**California Community Colleges:**

# A Progress Report on the Student Success Act of 2012

LAO

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

*Legislature Requires Community College Improvement Plan.* The California Community Colleges (CCC) serve more than 2 million students annually at 112 colleges operated by 72 districts throughout the state. For years, the Legislature has expressed concern about the low completion rates of CCC students. In an effort to promote better results, the Legislature passed legislation in 2010 requiring the Board of Governors (BOG)—the CCC's state-level governing body—to adopt and implement a comprehensive plan for improving student success. To meet this requirement, the BOG formed a "Student Success Task Force" that ultimately produced a report containing 22 recommendations—all of which were adopted by the board in early 2012.

*Legislature Passes Student Success Act of 2012 to Support Systemwide Changes.* To provide statutory authority for the CCC system to implement four key task force recommendations, the Legislature passed the Student Success Act of 2012—Chapter 624, Statutes of 2012 (SB 1456, Lowenthal). Chapter 624: (1) requires the BOG to establish policies around mandatory assessment, orientation, and education planning for incoming students; (2) permits the BOG to set a time or unit limit for students to declare a major or other specific educational goal; (3) authorizes the BOG to establish minimum academic standards for financially needy students who receive enrollment fee waivers; and (4) establishes the Student Success and Support Program (SSSP). Chapter 624 also includes intent language emphasizing that students not be "unfairly impacted" by the resulting policies adopted by the board.

*Legislation Has Reporting Requirement for Legislative Analyst's Office (LAO).* In addition, the legislation requires the LAO to provide a status report to the Legislature by July 1, 2014 (and July 1 of every even-numbered year thereafter) on CCC's implementation of Chapter 624 as well as the overall progress on implementation of the other task force recommendations. This report fulfills the 2014 reporting requirement.

*Notable Progress Being Made on Implementing Chapter 624. . .* Over the past two years, CCC and the state have engaged in a number of efforts to fulfill Chapter 624's provisions, as highlighted below.

- *Priority for Classes Granted to Students Completing Assessment, Orientation, and Education Plans.* Regulations adopted by the BOG stipulate that, beginning in fall 2014, first-time students receive enrollment (that is, registration) priority if they undergo assessment and orientation and develop an education plan. (First-time students who do not participate in these activities are not permitted to register for classes until open registration.) Colleges are using a number of strategies to accommodate increased student demand for these support services, such as hiring additional counseling staff and creating orientation sessions that students can access online.

- *Students Required to Declare an Educational Goal Early On.* Recent board regulations also require students to identify a specific educational goal either after completing 15 degree-applicable semester units or before the end of their third semester. Beginning in

fall 2015, districts may place a hold on registration for students who do not comply with this requirement.

- ***Academic Standards Adopted for Students Receiving Fee Waivers.*** In addition, board regulations stipulate that, beginning in fall 2016, students lose their fee waiver if they are placed on college probation for two consecutive terms. (As of this writing, the board is awaiting approval of this regulation by the Department of Finance [DOF], as is required by state law.)

- ***SSSP Augmented.*** Since Chapter 624 was enacted, the Legislature and Governor have provided substantial augmentations to SSSP—increasing annual funding from $49 million in 2012-13 to $269 million in 2014-15. In addition, the Chancellor's Office—the administrative arm of the board—has developed a new district allocation formula for SSSP funds based in large part on actual services delivered to students.

*. . .But Implementation Timeframe for New Enrollment Priority Policy Is Problematic for Many Colleges.* We generally find that the regulations adopted by the BOG are in alignment with Chapter 624's provisions. Based on a recent CCC survey of districts, we are concerned, however, that many colleges will not be able to implement the new enrollment priority policy in a manner that is consistent with legislative intent. Specifically, a potentially large number of first-time students could be denied—through no fault of their own—the opportunity to gain enrollment priority in fall 2014 due to insufficient access to counseling and other support services. In light of this information, we recommend the Legislature direct the Chancellor's Office to allow districts to delay implementation until they can fully comply with the new requirement. Given the substantial amount of new resources for SSSP in the 2014-15 budget, we believe all districts would be ready to implement the policy in time for the spring 2015 term.

*CCC System Making Great Strides on Several Other Task Force Recommendations. . .* In addition to implementing Chapter 624, the CCC system and state have made notable progress on initial implementation of several other task force recommendations. For example, community colleges have formed regional consortia with school districts to improve delivery of adult education instruction and adopted a new accountability "scorecard." In addition, the 2014-15 budget package creates a new Chancellor's Office-led technical assistance program designed to improve system and student performance.

*. . .With Still Much More to Address and Accomplish.* Though the system is well underway in implementing several aspects of the task force report, significant opportunities exist to address other important priorities identified by the task force. In particular, while some initial work has been done, much more progress in the areas of (1) course alignment, (2) basic skills instruction, and (3) professional development will be needed to complement and bolster CCC's other efforts.

# INTRODUCTION

*Legislature Focuses Significant Attention on Student Success at Community Colleges.* Community colleges serve more than 2 million students annually, accounting for about 70 percent of undergraduate students in California's public higher education system. For years, the Legislature has expressed concern about the low completion rates of CCC students. In an effort to address system and student performance, in 2010 the Legislature and Governor enacted legislation requiring the CCC system to develop a comprehensive improvement plan. In response, the BOG created a Student Success Task Force that ultimately made 22 recommendations, all of which were subsequently adopted by the board. Shortly thereafter, the Legislature passed Chapter 624, which focused on four of the task force recommendations—specifically ones relating to strengthening support services for entering students and creating stronger incentives for positive student behaviors.

