

The Critics Speak Out:

Community College Governance Flawed, Needs Major Overhaul

California community colleges have a 90-year tradition of providing Californians with low-cost, high-quality education programs that meet the diverse needs of millions of students in thousands of California cities and neighborhoods.

However, since passage of Proposition 13 in 1979, there has been a debate on how best to govern such a huge and dynamic system. Some believe the state should make all decisions related to community colleges while others believe the state should simply send districts money and get out of the way.

Criticism of community college governance has often been based on the belief that the underlying reason for programmatic and fiscal “problems” in the California community colleges was their governance structure. This argument gained favor in the 1980s among those who pointed out—to some degree correctly—that since passage of Proposition 13, the roles and responsibilities of community college district boards of trustees and the state Board of Governors had blurred, leaving the question of accountability for programs and fiscal responsibility blurred as well.

Recently, criticism of community college governance and, in particular, the role played by the locally-elected boards in the systemwide governance structure, again has begun to surface. These criticisms include:

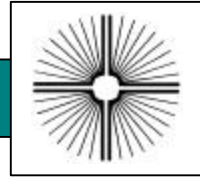
- Community colleges operate under an incompatible finance and governance structure. The state pays a majority of the bills while locally elected boards make a majority of the decisions.
- Passage of Proposition 13 shifted the responsibility for financing community college districts from local taxpayers to statewide taxpayers. Therefore, state government leaders should have the ultimate say in how districts operate.
- The community colleges’ historical vestiges with California’s public elementary and secondary schools continue to be evident in several ways and contribute to the perception that it is not a fully equal partner in California higher education.
- The governance structure jeopardizes the colleges’ effectiveness in meeting the needs of students. In many districts, employee unions exert

far too much influence on the boards, thus creating roadblocks for innovation and change.

- The state requirement allowing students to attend the college of their choice (“free flow”) has eliminated much of the rationale for the existence of community college district boundaries, and for trustees elected from within those boundaries.
- Far too many community college faculty are elected to boards of trustees, thus infusing local boards with a mindset that favors protecting employee privileges and rights over student and community needs.
- Local boards are responsible for the rapid turnover of community college presidents (their average term on the job is less than five years), which has led to a breakdown in leadership and effective management.

The California Community College Trustee board of the League takes its roles and responsibilities seriously. We have taken this opportunity to again study governance within the context of the history and mission of the California Community Colleges.

This report will address criticisms of community college governance and the recommendations for “fixing” the existing governance structure. The report will also address how the current governance structure actually works to help colleges meet their education mission and the exciting challenges ahead in the 21st Century.



A Governance Structure Serving Local Communities and State Needs

The Community College Mission: 1907-1997

California's 107 community colleges and 71 community college districts make up the largest higher education system in the world. They offer low-cost, high-quality collegiate education to all adults who can benefit.

From 1907, when the legislature first authorized high schools to offer "postgraduate courses of study, which shall approximate the studies prescribed in the first two years of university courses," the educational mission of the colleges has changed and evolved to meet the needs of a changing state. In 1917, the legislature enacted the "Junior College Act," which extended the course of study to include "the mechanical and industrial arts, household economy, agriculture, civic education and commerce."

In 1960, the *Master Plan for Higher Education in California* reaffirmed the existing community college mission as providing college courses leading to university transfer, vocational and technical education leading to employment, and general education.

In the years following publication of the *Master Plan*, the community colleges—like the state of California itself—have undergone significant changes. As the state has grown increasingly diverse, the programs and services the system provides students have expanded to include remedial and developmental education, English as a Second Language, basic skills and other basic education for adults, noncredit adult education, community services and economic development.

Today, community colleges offer a full range of day, evening and weekend courses to accommodate virtually any student's work schedule. Satellite campuses provide options in close proximity to a student's home or workplace. Ancillary services, such as childcare and tutorial programs, respond to family and skill development needs. And the list of educational options will undoubtedly continue to grow as advancements in technology make courses available via television, the Internet, and other "distance learning" media.

The community college mission is simple and profound: To provide all Californians with an opportunity for postsecondary education and training, enabling them to fully utilize their potential in the workplace and as citizens.

