to do something about it. When the Governor's budget came out in January, he made across the board cuts in all programs of 10% for next year. However, I know that some student services programs like financial aid actually got a bigger cut of 14%. There was a differential impact depending on what the programs would have received in the budget year before the cut was applied.

In addition, he called a special session of the legislature to make cuts to this year's budget. Vice Chancellor Erik Skinner was able to work with the Legislature during the special session to make \$31 million in cuts to this year's budget that were relatively painless because they did not involve money that had already been allocated.

However, after those \$31 million dollars in cuts were made, it was discovered that we were going to receive an additional cut of \$80 million in the current year which we didn't know about until 3 weeks ago.

This is when we learned that local property tax revenues had not come in at the level we expected. Unlike K-12 districts which receive an automatic backfill of state funds when property tax receipts come in below estimates, there is no such protection for community colleges.

So at the moment, our colleges are struggling to adjust to this massive cut in funding more than three-quarters of the way through the fiscal year.

Just so you get a sense of how significant this is, this cut in funds represents the resources to serve over 35,000 students.

We are working with Assemblyman Eng to carry a bill to get this cut overturned, but so far we have not been successful.

For next year, the news is even worse. \$483 million in budget cuts are being proposed for community colleges next year. I'll briefly mention how these cuts will impact student services in 3 areas:

First, you need to know that the Governor's budget proposed an \$80 million dollar reduction to categorical programs including those in student services which will obviously hurt our ability to help students succeed which has been my highest priority this year.

I have asked the legislators to please not cut these categorical programs because these are the very programs that provide the core services that make

the difference between whether or not a student succeeds or fails. I told them that students using these support services most often are low-income, first-generation college students who are working hard to juggle college, work and family responsibilities. These services provide the essential support that help students succeed. There is also a proposal from the LAO to put categorical programs into a block grant, which we also are opposing.

The second impact of the cuts is that we would not be able to provide classes for more than 50,000 students. Because our colleges are open access institutions and we do not limit enrollment and turn away students, the real impact of the proposed budget cuts would actually be felt by all 2.6 million California Community College students since they will not be able to get the classes they need to transfer or graduate on time.

So, the dilemma our students face is that they can get in and be admitted to community colleges, but then they can't get the classes they need to transfer or graduate. ...and, as you know, it then takes them longer to transfer or get a degree or certificate. As a result, we are not able to be as efficient and cost effective as we could be if we were able to offer these additional classes.

The third impact of the proposed cuts is the proposed lack of COLA will actually represent a cut of \$292 million. Due to the effects of inflation, colleges face yearly increases in health benefits, utilities, automatic salary adjustments, and other services. If no COLA is provided, colleges will be forced to cut classes and support services in order to cover these nondiscretionary cost increases.

So you might imagine, I am spending a lot of my time lately fighting these cuts and making the case to maintain funding for community colleges.

One week ago today I testified before the Assembly Budget Subcommittee on Education Finance, together with CSU Chancellor Charlie Reed and UC's outgoing Provost Rory Hume, about the devastating impact that California will suffer if the proposed cuts to higher education become a reality.

I am glad to be working collaboratively with my counterparts at UC and CSU because California's 3 public higher education systems are interconnected and cuts to one system affect the other 2 systems.

Last year, I'm proud to say that our community colleges transferred over 99,000 students to 4-year universities and almost one-third of all UC graduates were community college transfers and two-thirds of all CSU graduates were community college transfers.

So, when CSU decides to cut back 10,000 students, it impacts us, because our community college students then can't transfer.

Similarly, UC has reported a 7% increase in community college transfer applications this year and so cuts to the UC system will also affect us.

In addition, when students can't get into a UC or CSU as freshmen or can't afford to go there, they often come to us instead so that has a direct effect on our enrollment.

You will be happy to know that Charlie Reed publicly testified that the cut of 10,000 students applies only to first time freshmen and not to transfer students and that he will take all transfer students that apply.

You might be interested in some of the testimony that I am giving to the legislators to convince them why it is not in the state's interest to cut community colleges.

I have explained to the legislature that the community colleges are uniquely positioned to help improve the state's fiscal condition. When California workers face layoffs and difficult job markets, they turn to our colleges to upgrade their skills, move up in the workforce, and stay competitive and employable within their fields.

Given the fact that we serve 2.6 million students and enroll 73% of the students in public higher education, we are the only entity that is capable of delivering education and workforce training in every area of this state and on the scale that is needed to improve the state's economic strength.

I don't have to tell *you* that cuts of the magnitude that are being proposed would be felt by *all* of our students and especially by student services.

These cuts would undermine so much of what we as a system have dedicated ourselves to and I am especially concerned about losing the ground we have gained in coming together as a system to make our students' success our number one priority.

