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March 7, 2002

The Honorable Dede Alpert, Chair
Joint Committee to Develop a Master Plan – K-University
State Capitol, Room 5050
Sacramento, CA 95814

RE: Student Learning Working Group Final Report

Dear Senator Alpert:

On behalf of the California State University (CSU), I am pleased to convey the system's strong support for the work of the Student Learning Working Group, as represented by the final report being presented to you today. While the report sets an ambitious agenda for the state's K-12 schools and postsecondary education institutions, there is little question that the fundamental principle underlying the report's recommendations – that California's Master Plan must result in education policies that ensure quality and choice for all students, and enable equitable results – is the principle on which the success of the K-University Master Plan will be judged.

It is entirely appropriate that the Working Group has developed a set of recommendations which are not constrained by existing resources and structures. However, since the report's recommendations are so ambitious in scope, it is especially important to view them in the context of **Recommendation #2 – that California must provide adequate and equitably distributed learning resources**, and further, increase its commitment, as well as overhaul the methods by which it generates and allocates resources for schooling. While this subject has been considered in depth by the Finance and Facilities Working Group, it seems clear that success in achieving the goals of the Student Learning Working Group will rely in large part on the State's ability to accomplish this recommendation.

In the spirit of ongoing collaboration, CSU offers the following comments on specific recommendations contained in the report. As noted in our previous correspondence to the committee regarding the Professional Personnel Development Working Group report, we may wish to offer additional comments as the Master Plan process continues.

Challenging Goals and Curriculum for All Students

Recommendation 1: *Set ambitious learning goals and provide all students a challenging K-12 curriculum, including preparation for postsecondary schooling.*

Recommendation 1.1 (excerpt): *The State must ensure that all schools provide all students with curriculum and coursework that include the knowledge, skills, and experiences that enable them to attain the following learning goals:*

- *Preparation for successful entry into 4-year university, community college transfer programs, or community college vocational certificate programs, without the need for remedial or developmental courses.*

Recommendation 1.3: *Establish an academically rigorous course pattern (currently the A-G course pattern that is required for CSU and UC eligibility) as the standard curriculum for every high school student, and provide the learning support that enables students to successfully complete this college readiness curriculum. Students not wishing to participate in this rigorous curriculum should, with the proper counseling, be allowed to “opt out” of this pattern of courses. In such cases, students must follow a personalized learning plan that ensures basic academic competencies.*

These recommendations support CSU’s belief that all students should be given the opportunity and be prepared for college-level work. The CSU Board of Trustees adopted in 1996 a policy on Precollegiate Skills Instruction designed to reduce the need for remediation in English and mathematics at the college level. The policy does not call for the elimination of remedial and developmental studies but seeks to reduce substantially the number of students requiring remediation to succeed in college. While the policy has been successful – proficiency levels of CSU freshmen in 2000-01 completing math and/or English remedial courses prior to their sophomore year increased to 81 percent – the proficiency levels for freshmen entering in 2001-02 in both English and math remained almost constant at 54 percent, demonstrating that substantial work remains to be done.

The report notes that CSU and the University of California now agree on a desirable college/university preparatory pattern of high school course taking. It is important to recognize that this agreement represented an early achievement of one of the main goals of the Joint Committee – working towards a seamless system of education, K-University. The benefits that flow from this alignment include the following:

- The pattern of courses provides students with a rigorous and well-rounded high school experience.
- The common pattern facilitates curriculum development in high schools by narrowing the range of courses that need to be offered and by providing long-term stability in college preparatory requirements.
- The consistency of a common pattern facilitates high school counseling and simplifies course selection for college-bound students.
- The public four-year university systems emphasize that although their admission requirements may specify different achievement levels, the content of necessary college preparation is consistent across segments.

Recommendation 1.6: *Strengthen the academic programs at the community college that prepare students to transfer to CSU and UC.*

The report further notes that high-quality and well-articulated general education requirements and agreements about the courses that satisfy lower division requirements for majors must be in place between the community colleges and all public universities. CSU agrees with this statement. It is recognized in CSU’s Memorandum of Understanding with the California Community Colleges (CCC), which called for expansion of articulation agreements. In the MOU, CSU pledged to admit all fully eligible CCC upper division students, and the CCCs pledged to increase the number of fully eligible upper division students by at least 5 percent per year.