*Legislation Requires LAO to Report on Progress Meeting Chapter 624's Objectives.* Chapter 624 also includes a reporting requirement for our office. By July 1, 2014 (and July 1 of every even-numbered year thereafter), the LAO is to:

- Provide an update to the Legislature on CCC's implementation to date of Chapter 624, including a summary of campus implementation efforts.

- Analyze the impact of Chapter 624 on student "participation, progress, and completion," disaggregated by various demographic groups.

- Assess the extent to which the provisions of Chapter 624 have been implemented consistent with legislative intent.

- Provide recommendations on whether and how implementation of Chapter 624 can be improved.

- Assess the overall progress on implementation of the task force's other recommendations.

*Report Fulfills Statutory Requirement.* This report fulfills the 2014 reporting requirement. Below, we provide background on the CCC system and Student Success Task Force, explain Chapter 624's requirements, and detail CCC's efforts to date in implementing the legislation. (As we discuss later, because community colleges have not yet fully implemented any of Chapter 624's provisions, this report does not include an analysis of Chapter 624's impact on students.) We conclude with an assessment of the extent to which the CCC system appears to be (1) complying with Chapter 624 and (2) addressing and implementing other task force recommendations.

# BACKGROUND

This section provides an overview of the CCC system and the Student Success Task Force's origins and recommendations.

*CCC System Components.* The CCC system is made up of 112 colleges operated by 72 locally governed districts throughout the state. The state provides these governing boards with significant autonomy in matters such as determining course offerings, hiring and compensating campus staff, and managing district property. The BOG

oversees the statewide system. Key functions of the board include setting minimum standards for districts (such as student graduation requirements), allocating funds, ensuring district compliance with statutory and regulatory policies, and appointing a chancellor to run day-to-day statewide operations at the Chancellor's Office (located in Sacramento). In 2013-14, the CCC system received about $7 billion in state operational support (which includes state General Fund, local property taxes, and student fee revenues).

***State Law Establishes "Open Access" Policy, Identifies Key CCC Missions.*** Under the state's *Master Plan for Higher Education* and state law, community colleges operate as open access institutions. That is, whereas only the top one-third of high school graduates are eligible for admission to the state's public universities, all persons 18 or older may attend a community college. (While CCC does not deny admission to students, students have no guarantee of access to a particular course.) Current law defines CCC's core mission as providing academic and technical (vocational) instruction at the lower-division (freshman and sophomore) level. Under this mission, community colleges prepare students for transfer to four-year institutions and grant associate degrees and certificates. Other important statutory missions include providing opportunities for workers to update their job skills and offering precollegiate basic skills (remedial) instruction in English and mathematics.

***Given Poor Student Outcomes, Legislature Requires CCC to Develop Improvement Plan.*** Throughout the mid- and late-2000s, a number of studies highlighted the relatively low success rates of CCC students. In 2007, for example, the Institute for Higher Education Leadership and Policy found that only about one-quarter of CCC students who first enrolled in 1999-00 seeking to transfer or graduate with an associate degree or

certificate had actually achieved such an outcome. Subsequent reports from the Chancellor's Office found that only 60 percent of students successfully complete their basic skills courses. In response to these and other concerns, the Legislature passed Chapter 409, Statutes of 2010 (SB 1143, Liu). The legislation required the BOG to adopt and implement a plan for improving student success. Chapter 409 also required the BOG to create a task force to help develop the improvement plan.

***Student Success Task Force Recommends Comprehensive Set of Changes to System.*** To meet Chapter 409's requirements, in January 2011 the board formed the Student Success Task Force. The task force was comprised of 21 members from inside and outside the CCC system. After meeting for nearly one year, the task force released *Advancing Student Success in California Community Colleges* in December 2011. The report acknowledged the need to improve student achievement and contained 22 recommendations designed to foster greater student success. A key focus of the report was strengthening support services for students. In particular, the report stressed the importance of getting students to identify their specific educational goals (such as a program major) as early as possible and develop a course-taking plan to reach those goals. To that end, the task force report highlighted the importance of CCC's Matriculation program, which funds assessment, orientation, and counseling (including education planning) services. Other prominent themes in the report are (1) improving the system's accountability reporting system, (2) ensuring that CCC's course offerings are aligned with students' education goals, (3) piloting more effective ways of teaching math and English to underprepared students and implementing proven basic skills delivery models systemwide, and (4) providing focused and sustained professional development to faculty

and staff. The task force report noted that the recommendations could be implemented through a variety of means, including statutory changes, state budget actions, new BOG regulations, and dissemination and adoption of existing best practices by individual colleges.

*The BOG Adopts Task Force Recommendations, Turns to Implementation Phase.* The board endorsed all 22 task force recommendations in January 2012 and presented its plan to the Legislature in February 2012. To assist in the implementation process, the Chancellor's Office formed a number of systemwide work groups to provide input and advice on implementation details. As part of this process, the CCC Chancellor's Office also began working with the Legislature on statutory language, which culminated in Chapter 624 (discussed below).

