

Steven M. Kinsella, DBA, CPA, Superintendent/President

November 6, 2011

Dear Members of the Student Success Task Force:

I am a Professor of Anthropology and local senate president at Gavilan College. I have been serving on the ASCCC Futures Committee for two years, a committee charged with the task of researching, discussing, and analyzing student success data and agendas. I have also just participated, as a presenter and member, in the ASCCC Fall Plenary, which focused much of its general and breakout sessions on the Task Force recommendations. As a community college instructor, publishing research scholar, and advocate for my students, I am concerned that this package (as written) could unintentionally reform our system in ways that are detrimental to our students and dismissive of our state and local missions. Leaving behind our most vulnerable students will not help our state and national economies.

Though I have familiarized myself with the Task Force recommendations and am coordinating substantive dialogue with my campus about the recommendations, I am concerned that our campus dialogue and feedback will never be heard or taken into consideration by the Task Force. Given the Task Force's neglect to include local campuses in this important dialogue in a systematic and substantive way, I worry that our efforts to organize feedback are fruitless. It is hard not to wonder if this neglect was intentional. Most of the public forums have not been open to the public, having taken place at professional meetings requiring fees. And my colleagues and I have found the feedback website to be unprofessional and utterly inappropriate (akin to Facebook) given the significance of this reform effort.

I am enclosing a two-page draft resolution that my local senate has written in response to the resolutions. Some of our points echo resolutions that our state senate voted upon and passed on Saturday November 5. However, our attempt to provide feedback is rushed, due to the constraints of your timeline, and does not reflect the breadth of the critical and engaged discussions of our faculty, administrators, staff, and students. Gavilan College is committed to helping our students complete more degrees and certificates in a timely manner; we do not need detailed legislation and system centralization in order to improve upon our success rates.

I do not want this effort of system reform to turn us into another K-12 under the No Child Left Behind agenda, driven by test scores and outcomes-based funding. We are already bearing the burden of educating students who have not been properly educated under that system. I do not want our system to deny our students a holistic college education. If completion rates become our sole mission, then the mission of our system has been changed by this reform effort.

In my view, SB 1143 has been most successful by mandating that experts from within the CCC system engage in dialogue with those who hope to reform our system from outside the system. This is a step in the right direction. However, the recommendations (as written) reflect an outsider reform agenda that has the potential to transform our system at the expense of those students who need us the most. At the very least, I urge the Task Force to frame its recommendations with an honest discussion of how it sees this reform effort as a deliberate attempt to change the mission of the California Community College system. Though I do not believe that changing our mission is the appropriate purview for this legislation, the impact of this legislation will indeed change our mission. The current framing of this reform package is disingenuous.

I hope you understand, from the content of this letter, the extent to which local faculty and campuses are rendered powerless in the face of your broad-sweeping reform package.

Respectfully,

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Gavilan College Academic Senate Resolution

Subject: Recommendation Urging The Student Success Task Force to Support the Ongoing Student Success Efforts and Mission of California Community Colleges¹

November 6, 2011

DRAFT

Whereas, the Gavilan College community understands that these recommendations are the first step in an ongoing effort to reform, through legislation, the California Community College system. The Academic Senate, shared governance committees, and employee groups across campus have been critically assessing these recommendations.

Whereas, Gavilan College, located in a rural agricultural area of the central California coast with its main campus in Gilroy and additional sites in Morgan Hill and Hollister, is a Hispanic serving institution, with approximately 75% of entering students needing basic skills assistance prior to taking transferable courses.

Whereas, the 2001-2010 educational goals of Gavilan College students averaged: 26% transfer, 29% career technical education (job skills, retraining, certificates), and 14% personal enrichment.

Whereas, Gavilan College's mission states, "In an environment that cultivates creativity, stimulates curiosity and emphasizes student learning, Gavilan College serves its community by providing high quality educational and support services that prepare students for transfer, technical and public service careers, life-long learning and participation in a diverse global society."

Whereas, Gavilan College, having always focused on student success, is committed to supporting students toward the timely completion of their educational goals.

Whereas, Gavilan College passed a new Student Success Board Policy (BP 4600) in 2010 that recognizes the success of Gavilan College's students as one of the Board's highest priorities. This policy institutionalizes the Board's support of student success. To carry out the work of identifying existing and new pathways to student success, Gavilan College established the Learning Council, a subcommittee of the Academic Senate comprised of all stakeholder groups.

Whereas, Gavilan College consistently seeks to improve its student and instructional services and overall institutional effectiveness through: program planning at the departmental level; the internal institutional review process; the accreditation process; and the ongoing assessment of student and program learning outcomes.

Resolved, the Gavilan College Academic Senate urges to the Task Force to support the broader mission of local community colleges that includes and extends beyond the completion agenda.

Resolved, the Gavilan College Academic Senate supports the Task Force's recommendations to: improve diagnostic assessments; require education plans; strengthen support for entering students; and expand basic skills offerings. In the absence of legislation, Gavilan College has already been improving upon these student and instructional services.

Resolved, the Gavilan College Academic Senate urges the Task Force to revise enrollment priorities to reflect local and statewide Community College missions as well as the diversity of our students and their goals. We support accessibility to students who need the most help and support to succeed.²

Resolved, the Gavilan College Academic Senate urges the Student Success Task Force to consider how its recommendations will potentially exclude and marginalize Gavilan College's most socioeconomically disadvantaged students by limiting enrollment and moving toward an outcome-based funding model that narrowly measures success by momentum points and degree or certificate completion.

Resolved, the Gavilan College Academic Senate urges the Student Success Task Force to revise all recommendations to appropriately account for students whose goals include: career technical education, job retraining, learning English as a second language, and life-long learning.³

Resolved, the Gavilan College Academic Senate supports investing in full-time instructional and counseling faculty to best serve our students. We oppose outcome-based funding. Research has shown these models to fail in educational contexts because: the financial gains are not evident, and it is too easy to game the system by lowering academic standards or selecting for the most prepared students.⁴

Resolved, the Gavilan College Academic Senate is concerned that over-legislating the California Community College system will produce outcomes that fail to capture significant evidence of student success. We support the empowerment of districts to continue making decisions that are in the best interest of their locally served populations.

Resolved, the Gavilan College Academic Senate urges the Task Force to advocate for public investment, not divestment, in public education.

¹ All footnotes refer to the ASCCC senate resolutions passed on 11/5/11. A final list of these resolutions will soon be available on the Senate Website at: <http://www.asccc.org/>.

² See "Community Access and Student Achievement in California Community Colleges" and "Student Success Task Force Recommendations: Priority Enrollment," ASCCC senate resolutions passed on 11/5/11.

³ See "Removal of ESL Students from Student Success Task Force Recommendations," ASCCC senate resolution passed on 11/5/11.

⁴ See "Full-Time Faculty and Student Success" ASCCC senate resolution passed unanimously on 11/5/11 and "Oppose Student Success Task Force Recommendations on Basic Skills Funding," ASCCC senate resolution passed on 11/5/11.