CSU joins the California Education Round Table in supporting the development of an AA Transfer Degree program. The Round Table recommends consideration for the development of a systemwide distinctive community college transfer degree. Such a differentiated degree would provide a clear path to the baccalaureate degree resulting in an increase in the number of students transferring to California’s four-year colleges and universities.

We hope the committee will adopt this recommendation in the final report.

Guaranteed Opportunities to Learn

Recommendation 5.3: *As with K-12 schooling, community colleges and universities must insure that conditions are in place for all students to succeed. These conditions include, as a minimum:*

- *A clear statement of the academic standards that must be met for degree attainment, transfer from a community college to a four-year institution, or certificate of completion.*
- *Qualified faculty who combine subject matter knowledge, high expectations and knowledge of requirements and expectations for success for their students.*
- *A course of study that provides rigorous academic content and enables robust, viable career options.*
- *Suitable learning environments.*
- *Fair and authentic diagnostic assessment.*
- *Effective learning support for low-income, and immigrant students, English language learners and students with disabilities who need these supports.*

CSU believes it is important to express strong support for the conditions outlined in this recommendation and pledges to work with the committee to identify areas that need to be strengthened.

Recommendation 6.4: *Provide continuing information and counseling and planning, regarding college requirements and student financial aid to all teachers, students and families, and provide families college-going “accountability” reports that make clear their child’s progress toward college and careers.*

Providing access means assisting students all the way from elementary and secondary school until they graduate from college. Given the economic situation facing the state, CSU is making great progress with the limited resources provided for student outreach efforts. In 2000/01, the CSU spent \$50.5 million on outreach and student academic preparation programs for nearly 460,000 students. These programs generally target students who are economically disadvantaged, who are enrolled in schools with low college-going rates, and who need assistance in strengthening basic math and English skills.

Through the Collaborative Academic Preparation Initiative, 19 CSU campuses established partnerships with 172 of the California high schools that send us the most students needing remediation. Through these partnerships, the CSU helps students develop the math and English skills they need to enter directly into CSU courses without the need for remedial education. Additionally, nearly 200 CSU faculty members and 2,400 K-12 teachers participated in “faculty-to-faculty alliances” aimed at aligning CSU and high school standards in English and mathematics.

Other CSU outreach efforts include CSUMentor, our online college information service, which provides financial aid and admission information to students, families, and counselors; and our “steps to college” posters, which help students in grades 6 through 12 understand what it takes to prepare for college.

Recommendation 6.8: *Support the implementation of “dual admissions” programs that support the transfer of community college students to CSU and UC.*

A Dual Admission Steering Committee composed of CSU and CCC faculty, presidents, provosts, vice presidents of academic affairs, vice presidents of student affairs, and administrators representing campus enrollment management, admissions/records, articulation officers and transfer centers has worked in recent months on such a program. This committee was charged (1) to develop a student-centered program that would identify students who have chosen to begin

their postsecondary career at a CCC and who have the attainment of the baccalaureate degree as their goal; and (2) to identify the academic services to which these students will be entitled by each segment.

The program under development, the 4CSU Program, is designed to accord to community college students a sense of commitment and clarity toward the goal of the achievement of the baccalaureate that is accorded to freshmen enrolling at the CSU. The program will provide support services to all students enrolled at the CCC who have determined a goal of the completion of the baccalaureate degree at a CSU campus. These support services will be intended to enhance the academic advising efforts already in place so that students receive focused academic planning assistance that will expedite their successful transition to the CSU. This assistance will describe precisely which courses complete both lower division general education requirements and which course meet lower division major preparation needs as well. The student's progress will be monitored closely by both the CSU and CCC advisors in a partnership agreement to help ensure a successful outcome.

As a recipient of these services, program participants are expected to sign an agreement that indicates the campus, projected term of entrance at CSU, and major of the baccalaureate program to which they aspire. In turn, the CSU campus is obliged to describe precisely the requirements needed for successful transition from the community college to the CSU campus, at the term and in the major of choice, to reserve a space for that student in the term and major indicated. Students who successfully fulfill their agreement will therefore receive a guarantee of admission to the CSU campus, term and major agreed upon.