Community colleges serve more underserved populations than any other segment of higher education. Community colleges also are leaders in preparing the next generation of scientists and engineers. One in six bachelor's degree recipients started in a community college. And one in ten graduating PhDs in math and electrical engineering began in a community college.

Governance: A Brief History

In 1921, 14 years after high schools were first authorized to offer postsecondary courses, the legislature authorized the creation of local junior college districts. Organized under many of the laws applicable to K-12 districts, the community college districts were governed by locally-elected trustees accountable to both local voters and the applicable laws of the State of California. A unit of the State Department of Education monitored their operations.

The post-World War II boom in California brought millions of new residents to the state and a host of new challenges for its public higher education institutions. State legislators became concerned in the 1950s that the state meet its education challenges in a manner that was cost-effective and did not lead to duplication of effort.

Two significant actions took place in 1959 to address these concerns. First, the *Education Code* was rewritten (and greatly expanded). The legislature wrote into code laws that reflected governance practices that had been established when the first junior college opened in Fresno in 1910. Community colleges were to be governed by locally-elected boards, provide the first two years of postsecondary education and have the power to offer a curriculum that met the needs of the local community. Governing boards were also granted substantial control over their fiscal resources in that they were able to adjust property tax rates in order to provide revenues for their operations. The State Department of Education, which oversaw the colleges, was responsible only for approving courses of study, issuing teaching credentials and appropriating state aid based on a statutory formula.

The second important event in 1959 was the establishment by the University of California Board of Regents and the State Board of Education of a committee to draft a “rational plan for the development of California’s resources in higher education.”

That plan ended up being the *Master Plan for Higher Education in California*, which has had a profound influence on the development of postsecondary education in California over the past 38 years. With regard to governance, its authors concluded that, “The junior colleges have been, or ought to be, community based and locally controlled. No real reduction of local autonomy is proposed. The local board should remain the governing body, with the decided balance of control.” However, because community colleges were part of the public school system at the time, the *Master Plan* also concluded, “General goals and standards should be set forth in the *Education Code* so that the state has authority to enforce the legal provisions pertaining to them.” This authority would be exercised through the State Department of Education, which should have responsibility for setting standards of academic probation and dismissal and for setting standards associated with the formation and operation of junior colleges.

In 1967, seven years after publication of the *Master Plan*, two major studies found the California Department of Education “weak and unable to provide the leadership needed if this vital segment (community colleges) of the state’s higher education system is to assume the role

“The machinery for governing state-supported higher education in California has been about as diverse as could be conceived. The junior colleges have been and ought to be community based and locally controlled.”

**The Master Plan for
Higher Education
in California, 1960**

designed by the *Master Plan*.” In response, the legislature transferred statewide responsibility for the colleges from the State Department of Education to the newly created Board of Governors and Chancellor’s Office. The new board was granted the same responsibilities as the Department of Education.

The next major change in governance came as a result of voter action, when, in the statewide elections in 1978, California voters approved Proposition 13. The popular anti-tax initiative reduced local property taxes by 57 percent and, for all intents and purposes, ended the power of local community college districts to adjust property taxes in order to provide revenues. Almost overnight, the state became the major source of funding for the colleges as local property taxes were now distributed through a legislatively-approved formula.

Proposition 13 was also a catalyst for the legislature to play an even larger role in community college governance and operations. The legislature passed community college finance bills, sometimes to promote enrollment growth and sometimes to limit growth. The governor also exerted greater influence in this post-Prop. 13 world, proposing and approving state budgets that established both allocation models and funding levels.

Debate on the issue of state versus local control of the community college system suddenly began to intensify as state agencies and statewide commissions questioned the efficiency of a governance structure in which local control played such an important role in a state financed system.

In 1987, after several studies and a great deal of discussion among state leaders and representatives of the locally-elected boards, college CEOs, administrators, faculty and students, the legislature passed landmark legislation—AB 1725—providing new direction and focus for the community college system.