# KEY PROVISIONS OF CHAPTER 624

### Chapter 624 Addresses Four Student Success Task Force Recommendations

Chapter 624, which was signed by the Governor in September 2012, provides statutory authority for the CCC system to implement four recommendations from the task force report. Figure 1 (see next page) lists all 22 task force recommendations and identifies the four recommendations addressed by Chapter 624. Below we describe Chapter 624's four main elements.

*New Policies Relating to Assessment, Orientation, and Education Plans.* Chapter 624 requires the BOG to establish policies around mandatory assessment, orientation, and education planning for incoming students. These policies must establish an appeals process for students who fail to participate in these services as well as indicate whether certain students can be exempt from these requirements (such as students who already hold a postsecondary degree). Though Chapter 624 provides the BOG with considerable discretion in crafting specific approaches, the legislation requires the new board policies to be "phased in over a reasonable period of time" and take into account available resources "to ensure that students are not unfairly impacted." In addition, Chapter 624 states legislative intent that such "policies and processes be developed and implemented only as resources are provided and utilized by community college campuses . . . to ensure that students can successfully meet the [resulting] requirements."

*New Requirements for Declaring an Educational Goal.* In addition, Chapter 624 authorizes the board to set a time or unit limit for students to declare a major or other specific educational goal. As with the new Chapter 624 policies mentioned above, this policy must be "phased in as resources are available" so that students have an opportunity to comply with any resulting requirements.

*New Academic Standards for Students With Fee Waivers.* Chapter 624 also authorizes the BOG to adopt minimum academic standards for financially needy students who participate in the BOG fee waiver program. (Please see *The 2012-13 Budget: Analysis of the Governor's Higher Education Proposals* for background on BOG fee waivers.) Under the new policy, students cannot lose their fee waiver unless they fail to meet the established standards for at least two consecutive academic terms. Chapter 624 contains a number of additional requirements for this policy, including: (1) a "reasonable implementation period" that begins

**Figure 1**

## Student Success Task Force Recommendations

1.1. Collaborate with K-12 education agencies to develop common standards for college and career readiness.
2.1. Develop and implement a common assessment system for English and math.
2.2. **Require incoming students to participate in assessment and orientation and develop an education plan.**[a]
2.3. Develop and use systemwide technology (such as education planning tools) to better guide students.
2.4. Require students showing a lack of college readiness to participate in support activities.
2.5. **Require students to declare a program of study early in their academic career.**[a]
3.1. Adopt systemwide enrollment priorities.
3.2. **Require students receiving Board of Governors fee waiver to meet various requirements.**[a]
3.3. Provide students the opportunity to consider attending full time.
3.4. Require students to begin addressing their basic skills deficiencies in their first year.
4.1. Align course offerings with students' educational goals in areas of transfer, basic skills, and workforce training.
5.1. Support the development of alternatives to traditional basic skills curriculum and take successful models to scale.
5.2. Develop a comprehensive strategy for addressing adult education in California.
6.1. Create a continuum of professional development opportunities for faculty and staff.
6.2. Direct professional development resources toward improving basic skills instruction and support services.
7.1. Develop and support a strong community college systemwide office.
7.2. Set local and statewide student success goals.
7.3. Implement a student success scorecard.
7.4. Develop a longitudinal student record system.
8.1. Encourage categorical program streamlining and cooperation.
8.2. **Implement a Student Support initiative.**[a]
8.3. Encourage innovation and flexibility in the delivery of basic skills instruction.

[a] Addressed by Chapter 624, Statutes of 2012 (SB 1456, Lowenthal).

no sooner than one year after board adoption of the new standards, (2) adequate notification for students in danger of losing their waiver and information on available campus support services to help students maintain their eligibility, (3) a process whereby students can regain eligibility for a fee waiver, and (4) criteria for granting appeals to students who fail to meet academic and progress standards due to "extenuating circumstances." Also, in order to "ensure no disproportionate impact" to students based on their ethnicity or other characteristics, Chapter 624 includes intent language that colleges implement any new policy only when they have sufficient support and intervention services (such as tutoring) in place to assist fee-waiver recipients. Other than minimum academic standards, Chapter 624 explicitly prohibits the board from adding any

other conditions to the fee waiver program (such as capping the number of units a student can earn on a fee waiver).

*New Conditions for SSSP.* Chapter 624 also addresses the task force's recommendation to reframe and prioritize CCC's categorical program that funds assessment, orientation, and education planning. Specifically, Chapter 624: (1) renames the Matriculation program the SSSP, (2) calls for additional funding for SSSP to acquire counselors and other resources to help students, (3) conditions districts' receipt of SSSP funds on both adopting a common (systemwide) assessment test and providing accountability data to the Chancellor's Office for a new CCC scorecard, and (4) requires each community college to create an SSSP plan that contains information such as intervention strategies used to help students at risk of academic

failure. (Chapter 624 also requires colleges' SSSP plans to be coordinated with their student equity plans, which under current regulations identify enrollment and achievement gaps among certain demographic groups as well as strategies for closing the gaps.) In addition to the above provisions related to specific task force recommendations, Chapter 624 requires the board to develop a new methodology for allocating SSSP funds to districts—from the current allocation model based solely on student enrollment to a new model based in part on the number of students actually receiving support services (such as counseling).

# IMPLEMENTATION OF CHAPTER 624

This section describes actions to date in implementing Chapter 624's provisions by (1) the BOG and Chancellor's Office, (2) campuses, and (3) the Legislature and Governor through the state budget process.