Although still under development, the services a student will receive in 4CSU may include the following:

- Admission Application Fee Waiver;
- Joint development of academic plan;
- Receipt of regular CSU communications;
- Library card;
- Invitation to orientation programs;
- Monitoring and advising each term to ensure academic progress;
- Financial Aid services;
- Timely offering of sections of general education and major preparation courses;
- 4CSU Program liaison;
- Transfer center services;
- Collaborative outreach with CSU and CCC;
- Expanded use of cross enrollment opportunities, including distance learning.

Services defined as optional services are:

- Honors programs connections where appropriate;
- "Transfer/Transition Center" on the CSU campus;
- Email and website accounts;
- Use of CSU health services where appropriate fees have been paid;
- Priority for on-campus housing or housing assistance at the time of transfer;
- Invitations to parent programs;
- Access to internships on the CSU campus;
- Discipline-based (departmental) advising and contact;
- Book allowances at time of transfer, depending on available resources and potential impact on financial aid awards;
- Summer advising;

- Tutorial services.

In addition, there shall be an annual evaluation of program effectiveness conducted jointly by the CSU and CCC Chancellors' Offices in cooperation with the participants. The results of that evaluation shall be used to inform future program policy and implementation strategies.

A Fair and Useful Assessment System

Recommendation 7: *Develop an integrated and coherent assessment system that monitors programs as well as student learning and guides the provision of additional learning support.*

Related Recommendations:

Recommendation 6.2: *To target learning support adequately, establish as standard practice the use of classroom-based diagnostic assessments that specifically link to interventions aimed at enabling students to meet the standards of college entrance and placement requirements.*

Recommendation 6.6: *Use authentic assessments that measure students' high school accomplishments, including student work samples and portfolio entries, in relevant academic subjects for college admission and placement.*

CSU agrees with the report's comment that it is critical to develop an integrated, coherent system of assessment that could serve multiple purposes, avoid unnecessary cost and duplication, and support the learning outcomes wanted from students.

The current revision of the 11th grade California Standards Test is a great opportunity for CSU to join with the Governor, Legislature, State Board of Education, California Department of Education, and the public schools to develop more clarity, coherence and simplicity to CSU's entry-level placement process. To that end, over the past year CSU has been working to align CSU placement standards within an augmented California Standards Test (CST) now under development.

If all interested parties can agree to have the 11th grade standards tests cover the correct material in English and mathematics, California could offer one test both to measure 11th grade achievement and to inform students early about their progress in meeting CSU placement expectations. High schools would benefit because they would be able to identify students' weaknesses in the 11th grade and then work on them in the 12th grade. This could be a part of a larger effort to make 12th grade more meaningful. The CSU would benefit because students would be better prepared upon entering as freshmen, and we would be able to spend more time on college-level, rather than remedial education. And most importantly, students would benefit because they could focus on one test with direct and meaningful consequences for the future.

CSU is still in the discussion stage with statewide education officials on this project, but if we can reach agreement on a number of issues, a pilot version could be ready sometime in late 2002.

Systemic Accountability and Review

Recommendation 8: *Establish a system of regularly reported indicators for accountability and improvement.*

Recommendation 8.8: *Bring postsecondary education into an integrated accountability system by requiring and supporting public postsecondary institutions to do all of the following:*

- *Develop a commonly used longitudinal data base.*
- *Develop and report a set of accountability indicators that monitor quality and equity in access and attainment across geographic regions and among students from different racial and gender groups (i.e., patterns of admissions, community college transfer rates, certificate and degree completion, time to degree, postgraduate status).*
- *Engage public postsecondary institutions (perhaps in conjunction with the Western Association of Schools and Colleges in a process of examining and making recommendations about whether and how the state's educational system could benefit from a series of indicators of postsecondary students' learning, and explore the technology and the cultural and political implications of such a system.*

As the report notes, "accountability" can mean different things to different people in different situations. The Working Group calls for the construction and implementation of a vision of systemic, shared accountability, a two-way, mutual, and blameless vision of accountability wherein improved learning results are tightly linked to improved conditions of learning. CSU strongly agrees with the Working Group that it is critical to develop an accountability mechanism that calls attention to student needs and directs resources to addressing those needs rather than initiating punitive measures.