AB 1725 designated the California community colleges as a postsecondary system of higher education and reaffirmed the system’s comprehensive educational mission but with clear state priorities. The role of the academic senates in academic matters was strengthened. The Board of Governors and Chancellor’s Office were granted additional responsibilities in the on-going development of the system’s finance mechanism.

Under AB 1725, accountability was given new primacy. The system was to be held accountable for tracking and reporting student success. And, in an important step to clarify governing roles within the system, the new law specifically outlined the roles of the locally-elected boards and the state-appointed Board of Governors.

The Education Code contains approximately 3500 statutes—covering over 850 pages—applicable to the community colleges. The statutes were enacted over 130 years of California history, with most being added between 1915 and 1967. The statutes are highly particular in nature, regulating almost every facet of community college operations.

Governance Studies and Criticisms: A Historic Overview

The first major study of higher education governance in California came in a 1968 report commissioned by the Coordinating Council for Higher Education (now CPEC). The study looked at higher education governance in California and gave careful consideration to various alternative structures, including creating a single board for all public colleges and

universities. The authors, a group of nationally recognized educators, concluded, “The plan to place all 110 public institutions under a single board...with its possible weakening of the unique aspects and local relationships of the Junior Colleges and its probable overburdening of a central board and administration, does not, in the Panel’s opinion, deal effectively with many of the key problems in California at this time.”

A similar finding was reported when a special legislative committee reviewed the Master Plan in 1973. That committee recommended that the University of California, the California State University and certain large community college districts “undertake controlled experiments in decentralization of governance.”

However, the argument that the problems community colleges faced were caused by its decentralized governance structure gained favor in the 1980s among those who pointed out—to some degree correctly—that since passage of Proposition 13, the roles and responsibilities of local district boards and the Board of Governors had blurred.

The debate over community college governance intensified in 1985 when the Board of Governors claimed the “public interest” would be better served if the state board was given “authority” for statewide community college education policy. Locally-elected trustees grew immediately concerned that a board and agency based in Sacramento were interested in making education judgments impacting colleges throughout the state.

These concerns and others led to the establishment in 1986 of the Commission for the Review of the Master Plan for Higher Education and the Joint Legislative Committee on the Master Plan. The commission ultimately recommended that the system be administered as a “unified state-local system” that gave the Board of Governors “broad policy-making and management responsibilities in both academic and financial matters.”

The joint committee reaffirmed the community colleges’ historic mission: to see that “all Californians are offered a chance, challenged and taught with imagination and inspiration, offered assistance and counseling, and held to honest standards.” It made no recommendation to change the community college governance structure.

About that same time, a group of community college trustees and chief executive officers also conducted a study of governance and concluded the issue was not governance but accountability. They argued that if community colleges were viewed by those at both the state and local levels as being appropriately accountable for student success, staffing and expenditures, the debate on governance would subside.

On the issue of accountability, both CCCT and the Chief Executive Officers of the California Community Colleges (CEOCCC) urged the legislature to establish broad mission goals for the community college system and for the Board of Governors to provide the leadership to the colleges to achieve those goals. But the trustee and CEO groups also insisted that the local districts and boards of trustees maintain the flexibility to determine how best to meet those goals given the diversity of the colleges and their communities. The district leadership groups urged that they be held accountable for the results, not the exact process and procedures used to achieve those results.

"Local boards (for the UC and CSU systems) could free the energies of segmental boards from parochial matters and enable them to focus more intensively on issues of systemwide policy. Boards with enormous responsibilities too frequently bog down with matters better decided locally."

California Legislative Committee, 1973

As a result of these studies, CCCT issued a report that called on the legislature to support three major governance recommendations, each of which was subsequently addressed in AB 1725. Those recommendations were:

1. Clearly define governance roles and responsibilities
2. Revise decision-making process
3. Establish a statewide accountability system.

These and other studies all contributed directly and indirectly to passage in 1987 of the historic and comprehensive reform legislation AB 1725, which established community colleges as a postsecondary system of higher education in California and clarified the roles of the Board of Governors and locally-elected boards.

In 1988, the legislature conducted yet another study of the *Master Plan* and concluded, “The basic governing structures do not strike us as problematic. The real issues are about commitment and imagination within the structures.”