I would like to ask for your help in fighting these cuts. There are 2 dates coming up that I would like you to mark on your calendar:

- **Monday, April 21, in less than two weeks, there is going to be a gigantic student rally at the capitol with the students from UC and CSU. It will look very much like the 10,000 student march we did a few years ago. I would like to ask you to get as many students there as you can and also come yourselves.**
- **Then on Wednesday, April 23, at 4pm there is going to be a hearing on the community college budget. We would like to pack the room and will be asking a number of speakers to testify about the effect of the cuts on student services. I would like to invite you to come to that hearing if you can.**

Linda will be talking more to you about advocacy in a few minutes.

2. The second area I wanted to talk to you about today is what I consider to be our greatest challenge and my highest priority this year.

So what do I think is our biggest challenge? In my opinion, it is to improve the success rates of our students and to do something about the achievement gap.

Why do I say that this is our biggest challenge?

We only have to look at our own Chancellor's Office accountability statistics, ARCC, which shows that statewide:

- **52% of our DEGREE SEEKING students earn a degree, certificate or transfer in 6 years.**
- **but for students of color the numbers are lower;**
- **Only 41% of our Latino and African-American students earn a degree, certificate or transfer in 6 years.**
- **That means that for every 10 Latino or African American students who come to us, only 4 succeed in getting a degree, certificate or transfer in 6 years.**
- **I think we can do better than that. I think we must do better than that.**

3. Student Services Programs that are Making a difference to close the achievement gap

The 3rd area I want to talk to you about today is the number of new programs that are making a difference in improving the success and college completion rates for African-American, Latino and Native American students and in closing the achievement gap.

Student services has been at the forefront of efforts to address this achievement gap and I want to thank you and acknowledge you for that. I know that many of you are directly engaged in this effort on your campuses through EOPS, MESA and Puente and other programs that utilize the approach of culturally-relevant learning communities.

Umoja is a relatively new program that is very exciting. It is designed to promote the success of African American students in California Community Colleges. We invited members of the Umoja Steering Committee to make an informational presentation to the Board of Governors about efforts to expand this model statewide and the Board responded by putting a motion on the table and unanimously passing it to endorse and support this wonderful program!

The Umoja Steering Committee will report back to the Board at its May meeting in a few weeks about their progress in the last 6 months and will ask for our support to find funding for the program going forward.

Despite the funding challenges we are facing at least for the next year and maybe longer, I will do everything I can to find a way to get resources so that this program can continue to expand because it is thoughtfully addressing such a critical need. I understand there is an Umoja workshop this afternoon if you want to learn more about this program.

I was also heartened to hear about a new effort focused specifically on African-American males. It is called AMEND which stands for the African American Male Education Network and Development organization. They held their inaugural conference at Coastline College 2 weeks ago and had an amazing 300 people in attendance!

There is also a new Hermanos Program targeting latino males which you can learn about at this conference tomorrow morning. There is so much energy in our system right now to solve these difficult challenges that I think we can really make a difference for California's population and the state's future.

California's future depends on solving this challenge and community colleges have to be part of the solution.

So those are just some of the new things that are happening that involve student services to do something about the achievement gap. What else is happening in the classroom?

We all need to ask the question: Why aren't all of our students succeeding in their classes despite your efforts in students services? What do we need to do differently on the academic side to help our students succeed?

There are of course many reasons, and you all probably know them better than I do. One of them is that student services are so underfunded. Another reason is that more than 70 percent of the students who come to us cannot read, write and do math at the college level.

Many students drop out because they cannot do the work and they need a lot of help in this area.

Less than 10% of students who need basic skills education and don't get it survive in college.

Basic skills is the foundation for everything else a student wants to do...whether a student wants to transfer or study career technical education or take any kind of course...that student needs certain basic skills to succeed.

The good news is that we are hard at work trying to do something about it with our Student Success/Basic Skills Initiative.

I have been very impressed with the progress we have made to date and how we are approaching this issue.

First, it is exciting to see the unprecedented collaboration that has been happening between the statewide Academic Senate, Chief Instructional Officers and Chief Student Services Officers and the system office on this important project.

I commend these groups for providing leadership in this important area. Robin Richards was especially instrumental in representing student services in the original conversations.

Second, we have done an extensive review of the literature which identified 26 model practices in basic skills, that is, 26 things we now know about that colleges can do to improve their student success rates.

Guess what they found? It is something all of you know...and that is...how important student services are in helping students succeed academically. The review of the literature stressed that it is important to create a new culture that breaks down the silos between instruction and the direct support student services provides for what happens in the classroom. The learning community models and Supplemental Instruction that puts tutors right in the classroom have been proven to be effective and you'll hear Vincent Tinto talk some about that tomorrow. The statewide Academic Senate is now doing a follow-up supplement to this review through its Basic Skills Professional Development grant to look at the role of other student support services, like financial aid and counseling, in helping underprepared students be successful.