In the late 1990s, the CSU developed and the Board of Trustees unanimously endorsed the Cornerstones Report, a systemwide planning framework articulating the values, priorities and expectations for a strong and successful future at CSU. Principle #9 of the Cornerstones Report states:

"The California State University will account for its performance in facilitating the development of its students, in serving the communities in which we reside, and in the continued contribution to the California economy and society, through regular assessment of student achievement and through periodic reports to the public regarding our broader performance."

As part of the Cornerstones Implementation Plan, the Board in November 1999 adopted the CSU Accountability Process, which consists of eleven fundamental institutional outcomes based in the mission of the CSU systems: quality of baccalaureate degree programs; access to CSU; articulation and transfer; graduation; teacher education; relations with K-12; remediation; facilities utilization; quality of post-baccalaureate programs; contributions to community and society; and institutional effectiveness.

In concurrence with the development of this process, negotiations with the Administration on the Partnership Agreement greatly expanded the emphasis on accountability. Under the Partnership Agreement, CSU now reports annually on 18 key performance indicators:

Improving Access and the Transition to High School and College

- Improving Access to the CSU
- Improving Student Preparation
- Improving Proficiency of First-Time Freshmen

Improving the Quality of Teacher Preparation and Demand

- Increasing Credentialed Teachers
- Improving the Quality of Teacher Education
- Increasing Teacher Credentialing Requirements Pass Rates
- Implementing Teaching Improvement Initiatives
- Expanding the Use of Technology by Teachers

Improving Transfer and Articulation

- Increasing CCC Transfer Enrollments
- Increasing Common Course Requirements
- Increasing CCC Course Transfer Rates
- Developing Transfer Agreements

Improving Institutional Productivity and Efficiency

- Reducing Structural Deficits
- Shifting to Year-Round Operations
- Reviewing Program Offerings
- Streamlining Graduation Unit Requirements
- Closing the Faculty Salary Gap

Improving the Academic Experience

- Increasing Community Service Learning

The CSU values being held accountable for its performance, and looks forward to working with the staff and members of the committee to develop any additional accountability indicators that are felt to be necessary.

Recommendation 9.1: *Augment membership of the Intersegmental Committee of the Academic Senates (ICAS) with faculty from K-12 schools. This new K-12/higher education intersegmental faculty body should be charged with reviewing and recommending changes, if needed, related to the alignment and coordination of curricula, assessment, admissions, and placement.*

It is unclear from this recommendation what the exact role of this body would be. It is important to recognize that the purview over these specific issues may vary by segment. CSU proposes that its role be clarified to reflect current and existing authority for such matters delegated to the CSU Board of Trustees. An intersegmental body designated to review these issues should include not only faculty, but also representatives of the California Education Round Table's Intersegmental Coordinating Committee and students.

An Immediate Intervention to Increase Access

Recommendation 10: *Increase Access to the University of California for students in the most educationally challenged schools.*

Given that it reflects the population of the state of California, the CSU system is one of the most diverse in the nation. The percentage of traditionally underrepresented students is almost 53 percent, more than twice the national average for four-year public colleges and universities. About one in five students is the first in his or her family to attend college, and about 40 percent come from houses where English is not the primary language spoken.

In order to build on our success in this area and further increase access, CSU believes this recommendation should be broadened to include support for CSU intervention programs designed to increase the college participation rates of students historically underserved in higher education. CSU outreach and student academic preparation programs, such as the aforementioned Collaborative Academic Preparation Initiative and CSU/High School Faculty-to-Faculty Alliances,

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provide significant support to California's diverse population of elementary, middle, and secondary students who are disadvantaged educationally and economically.

However, with current state support, CSU is able to work with only 172 public high schools that send the most students to CSU needing remediation in English or mathematics. Because of limited resources, CSU is unable to provide these services to public high schools with low college participation rates or to middle schools that serve as feeder schools to these high schools. In addition, the 4CSU Program, which has at its heart expanded academic advising provided by CSU and CCC faculty advisors, will require the commitment of significant state resources.

In conclusion, the CSU commends the working group for their efforts in identifying many key issues facing the state, and hopes that this initial response is useful in the committee's ongoing deliberations. We look forward to working with the members and staff of the committee, and providing additional information and feedback, as the process continues.

Sincerely yours,

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Assistant Vice Chancellor

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