## Implementation Efforts by BOG and Chancellor's Office

Since 2012, the BOG has adopted several new regulations related to implementation of Chapter 624, as described below.

*Assessment, Orientation, and Education Plans.* Since passage of Chapter 624, the BOG has adopted two regulations pertaining to assessment, orientation, and education planning for incoming students. First, in September 2012, the board adopted systemwide enrollment (registration) priorities for new students. (Please see *The 2011-12 Budget: Prioritizing Course Enrollment at the Community Colleges* for background on CCC enrollment policies.) Beginning in fall 2014, first-time CCC students are given enrollment priority if they (1) undergo assessment, (2) participate in orientation, and (3) develop an initial education plan (which typically includes students' broad educational objective, such as an associate degree or certificate). First-time students who do not participate in these services are not allowed to register for classes until open registration. The intent of this policy is to provide a strong incentive for incoming students to complete these core activities before they begin their CCC studies. In July 2013, the board adopted a second set of regulations that goes a step further. Specifically, beginning in fall 2015, districts are permitted to disallow first-time students from enrolling until they complete required assessment, orientation, and education planning activities. Both sets of regulations allow districts to exempt certain students from these requirements, such as students who already hold an associate degree or higher, and require districts to establish written procedures by which nonexempt students can file an appeal for being denied enrollment priority or enrollment. (In addition to these new regulations, the BOG adopted new enrollment priority policies pertaining to continuing students, as discussed in the box on the next page.)

*Declaration of an Educational Goal.* In July 2013, the board also passed regulations requiring students to complete a comprehensive education plan (which includes identifying a specific educational goal) either after completing 15 degree-applicable semester units or before the end of their third semester (whichever comes first). The regulations permit districts to establish a shorter period for completion of this requirement. Beginning in fall 2015, districts may place a hold on registration for students who do not comply with the requirement.

**Enrollment Priority Policy for Continuing Students**

*Task Force Recommends New Systemwide Enrollment Priority Policy for Continuing Students.* As we discuss in *The 2011-12 Budget: Prioritizing Course Enrollment at the Community Colleges*, historically community colleges have decided for themselves the order in which students are permitted to register for classes. These local policies tended to give earliest registration privileges to continuing students with the most units—regardless of their academic performance and whether they were making progress toward their educational goals. To address this issue, the Student Success Task Force called for changing systemwide enrollment priorities to encourage more successful student behaviors.

*Adoption and Implementation of New Enrollment Priority Policy for Continuing Students.* In response to the task force's recommendation, in September 2012 the Board of Governors adopted a new enrollment priority policy affecting continuing students. Under the new systemwide regulations, which go into effect in fall 2014, continuing students get enrollment priority if they have fewer than 100 degree-applicable semester units and are in good academic standing. Students who accumulate 100 or more degree-applicable semester units or are placed on college probation for two consecutive terms lose their enrollment priority. The regulations permit districts to modify these systemwide requirements under certain circumstances and require districts to establish procedures by which students can appeal the loss of priority enrollment status.

*Academic Standards for Fee Waivers.* In January 2014, the board adopted regulations that require students to meet minimum academic standards to retain a fee waiver. Specifically, beginning in fall 2016, students lose their fee waiver if they have been on college probation for two consecutive semesters. (As we discuss in *The 2013-14 Budget: Analysis of the Higher Education Budget*, community colleges are required to place students on probation who, after attempting at least 12 units, either have a grade point average below 2.0 or receive a "withdrawal," "incomplete," or "no pass" mark on 50 percent or more of total attempted units.) The regulations exclude foster youth and former foster youth from this requirement. To provide adequate notification to students, the regulations require districts to begin notifying students of the new policy following the spring 2015 term. As part of this and subsequent notifications, districts must inform students about campus programs available to them to remain in good academic standing (such as counseling or referral to other support services). Districts also must inform students that those who lose their fee waiver can regain eligibility when they are no longer on probation. The board regulations further require districts to establish policies and procedures for students who appeal the loss of their fee waiver due to extenuating circumstances (such as an illness or evidence they were unable to access needed campus support services). As of this writing, the board is awaiting approval of this regulation by the DOF (as is required by state law).

*SSSP Plans and New Funding Allocation Formula.* In July 2013, the board adopted a set of regulations relating to SSSP. Under these regulations, the Chancellor's Office is authorized to require colleges to provide "periodic updates" of their SSSP plans. (The Chancellor's Office has set an October 2014 deadline for colleges to submit their

initial SSSP plans.) In addition, the regulations charge the Chancellor's Office with developing the new methodology for allocating SSSP funds. In mid-2013, the Chancellor's Office finalized the new allocation formula, which distributes 40 percent of funds based on student enrollment and 60 percent based on the number and type of services (assessment, orientation, education planning, and other specified counseling activities) provided. To implement the new allocation formula and ensure matriculation services are collected and tracked consistently across districts, the Chancellor's Office created new data elements in its information system and has provided detailed instructions to districts on how such services are to be coded and reported. The new SSSP funding formula will go into effect beginning in 2015-16.

## Implementation Efforts by Colleges

As described below, community colleges have been engaged in a number of efforts to comply with Chapter 624 and associated regulatory and administrative requirements.