Three years later, in 1991, the Board of Governors appointed a special task force of business, civic and education leaders called the Commission on Innovation to conduct a study and make recommendations on how colleges could increase access during a period of reduced fiscal support. The commission recommended that community college governance be restructured in order to “enhance local autonomy, strengthen system-level capacity to provide overall direction, and reinforce accountability.” The Commission called for “deregulation” of governance to give the state board and local boards more authority.

In 1993, the Assembly Committee on Higher Education conducted the most recent review of the *Master Plan* and of the mission and governance of the community college system but took no action.

Community College Governance Today: Effective Bilateral Structure for a Diverse System

The 1985 study conducted by the California Community College Trustees (CCCT) indicated there were 22 different governmental or education officials, agencies, institutions and associations having influence and/or authority in the governance of community colleges. With passage of AB 1725 two years later, the Board of Governors and the locally-elected boards of trustees, while still impacted by decisions and actions of other agencies and organizations, were now called upon by the legislature and governor to be in charge of and accountable for community college governance.

AB 1725, in effect, gave the system the tools for effective leadership, management, and accountability. Governance responsibilities were clearly designated. Governance processes were defined, with specific roles given to the state board, locally-elected boards, CEOs, faculty, staff and students. The Chancellor’s Office began a systemwide consultation process. An accountability system was established to measure student

The governance structure of California’s community colleges fits the mission. There is a shared, bilateral structure that gives clearly defined responsibilities to both locally-elected boards of trustees and the state Board of Governors.

success and report findings to state leaders on a regular basis. These steps helped improve lines of communication and cooperation between the state and local boards and districts, and provided for sound, accountable approaches to planning, resource allocation, data collection and analysis, and evaluation of results.

Student interests are best served by a stable governance framework that encourages and rewards local boards for addressing critical community needs, but which also ensures that wasteful duplication of programs and services is avoided and that costs are kept low. Local and state boards working together under the current bilateral governance system can ensure that student access and success and campus accountability and efficiency are the ultimate goals of the California community college system.

Trustees: Elected by the Community, Answerable to the Local Communities

The role of locally-elected boards of trustees in overseeing the education mission has remained much the same since the first community college courses were offered nearly 90 years ago. Boards are responsible for ensuring the colleges provide programs and services that meet the education needs of the residents of the communities the colleges serve. To achieve that goal, locally-elected boards employ chief executive officers who are authorized to manage the district in the best interests of the community. Working with community leaders, the CEO, faculty, staff and students, the board determines the needs of the community, sets priorities for education programs, budgets, and facilities, and then regularly evaluates the college's progress toward meeting its goals.

All these responsibilities are undertaken following the laws and regulations prescribed by the legislature and under the leadership and direction of the Board of Governors of the California Community Colleges.

Each of the 71 community college districts in the state has a locally-elected board of trustees, made up generally of five or seven members. Voters elect trustees to four-year terms on either a district-wide basis or within trustee areas.

Having been elected by voters in the district, trustees have a direct and sustained interest in the educational process under their stewardship. Working together as a board, trustees are responsible for promoting quality education and monitoring the performance of the college staff toward that goal, building and maintaining the campus, assuring the fiscal health and stability of the district, and representing the college within the community.

Local residents hold governing boards responsible for ensuring that community needs are being met. The Board of Governors holds local district boards accountable for ensuring that state laws and priorities are followed. Among the responsibilities of locally-elected boards, as defined by state law, are:

- Hiring the chief executive officer and many senior administrators

Community colleges were carved into districts so local residents would have direct control over local education programs that tend to benefit the community in a very direct way. People who live in the community are best suited to respond to local needs...the entire concept of the community college—its very name, in fact—cry out for local control.

**Santa Barbara News-Press
January 14, 1998**

- Establishing policies for the educational program of the districts
- Establishing policies for the hiring of all faculty and support staff
- Approving changes in the educational program
- Controlling the district's operational and capital outlay budgets
- Managing district property
- Establishing employment practices, salaries and benefits

State Board: Appointed by the Governor, Answerable to the State

The Board of Governors has policy leadership and regulatory authority while keeping the responsibility for the operation and governance of the local districts in the hands of the locally-elected boards of trustees. Under AB 1725, the legislature, in effect, turned over to the state board and local boards more responsibility to manage and govern the colleges within the system.