Because this is such a critical year for implementing the Student Success/Basic Skills Initiative, I have made it my top priority along with closing the achievement gap and I hope you will make it yours and participate in the conversations that are going on right now on your campuses. I urge you to get involved, to provide strong leadership, to look at the 26 effective practices and implement the ones that make sense to you.

The reason I am so excited about supporting the basic skills initiative is that I think for the first time ever we might be able to make a real transformational shift in the way we deliver education to our most vulnerable, at-risk students and help more students succeed.

4. Work with High Schools: CAHSEE & CSU Early Assessment

The fourth area I want to talk to you about today are some hopeful new directions in working with high schools that will help students come to us better prepared to do college level work.

Why work with high schools? It has become increasingly clear to me that we will be fighting an absolute uphill battle unless we can help our colleagues in the K-12 system to stop students from dropping out of high school and decreasing the number of high school graduates who come to us without the skills they need to succeed in college or the world of work.

Do you know that 60% of all students graduating from California high schools today are scoring *below proficient* on their 11th grade California Standards Assessment Test which they refer to as the STAR tests?

And the percentages are even worse for African American, Latino and Native American students in high schools.

As a state, we have devoted so much attention to implementation of the California High School Exit Exam, the CAHSEE, and making sure that it doesn't increase the numbers of students without high school diplomas, that we have paid little attention to the fact that the CAHSEE does not measure 12th grade math and English skills, but rather, it sets the bar much lower. You can pass the CAHSEE with only 8th grade math skills and 9th grade writing and language skills.

I think it is very unfortunate that we now have this very important test that is required for high school graduation and it gives students and parents the impression that they are ready to do college-level work. When students come to us having passed the CAHSEE test, they don't understand why they have to take basic skills classes with us. They think, I've graduated from high school and passed the CAHSEE...I must be ready for college...but in fact, they are not, they only have 8th grade math skills and 9th grade writing skills.

The CSU is addressing this problem by working with the high schools to provide students feedback on their 11th grade STAR test results that lets them know whether they are on track to graduate prepared for college and advises those who are not that they need to use their senior year to work on areas of deficiency so that they will not have to take basic skills courses when they enroll at a CSU.

An essential part of this CSU Early Assessment Program is the work CSU is doing with the high schools to make teaching in the 12th grade more effective in closing students' skill gaps before they graduate.

I feel strongly that community colleges need to be part of this process, so that students who intend to go to their local community college will begin to learn that they too need to prepare for college so that they will not start out already behind.

We need to take on the myth that many high school students *and their counselors* have that "what you do in high school doesn't matter if you're 'just' going to community college", because it does matter.

We would need to do this very carefully, of course, so that we don't cause anyone to think that we won't *take* students who don't meet a college-ready standard.

In my view we should *always* be a second chance for students who arrive under-prepared, and we will always need to serve the high school drop-outs and immigrant and older students who have never had the opportunity to reach basic skills proficiency or who have been out of school for so long that they need to re-learn skills they have lost.

For the last 3 years, community colleges have supported legislation that would let community colleges participate in the CSU Early Assessment Program.

The first bill, carried by Sen. Escutia, was vetoed by the Governor in 2006 but Sen. Jack Scott reintroduced the same legislation last year and I am optimistic that we will be able to get it through this year and when we do, I hope you will consider participating in it.

The approach in SB 946 and the earlier bill would create a pilot program for about 25 community colleges to volunteer to participate in the EAP and our expectation was that funding would be provided in the budget for the participating colleges to hire an outreach and assessment specialist or an EAP coordinator to make this work.

Since there is no potential for budgetary support this year, we are currently working with Sen. Scott's office to remove the pilot approach but still authorize K-12 to share individual student test results with community colleges so that colleges wishing to join the program locally would have the ability to do so.

I know that the Los Angeles community college district already tried to pilot the EAP two years ago but ran into a barrier when schools could not share student test results with them. I am confident that other districts would also voluntarily join the program if we can accomplish legislative support and authority to make it work.

Bridge Program

There is another program that I am *really* excited about that builds bridges between community colleges and their feeder high schools that I want to tell you about.

What if I told you that there was a high school graduation where the principal at the end of the graduation ceremony asked all of the high school graduates to stand if they were enrolled in college.

Then imagine the entire high school class standing up to indicate that they were all enrolled in college...and then imagine the parents and family in the audience coming to their feet and clapping with pride over the fact that their child was enrolled in college.