*Colleges Using Various Strategies to Expand Support Services to Students.* Though advised to do so by colleges, historically many incoming CCC students have not participated in matriculation services. The new regulatory policy that links enrollment priority for first-time students to completion of assessment, orientation, and an education plan, however, has increased students' demand for these support services. According to a May 2014 survey by the CCC Chief Student Services Administrators Association (hereafter referred to as the "Student Services Association"), colleges are using a number of strategies to expand their support services. Colleges generally have hired more counselors to meet with students and develop education plans. In addition to hiring more counseling staff, a number of colleges have acquired online education planning tools that allow

students to identify the courses they need to fulfill requirements for a particular major or program. A few colleges report having hired classified staff or student interns to train incoming students on how to use the education planning software. By getting students to start thinking earlier about their educational goals and familiarizing them with online planning tools, these staff can help expedite the process when students meet with an academic counselor. In addition, a large number of colleges have developed online orientations to supplement traditional face-to-face sessions. Colleges also report expanding outreach activities to local high schools, whereby graduating seniors have an opportunity to undergo assessment, orientation, and education planning on their high school campus.

*Heightened Attention to Reporting Data Properly.* For many years, colleges have been required by the Chancellor's Office to provide data on the number of support services provided to students. These data are publicly available on the Chancellor's Office's website. Despite this requirement, historically many colleges have not collected or provided accurate data (such as the number of counseling sessions provided). As noted earlier, Chapter 624 requires a new allocation formula that is based in part on the number and type of services actually delivered to students. The new formula goes into effect in 2015-16 and will be based on services provided by colleges in 2014-15. To increase the likelihood they receive the amount entitled to them, colleges used 2013-14 to check the accuracy of the data they collect and report to the Chancellor's Office's information system.

## State Budget Actions in Support of Chapter 624

As noted earlier, Chapter 624 identified additional funding for SSSP as a high state priority. Since that time, the Legislature and Governor have

augmented funding for SSSP as well as several other student support programs, as discussed below.

***2013-14 Budget Augments Funding for SSSP, Carves Out Funding for New Technology Projects.*** The *2013-14 Budget Act* provided a $50 million increase for SSSP—bringing annual funding for the program to $99 million (back up to about the 2008-09 peak level). Provisional language permitted the Chancellor's Office to use up to $14 million of this augmentation for new statewide technology projects, including an online common assessment system. The 2013-14 budget also provided a total of $38 million (22 percent) in funding augmentations for three other CCC student support programs: Extended Opportunity Programs and Services, Disabled Students Programs and Services (DSPS), and the California Work Opportunity and Responsibility to Kids program.

***2014-15 Budget Further Augments SSSP Funding.*** The *2014-15 Budget Act* provides a substantial amount of additional resources for SSSP. Specifically, the budget includes $170 million for SSSP, bringing total funding for the program to $269 million. Of the $170 million, $100 million is allocated to districts in support of all students, consistent with existing practice. The remaining $70 million is allocated to serve "high need" (such as low-income) CCC students. The Chancellor's Office is tasked with developing a methodology for allocating these monies to districts. The intent is for districts to use these additional funds to provide supplemental services—beyond the base services provided by regular SSSP dollars—to reduce any achievement gaps identified by colleges in their student equity plans. (The Chancellor's Office has required colleges to complete their equity plans by November 2014.) The budget also provides an additional $30 million (36 percent) for DSPS.

# LAO ASSESSMENT OF IMPLEMENTATION TO DATE

In this section, we assess (1) the extent to which the CCC system is meeting the intent of Chapter 624 as well as (2) the overall progress on implementation of the other Student Success Task Force recommendations. As noted in the "Introduction," Chapter 624 also includes a requirement for the LAO to analyze and assess how the statute's various provisions have affected CCC students' access and success, disaggregated by various demographic groups. Because the community colleges are still in the planning and initial implementation phases, such data are not yet available and thus are not included in this report.

## IMPLEMENTATION OF CHAPTER 624

***Regulations Generally Reflect Chapter 624's Provisions. . .*** Based on our review, we generally find that associated regulations adopted by the board are in alignment with Chapter 624's provisions. As discussed below, we are concerned, however, that CCC will not be able to implement the new enrollment priority policy in a manner that is consistent with legislative intent.

***. . .But Meeting Fall 2014 Requirement Identified as a Problem by Many Colleges.*** The various new policies adopted by the BOG go into effect at different times over the next few years. The first such implementation period is this fall, when first-time students must participate in assessment, orientation, and education planning services

as a condition of receiving priority enrollment. In May 2014, the Student Services Association surveyed districts on their readiness to meet this requirement. Of the approximately one-half of CCC's 72 districts that responded to the survey, 56 percent indicated they anticipated being able to provide such services to all first-time students in the fall. The remaining 44 percent of respondents indicated that they anticipated they would be able to provide most—but not all—first-time students with these services. A number of respondents cited insufficient staffing levels as a barrier to complying with this policy.

*Recommend Legislature Direct Chancellor's Office to Delay Implementation for Some Districts Until Spring 2015.* As noted earlier, Chapter 624 gives the BOG considerable discretion to adopt policies around assessment, orientation, and education plans. The statute does include intent language, though, that any students affected by such policies be able to meet such new requirements. Based on the May 2014 survey results, we are concerned that a potentially large number of first-time students could be denied—through no fault of their own—the opportunity to gain enrollment priority due to insufficient access to counseling and other support services. In light of this information, we recommend the Legislature direct the Chancellor's Office to allow districts to delay implementation until they can fully comply with the new requirements. Given the 2014-15 budget provides a substantial amount of new resources for SSSP, we believe that all districts would be ready to implement the new policy in time for the spring 2015 term.