Today, the responsibilities of the state-appointed Board of Governors include:

- Providing leadership and direction in the continuing development of the community colleges
- Helping maintain as much local authority and control as possible
- Establishing minimum standards for academic requirements and policies related to graduation, probation, and dismissal.
- Establishing criteria and standards for credit and noncredit courses
- Establishing minimum standards for employment of academic and administrative staff
- Consulting with representatives of locally-governed districts
- Administering state and federal support programs for community colleges

Two ways the Board of Governors addresses its role of providing leadership and direction are the development of its *Basic Agenda* and the Chancellor's Office consultation process. The Board's *Basic Agenda* provides the State and the locally-governed districts with a long-range vision and implementation plan for the system and its 107 local colleges.

The consultation process assists the Board of Governors (and the state Chancellor) in its leadership role by providing a systematic method of allowing representatives of the community college constituencies to discuss, debate and deliberate on major issues facing the system and the state board. The process promotes communication and cooperation throughout the system and is a centerpiece of this bilateral governance structure.

The California Community College Board of Governors is a 16-member board, appointed by the Governor. Two seats on the board are designated for locally-elected trustees, two for community college faculty, and one for a student.

"The Board of Governors will lead and coordinate the community college system through planning and policymaking and by providing technical assistance, positive incentives, and accountability in support of student success."

***New Basic Agenda
Board of Governors
California Community
Colleges***



Local Governance: Making a Positive Difference on Campus and in the Community

The community colleges are unique among higher education institutions in California, responding to local community needs both quickly and effectively while serving broader state interests. The fact that locally-elected boards—working with their chief executive officers, faculty, staff, and students—govern them is an important element in that success.

The college boards' dedication to serving their local communities is demonstrated in varied and impressive ways by what has been accomplished by the faculty and staff addressing board goals. The community college response to the rapid immigration of Southeast Asian refugees into California in the 1980s illustrates the point.

When tens of thousands of Vietnamese, Cambodian, Laotian and other Southeast Asian refugees began to settle in California, the community colleges immediately began offering English as a Second Language courses, basic "survival" courses in how to function in modern American society, and citizenship classes. Boards, working closely with CEOs, faculty, and staff, helped focus local attention on a local challenge. By helping these new residents acclimate themselves to their new homeland, the community colleges made it possible for their communities to avoid the racial conflicts and "cultural shock" that so often accompany a rapid immigration of refugees.

There are many other examples. Community colleges are key players in efforts to help people make the transition from welfare rolls to payrolls, a top priority for Governor Wilson, the California Legislature and the Board of Governors. Community colleges last year served more than 125,000 students who were on public assistance while preparing for work. The locally-governed community colleges have forged a strong working relationship with state and local county welfare officials to help students make the transition from welfare to work.

A study this year by the Chancellor's Office of the effectiveness of community college education programs found that, "There was congruence between student attendance goals and instructional services provided." In other words, the number of transfer courses, occupational training courses and basic skills classes offered by the districts matched the needs of students. That same report found the overall rate of successful course completion went up in Fall 1995 to 66.8%.

These types of success stories demonstrate the wisdom of the system's emphasis on meeting community and student needs. As William Pickens, the Executive Director of the California Citizens Commission on Higher

"Successful governance will be judged by our capacity to use our existing structure shrewdly, driven by the need for substantial success in the target areas we identify. Innovation will serve residents by crafting new ways of animating our institutions to new forms of excellence, not by designing new organizational charts. These boards, and the faculties with whom they share authority over the substantive direction of education, are finally answerable to the communities they serve. Their legitimacy and authority rests ultimately in how faithfully and well they serve those communities."

Joint Committee for Review of the Master Plan, 1988

Education, has said, “The highest priority for resources and governance/administrative activity for the community colleges should be activities which directly benefit students and meet their needs through effective education.”