This actually happened at Sweetwater High School in Victorville where a high school teacher named Chris Piercy started what they called their K-16 Bridge Program. In just the first year of this program, the number of seniors graduating from Sweetwater High School who enrolled at Victor Valley College for the fall semester went from 87 in 2006 to 257 in 2007!

Chris Piercy, the wonderful visionary who started this program is presenting a workshop on the program tomorrow afternoon along with Victoria Hinds from Victor Valley College and I encourage you to attend.

The K-16 Bridge Program is in its second full year of implementation at Victor Valley College and its feeder high schools. This program assumes that college should be made a viable option for *all* students.

It works by bringing career and college exploration *into the high school classroom* for *all* seniors at participating high schools.

They actually complete the college admission and financial aid applications at the high school by building it into the curriculum *for every high school senior*. Students are brought to the campus for a College Day experience, but orientation, assessment and development of an education plan are all done at their high school site.

By making the actual steps of preparing for college part of the high school curriculum, students are simply not allowed to self-select out of a college track; to the contrary, they are given step-by-step assistance to enroll in college as part of their high school experience.

How many of you have had the experience of hearing that high school counselors were bad mouthing your community college and telling their students to go to a 4 year college instead of your college. It happened to me and it made me furious. The Bridge program has overcome this issue by hiring high school counselors at every high school site as adjunct college counselors. The high school counselors come to college meetings and develop

relationships with their college counterparts and learn the college procedures and culture, which they can then teach to their high school students.

Relationships are also developed between college and school administrators and among high school teachers and college faculty who become engaged in course articulation.

In addition, the model is designed to incorporate curriculum into earlier grades each year until eventually the senior year program becomes the culmination of lessons begun in the 6th grade to change perceptions of what is possible for each child's future.

I see this program as a way to bring about the kind of deep, systemic change that California needs if we are going to significantly reduce the secondary school drop-out rate, raise the achievement level of our high school graduates, raise California's college-going rate from the dismally low 43.7% (which puts us near the bottom for all states in the nation). We need to do this if we are to produce the educated and skilled population on which California's economic and civic future depends.

I am excited that this program is already growing in parts of southern California and many colleges, including a couple of CSU campuses, are actively working with the Victor Valley team to adopt the program. If you would like to explore this program for your college, talk to Chris Piercy at his workshop tomorrow afternoon.

Other student services programs

I am also proud of the many other wonderful things going on in our colleges and in Student Services.

I commend all of you who are working on the Foster Youth Success Initiative;

I also want to mention how grateful I am for the efforts by our Veterans Services coordinators and our DSP&S programs (and our Admissions Offices that are implementing priority enrollment legislation that passed last year) to help our veterans transition back into civilian life and put their lives back together after sacrificing so much to serve our country;

I am so happy to hear about the workshops and media interviews going on all over the state this month as we celebrate Community College Financial Aid Awareness Month to help graduating high school seniors and others know

that college is still an option for them and that they *can* afford college even if their plans for life after graduation aren't already made.

I also love the new Transfer Counselors Web Site that will help counselors keep up with the ever-changing transfer requirements to keep students on track to move on to CSU or UC or other 4-year institutions.

You will have the opportunity to learn more about all of these initiatives and more over the course of this conference.

I have covered a lot of ground with you today in my remarks about our community colleges and I have tried to leave you with the message that this is a challenging and yet a very hopeful time for our community college system.

We are at a strategic moment in the history of our system because we are working together as never before on our toughest issues like closing the achievement gap and trying new approaches in student services and basic skills to help all of our students succeed, and we are making progress.

Final Thank You

In closing, I want to thank each and every one of you in this audience for the role you play in helping our students be successful and in realizing their dreams. Our work may not be the easiest, but it is the most important and also the most rewarding.

I know that you don't get nearly enough recognition for all you do and that you often have to work with insufficient staff, not enough money and resources, but that you do your best to carry on anyway because you believe in what you do and are committed to student success.

Looking back on our careers and on our lives, we can all feel good and proud that this has been our life's work. We do make a difference...people change as a result of the education we provide for them and we know that these students have opportunities that they didn't have before.

We take pride in the California Community Colleges for being the "people's college" and in serving those students who would not otherwise have a chance to go to college.

We are the Ellis Island of Higher Education.

We believe in the power of education for all people, not just for the elite.

Our community colleges are open to everyone and we offer students an opportunity to achieve their personal goals, to transform their lives and to realize and live the American Dream.

We are doing this work for a simple reason. We know that education is the best means for people to create a better life...and it is what our community colleges offer to everybody in this state every day. Thank you for the essential role you play in our colleges.

I hope you enjoy the rest of the conference. Thank you so much for giving me this opportunity to speak to you today.