## NOTABLE PROGRESS ON CERTAIN OTHER TASK FORCE RECOMMENDATIONS

As noted earlier, the Student Success Task Force report included a comprehensive set of recommendations for improving student outcomes and the overall system. Chapter 624 addressed four of those recommendations. In addition to working to implement those recommendations, the CCC system and state have made notable progress on initial implementation of several other task force recommendations, particularly as regards adult education and accountability reporting. In addition, the 2014-15 budget package creates a new CCC technical assistance program, which addresses another task force recommendation. (In recent years, the CCC system has adopted and implemented some other notable changes not part of the Student Success Task Force report, as described in the box on the next page.)

### Adult Education

*Task Force Calls for Rethinking Adult Education System.* Citing a "fractured system," the Student Success Task Force called for enhanced coordination by adult education providers. Though the task force did not recommend a specific delivery model, it called on the community colleges, school districts (through their adult schools), and community-based organizations to "develop a clear strategy to respond to the continuum of need in order to move students from educational basic skills to career and college readiness."

*CCCs Are Key Participants in Development of New Adult Education Program.* In an effort to create a more coordinated system, the 2013-14 budget package created the "Adult Education Consortium Program." The *2013-14 Budget Act* provided $25 million to regional consortia for the purpose of creating integrated program plans. (These planning grants are available for expenditure through 2014-15.) The 2013-14 budget package also includes intent language for the Legislature to appropriate a significant amount of new funding to these consortia in 2015-16 to "expand and improve" adult education in the state.

**Other Recent Efforts to Improve Efficiency and Outcomes**

In addition to implementing several specific Student Success Task Force recommendations, the California Community College (CCC) system has undertaken other efforts consistent with the task force's overall emphasis on improving statewide efficiencies and student outcomes.

*CCC Regulations on Retaking Classes.* In recent years, the Board of Governors (BOG) has enacted changes designed to reduce excess course-taking by students, thereby encouraging students to focus on completing their courses and potentially freeing up space for other students. In July 2011, the BOG approved a regulation that reduces the number of times community colleges are eligible to receive state support for students who (1) fail to pass a course or (2) enroll but then drop the course. In July 2012, the BOG adopted another regulation that prohibits community colleges from receiving state support for re-enrollments in certain "activity" courses (such as physical education).

*Major Transfer Initiative.* In 2010, the Legislature adopted Chapter 428, Statutes of 2010 (SB 1440, Padilla), to improve the efficiency of transfer from community colleges to California State University (CSU). The legislation requires community colleges to create two-year (60 unit) degrees (known as "associate degrees for transfer") that are fully transferable to CSU. A student who earns such a degree is automatically eligible to transfer to the CSU system. Once admitted, these transfer students need only complete two additional years (60 units) of coursework to earn a bachelor's degree. As of May 2014, community colleges have created a total of 1,300 associate degrees for transfer, an average of about 12 such degrees per college.

According to a recent report by the Chancellor's Office and California Department of Education, CCC's 72 districts and 281 school districts have formed a total of 70 consortia. (Four CCC districts combined into two consortia.) These consortia are currently developing joint plans for serving adult learners in their area.

**Scorecard and Performance Goals**

*Task Force Recommends Revised Accountability System.* Chapter 581, Statutes of 2004 (AB 1417, Pacheco), requires the Chancellor's Office to submit an annual report to the Legislature and Governor that includes system- and college-level performance data. The Chancellor's Office released the first report, known as Accountability Reporting for the Community Colleges (ARCC), in March 2007. While the Student Success Task Force found that the ARCC report and performance metrics were generally sound, it concluded that the system's accountability reporting system could be refined. Specifically, the task force recommended a scorecard that (1) uses a reader-friendly, web-based format; (2) tracks outcomes for a broader set of students; and (3) disaggregates outcomes by demographic groups, including race/ethnicity. The task force further recommended that the Chancellor's Office set annual statewide targets for the scorecard metrics, as well as assist community colleges with setting their own local targets.

*CCC System Adopts New Scorecard, Looks to Setting Performance Goals.* To address these recommendations, the CCC Chancellor's Office convened a technical advisory group, which was made up of members from inside and outside the system. The Chancellor's Office unveiled the new scorecard in April 2013. The scorecard, which is available on the Chancellor's Office's website,

has six performance metrics (disaggregated by age, gender, and race/ethnicity). In addition, the scorecard contains other system- and college-level data, such as student-to-counselor ratios. (As discussed in the nearby box, the Chancellor's Office has developed a companion information system that provides wage data of CCC graduates in an effort to guide students' education and career planning.) The 2014-15 budget package includes requirements for state and local goal-setting related to the scorecard. Specifically, trailer legislation requires the Chancellor's Office to adopt prior to 2015-16, and annually thereafter, systemwide targets for the scorecard metrics. In addition, as a condition of receiving SSSP funds, community colleges must adopt their own targets prior to 2015-16 (and annually thereafter). As part of a larger augmentation pertaining to technical assistance (discussed below), the budget also provides funding for a new position in the Chancellor's Office to help develop and monitor CCC progress toward and achievement of those targets.