Others have also praised the local focus community colleges bring to their education mission. Two of America’s most respected higher education consultants, teachers and writers, Frank Bowen and Lyman Glenny, conducted a study of the California community colleges in 1968 and concluded, “The history of community college education in California can be traced from its beginnings in transfer programs at high schools through the addition of vocational and technical education to its present comprehensive offerings. It is a proud history of growth and expansion to meet the needs of both the State and local communities.”

And just this year, the U.S. Department of Education issued a major report on community colleges that read, in part, “As an institution with a primarily local focus, the community college is a vital hub for the development of human resources to support local business and industry. The typical community college curriculum is driven by academic and occupational programs and support services that target local economic and workforce development needs.”

The undisputed success of local districts in meeting the educational needs of local students is tied in part to the contribution locally-elected boards of trustees make to their districts. They are elected by local voters to govern the colleges and are held responsible by local voters for ensuring college programs respond to community needs. And when they are functioning well, locally-elected governing boards are dedicated to their own efficiency, accountability and performance.

Locally-elected boards have been aggressive in encouraging diversity in the student body and in the college staff. Full-time faculty at California’s community colleges is 44% female and 21% non-White. Newly hired faculty were 55% female and 28% non-White.

The Changing Nature of Local Board Leadership

In order to maintain the effectiveness of locally-elected governing boards and to ensure the local governance component of the bilateral governance structure remains vital, local community college leaders continue to evaluate and assess the changing nature of local board leadership.

The rapid changes in society, demography, economy, and political climate have placed new and changing demands on governing bodies at all levels of public service. Those attracted to elected office have an increasingly wide variety of values, issues, and motivations. These changes have affected local community college governing boards, as well. In response, their roles and responsibilities are evolving to better meet the needs of today’s Californians while maintaining the important local community tie. Local governing boards must seek to improve their functioning to meet these changes, among which are:

Free flow between districts—Students cross district boundaries with ease. Particularly in urban areas of the state, boundaries seem to have disappeared—students and businesses will go to the college that meets their needs, not necessarily the one that is closest to them.

Eighty-eight percent of the community college students that transfer to the University of California were not initially eligible. This is strong evidence of the colleges’ success in preparing students for transfer.

At the same time that some boundaries have disappeared, others have been created. People still seek a sense of local community and identity, whether it be through stronger ethnic identification, neighborhood and community associations, or gated communities. In fact, some futurists say that our society is in danger of becoming more fragmented and that social and psychological boundaries will increase.

Local community college boards balance the two trends by being close to the changes in their regions and communities. The ability to attract students from neighboring districts requires that colleges increase the quality of their programs to be competitive. At the same time, boards have supported joining together in consortia to address regional issues and more effectively use resources.

Trustees, as community representatives, jointly explore the needs of their regions and how to best address those needs. They bring the local perspective and ensure it is represented in regional decisions. Local boards help create and reinforce a sense of local community and identity. They ensure that each district and college in it has the opportunity to build on unique strengths, thereby ensuring that there is a diversity of colleges to respond to the diversity that is California.

Loss of local taxing authority, reduced proportion of state support for higher education Some say the loss of taxing authority means local boards are no longer needed. However, they are needed more than ever to ensure that finite state dollars are adapted to the needs of the local community.

In addition, as community representatives, they ensure and help build partnerships with local businesses to increase local sources of funding support. They ensure and help build partnerships with other institutions and community organizations to collaborate in providing education services, thereby using funds more effectively. Because they are elected from the community, they provide all-important links to the community groups to foster partnerships.

Activist trustees—All levels of government have experienced a change in the increased variety of values and interests of those being elected to public office. Many observers have noted an increase in “activist” governing board members. Community college boards have been included in the criticisms that some activists are elected to represent narrow interests and some boards are controlled by unions, and therefore boards no longer fulfill their public trust.

A strong democracy requires many avenues for local voices and interests to be heard. Local boards provide a forum for local interests to influence the direction of their colleges. Silencing these voices by eliminating local boards would be detrimental to democracy.

Local boards have the potential to increase access to democracy for local citizens. In a state as complex and large as California, this access should not be lost. Efforts should be continued to help individual trustees be effective voices on their boards and to support the work of boards to integrate and capitalize on the multiple interests of their communities.

Planning and Accountability—The nature of state financing, with its year-to-year boom and bust cycles presents unique challenges to colleges.

In addition, there is increasing demand for accountability of the use of public funds.

Local boards contribute the local perspective to setting local policy direction to ensure that district plans respond to local, regional, and state needs. Governing boards add a needed layer of accountability that is immediate and local. Colleges must be accountable to locally elected representatives to ensure that public funds are used well.

Increasingly complex, California has one of the most diverse populations in the world. The 107 colleges in 71 districts serve an incredibly diverse set of needs. Significant differences exist between areas that are rural, suburban, and urban, between economies that are agricultural, industrial, technological, depressed, and/or growing, and between communities that are old, young, white, multicultural, rich, and poor. It is absolutely essential that a board of locally elected representatives exists to provide the all important bridge to the community and to local businesses to ensure that local colleges are responsive to local needs. It is impossible for state government to fulfill that role alone.

The changing role of governing boards—The changes outlined have required that boards play a stronger bridge and buffer role in their communities. Trustees must be more aware of and inclusive of diverse local needs. They must refine and interpret state mandates to adapt them to local differences. In addition, governing boards buffer the college from single interests in local communities to ensure that the state’s higher education mission and interests are met.

To accomplish this, today’s trustees are required to have high level skills to integrate interests and resolve differences. They must be able to reach out to and listen to the needs of many different voices in their communities, and resolve the conflicts between numerous groups and state and local demands.

Today’s trustees must be strong advocates for their colleges at the state and national levels and to local businesses, government, and their communities. They must be activists and advocates in their communities on behalf of vital, relevant community college education. They must support and foster their CEOs’ efforts to build strong community links. Today’s boards must be strategic and analytical in their thinking, value board education and cooperation, and be flexible and responsive to ongoing changes in their communities, in California, and in the world.

Trustee Development

To help boards continually upgrade the leadership and stewardship skills necessary to effectively govern a community college district, the Community College League of California provides local districts with information on trends, issues and challenges, offers consulting services and delivers trustee and CEO development training. The League conducts conference workshops and sessions on trustee and CEO leadership, policy development, budget and administrative matters and key legislative issues.

The League provides local boards with information on statewide issues and trends in such special reports as *Facing the Millennium: California Community Colleges into the 21st Century* and *Preparing to Serve the Student of the Future*. These reports outline the economic and educational challenges facing California and its community colleges and provide recommendations for addressing the most important issues, including funding, governance, accountability, and education mission.

The League publishes quarterly and annual professional and trustee journals and handbooks to help governing board members and CEOs effectively undertake their duties. And, working in coordination with the most respected leaders in the state, the League offers a variety of consulting services to local boards aimed at helping facilitate effective board stewardship.

There is recognition that the strengths of local governance require vigilance, evaluation, improvement, and nurturing. The leadership of the locally-elected governing boards will continue to address those needs while vigorously supporting local governance.



Locally-Elected Boards, Working with the State Board, Keep the "Community" in the Community Colleges

Is the California community college governance structure up to the challenge of responding to the economic, social, and technological challenges of the 21st Century?

The answer, of course, is “yes” and “no.”

While there have been a number of attempts to “reform” community college governance, the original allocation of jurisdictional responsibilities has remained basically intact. Under California’s governance system, locally-elected boards of trustees have the authority to direct their colleges to provide the classes and services necessary to meet the needs of the local community within the parameters established by the state. Because they are elected by and come from the community, district governing boards are constantly striving to be responsive to the immediate and long-term needs of the community.

The success California community colleges have had in meeting the postsecondary needs of their communities and the state are well documented both in the numbers of students who contribute to the economic and social health of the state and in the polling data that shows year after year the strong public support for community colleges.

Arguments that community college students would benefit from a centralized governance system like the University of California’s have been made repeatedly but never supported with research or evidence beyond anecdotal stories. Centralized, statewide boards like the UC Board of Regents or the California State University Board of Trustees are appropriate for their missions, which serve state, national and even international education and research needs.