### New Technical Assistance Program for Community Colleges

*Task Force Recommends More Active Role for Chancellor's Office in Assisting Colleges.* The task force report noted that, compared with the state's other two public higher education segments, the Chancellor's Office exercises the least amount of influence over campuses within its system. While this focus on local decision-making has its advantages, the task force concluded that a key downside is that the system lacks a "robust mechanism" for sharing best practices and assisting colleges in need of help. To enhance state-level support for colleges, the task force recommended a stronger Chancellor's Office that, among other duties, would provide technical assistance and disseminate best practices throughout the system.

*2014-15 Budget Creates New Program for Chancellor's Office.* The 2014-15 budget package addresses the task force's recommendation by creating a new system of support for the community colleges. Specifically, the budget provides $1.1 million for nine new positions (including the position mentioned above) at the Chancellor's Office. These positions are charged with various functions, including identifying and disseminating best practices in several areas of operations (including academic affairs and student support services) and overseeing local technical assistance teams. The budget provides an additional $2.5 million for these teams to provide technical assistance to CCCs. Under the new program, districts or colleges will be able to request assistance directly or the Chancellor's

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**New California Community College (CCC) Wage Database**

In June 2013, the Chancellor's Office introduced a new database called "Salary Surfer." By linking with Employment Development Department wage records, Salary Surfer allows the public to view the aggregated median earnings of CCC students who earn a certificate or associate degree and then enter the workforce. (Community college graduates who continue their studies by transferring to a four-year institution are not included in the database.) Earnings can be disaggregated by college and educational program. The data show the annual earnings of CCC graduates two years prior to earning an award, then two and five years after graduating. The purpose of the new database is to help students make informed decisions about the program of study they choose.

Office can initiate intervention. In either case, the intent is for Chancellor's Office staff to contract with teams of community college experts (such as leading faculty) that can help community colleges requiring additional support. Beginning in 2015-16, the Chancellor's Office must provide an annual report to the Legislature and DOF on prior-year use of these funds.

## NEXT STEPS: ADDRESSING ADDITIONAL TASK FORCE PRIORITIES

*Much Progress Has Been Made to Date. . .* Over the past few years, community colleges, with the support of the Legislature and Governor, have adopted a number of measures designed to increase student achievement. As this report has detailed, to date the CCC system has focused on key task force principles such as expanding support services, creating stronger incentives for successful student behaviors, increasing collaborations with other educational providers that serve adult learners, and establishing a new role for the Chancellor's Office of setting performance goals and overseeing local assistance efforts. Overall, we believe the CCC system is off to a solid start.

*. . .With Still Much More to Address and Accomplish.* While the system has made notable progress in addressing several aspects of the task force report, significant opportunities exist in addressing other important priorities identified by the task force. Below, we discuss three key areas from the task force report in which, while some initial work has been done, much more focused and sustained efforts will be required in the near future to fully address the task force's associated recommendations. Specifically, we highlight: (1) aligning course offerings with students' education goals, (2) improving basic skills instruction, and (3) supporting CCC faculty and staff with effective professional development

programs. We believe that much greater progress in these areas is necessary to complement and bolster the other efforts discussed in this report.

## Aligning Course Offerings With Students' Education Goals

*Task Force Calls for a Strategic Approach.* Community colleges are given wide discretion to choose which courses and programs to offer to students each year. The Student Success Task Force acknowledged, however, that these decisions are not always made in ways that optimize the availability of courses that students require to meet their academic and career goals. Instead, the task force report notes that colleges rely primarily on "historical course scheduling patterns" and continue to offer state-funded classes that are recreational in nature and may not support student education plans. To address these issues, the task force called for community colleges to "strategically focus the scheduling of classes" to advance student goals in the system's core missions of transfer education, basic skills, and workforce training. The task force noted that improving alignment of course offerings with student demand is particularly important given the task force's emphasis on consequences for students failing to meet certain requirements (such as declaring a program of study within a defined period of time). As part of this focus on reprioritizing courses, the task force recommended that the Chancellor's Office collaborate with CCC faculty and administrators to develop strategies and best practices for aligning course offerings with student education plans. The task force also recommended the Chancellor's Office consider changing CCC regulations to specify that courses not in support of student education plans should not be funded with state monies. Instead, such noncore classes should be moved to fully fee-based "community education" or other local programs.

*Limited Work Accomplished to Date, CCC Still Aims to Address Task Force Recommendations.* In response to the task force's recommendations, the Chancellor's Office formed an "Alignment of Course Offerings Committee" in 2012. The committee was made up of 25 CCC faculty, students, and administrators. The committee held a two-day meeting in November 2012, with the purpose of reviewing CCC best practices and strategies related to scheduling courses to meet student demand (including using data from student education plans to guide course offerings). The committee expressed the goal of eventually producing a report but did not meet after that initial meeting. Recently, the Chancellor's Office has experienced several vacancies in its Academic Affairs division (the division in charge of the committee). The Chancellor's Office has indicated, though, that it still hopes to issue a report sometime during the coming year.

## Basic Skills Instruction

*The Challenge of Educating Underprepared Students.* The task force acknowledged that one of the major problems facing the CCC system concerns providing effective basic skills instruction to students. The task force noted that the vast majority of students who enter the community colleges arrive unprepared for college-level work in reading, writing, or math. In addition, relatively few of these students reach proficiency during their time at CCC.

*Task Force Recommendations for Fostering Effective Practices.* Research on basic skills suggests that traditional teaching models—which tend to rely heavily on lecture-based formats and repetitive drills involving abstract concepts—are generally ineffective. For that reason, the task force report emphasized that community colleges "cannot simply place students into classes that use the same mode of instructional delivery that failed to work for them in high school." Rather, the task force called on community colleges to pilot innovative ways of teaching basic skills instruction and "take to scale" successful models already used by some colleges. These approaches include contextualized learning, whereby students are taught math or English in a way that references "real world" situations (such as students' life experiences or interests in a vocational field) and the use of learning communities, in which small groups of students are taught a common, coordinated set of courses for a semester. To foster innovation, the task force recommended the Chancellor's Office develop an alternative funding model that provides districts with a lump sum for designated cohorts of basic skills students based on what districts would have earned for the same students under the standard funding model (which is driven by the number of student instructional hours provided). The intent behind this proposed funding approach is to encourage colleges to devise new ways of teaching basic skills (such as compressing basic skills curricula into fewer semesters and supplementing in-classroom instruction with intensive tutoring or other support services). Under the task force's recommendation, districts' continued participation in this alternative funding arrangement would be conditioned on demonstrating improved student success rates. The task force also recommended that the Chancellor's Office target a portion of funds from the Student Success for Basic Skills Students categorical program (hereafter referred to as the "basic skills initiative") for faculty redesign of curriculum. (Any changes to current funding models would require statutory authority.)

*California Continues to Wrestle With Issue.* Like other states, California's community colleges continue to struggle with ways of fundamentally improving success rates of underprepared students. In an effort to help colleges identify best

practices, the Chancellor's Office published an online resource, "Basic Skills Completion: The Key to Student Success in California Community Colleges," in September 2013. The document describes various basic skills programs and projects within the CCC system that have demonstrated increased success rates. Though exemplary cases such as these exist, the Chancellor's Office acknowledges that the traditional instructional approach is still the prevalent model offered to CCC students. As regards the task force's recommendation on alternative funding models for basic skills, the Chancellor's Office has not yet developed or considered any proposals. Chancellor's Office officials have expressed their hope to begin studying the matter later this year. In the process of developing a 2014-15 budget, both houses of the Legislature approved a $3 million augmentation for the basic skills initiative along with provisional language for colleges to use the funds to "adopt and scale-up evidence-based models of remediation" that advance student progression through basic skills. The appropriation and provisional language, however, were omitted from the final budget.

## Professional Development

*Task Force Recommends Greater State-Level Leadership on Professional Development.* The task force report also stressed the importance of staff training in improving student outcomes. The task force noted that colleges use a variety of sources to fund faculty and staff training. These include earmarked funding from the basic skills initiative, outside grants, and district general operating funds for faculty "flex days" (paid time for instructors to engage in various professional development activities). (Statute establishes a "Community College Faculty and Staff Development Fund" for professional development purposes, though the budget has not provided funding for the

program since the early 2000s.) The task force acknowledged, however, that "professional development activities have tended to focus on short-term programs and one-time workshops rather than providing sustained engagement with ideas and processes that . . . have a greater chance of bringing about real change." To address these shortcomings, the task force recommended that community colleges create a focused and ongoing system of professional development for all faculty, staff, and administrators. To implement this overarching recommendation, the task force requested the Chancellor's Office, in cooperation with the Academic Senate and other relevant CCC organizations, identify best practices for professional development—particularly around basic skills education. The task force also called on the Chancellor's Office to recommend specific purposes for flex days to ensure that they are used effectively and to consider alternative ways that professional development could be delivered (such as by encouraging regional collaboration and using technology).

*Professional Development Committee Issues Report.* In response to the task force recommendations, the Chancellor's Office formed a 30-member "Professional Development Committee" in fall 2012. After meeting a number of times, in September 2013 the committee released a report containing seven recommendations. The committee reiterated the desirability of offering professional development opportunities to all CCC employees and recommended the establishment of a statewide "Community College Professional Development Program" that would be funded by a set-aside from the system's base budget.

*Committee Recommends Additional Study.* The committee report did not include specific guidelines and best practices for professional development. Instead, the committee recommended convening a "systemwide advisory

committee" to develop guidelines and criteria for implementing and evaluating professional development activities. The committee report also recommended the formation of a "virtual professional development resource center" at the Chancellor's Office that would be charged with identifying and disseminating best practices (including what constitutes "acceptable" and "not acceptable" professional development practices). In addition, the committee report envisions the virtual center as a "one-stop shopping environment" for colleges and their employees to access professional development resources. The committee presented its findings and recommendations to the BOG in September 2013. To date, however, neither the systemwide advisory committee nor the virtual center have been created. (Assembly Bill 2558 [Williams], which is sponsored by the Chancellor's Office, would address one of the professional development's recommendations by changing the name of the Community College Faculty and Staff Development Fund to the Community College Professional Development Program. The bill does not include any funding for the program.)

# CONCLUSION

At the direction and with the support of the Legislature, the CCC system has made a number of changes over the past few years designed to improve student achievement. Though these student support policies and practices are still in the early stages of development and implementation, overall we believe the system is on the right track. To ensure community colleges comply with legislative intent, however, we recommend the Legislature direct the Chancellor's Office to allow districts to delay implementation of the new enrollment priority policy for incoming students from fall 2014 to spring 2015. This would allow all campuses to be positioned to inform and support new students. In addition, while the system is well underway in implementing several key task force recommendations, additional work needs to be done to address other important priorities, particularly in the areas of course alignment, basic skills, and professional development.