The University of California and the California State University governance structures were designed to maximize the influence of their education professionals and minimize external intrusions. It achieves those objectives. While state boards might be most appropriate for certain institutions, there are still problems inherent in a centralized system.

In a *Los Angeles Times* op-ed piece, UCLA professor J. Eugene Grigsby reports that a study by the American Governing Board of Universities and Colleges indicates a vast majority of statewide university boards of trustees are appointed by state governors. “Unfortunately,” writes Grigsby, “this appointment process is done more on political grounds than on sound educational criteria. Often the most relevant qualifications for

I believe America ought to work the way the community colleges in America work. I believe they are the ultimate democratic institution—small "d"—open to everybody, where everybody has a chance; results-oriented; flexible, not bureaucratic; working in partnership with the private sector; guaranteeing opportunity for everybody who is responsible enough to seek it.

**President Bill Clinton
September 6, 1996**

appointment are tied to how much the candidate contributed (to the governor's race), their race, gender or geographic base."

Statewide boards for UC and CSU are appropriate for those systems because the UC and CSU campuses do not put a high priority (and in UC's case, any priority at all) in responding to the education needs of the local community.

For the community colleges, a centralized system, or even a regional system of boards, would reduce the capability of community colleges to respond to the needs of their communities, for 90 years a top priority of the state's mission for community colleges.

Locally-elected boards believe strongly in the bilateral system of shared responsibility of the state Board of Governors and the locally-governed districts. Locally-elected boards support the role of the Board of Governors in providing leadership and direction in the continuing development of the California community colleges. Local boards support the goals of the Board of Governors to secure adequate, stable funding, to advocate for low student fees and to promote excellence in programs and services. Local boards believe districts should work closely with the state board to ensure the mission of the California community colleges responds to the needs and priorities of the state and its local communities and that the system be accountable to taxpayers.

But the colleges' link to their local communities through democratically elected boards of trustees must remain a focal point of community college governance.

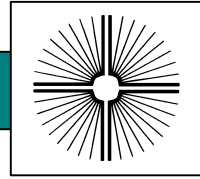
- Locally-elected boards are held politically accountable by local voters for the achievements or lack of achievements of their districts.
- Locally-governed districts collaborate with neighboring districts on projects and programs.
- Locally-elected boards give campus constituents a sounding board for their concerns and ideas.
- Locally-elected boards bring local values to their colleges regarding programs, services, staffing.
- And locally-elected boards are better able to articulate the needs of the local community at the state and federal level.

Locally-elected trustees live and work in the community their college serves, attend local churches, civic club meetings and community events, walk the community and walk the campus, meet with community members and meet with faculty and staff, visit classrooms and tour campus facilities.

Voters in each community college district decided years ago to establish a local community college based upon the perceived local need for higher education in that community. They also passed bond measures, taxing themselves to pay for the colleges they wanted to build for themselves, their children, and fellow community members. And finally, they elected fellow citizens to watch over their investment and to assure that local educational needs are met.

The community college system includes an important role for the legislature and governor, leadership and accountability responsibilities for the Board of Governors and Chancellor's Office, and a governing and leadership role for local boards and chief executive officers.

Part Four



The State Board, Working with Local Boards, Keep "California" in the Community Colleges

Locally-elected boards and the state Board of Governors are partners in California's unique bilateral community college governance system. As designated by state law, the state board provides leadership and support and the local boards work to ensure that community college districts respond to local education needs and to the major challenges identified by the state.

Working with their chief executive officers, local boards are constantly striving to maximize their resources in order to meet these dual responsibilities. Local boards support the role of the state board and recognize their own special role in this bilateral governance system.

The leadership provided to the districts by the Board of Governors includes publication of its *New Basic Agenda*, a summary of the major challenges it sees for California and its community colleges. The *New Basic Agenda* provides the state and locally-governed districts with a long-range vision and implementation plan.

In its *New Basic Agenda*, the Board of Governors identifies four challenges facing the community colleges:

1. Delivering high quality education in a manner that achieves student success
2. Meeting the expanding educational needs of the residents of California
3. Adapting to the changing educational needs of the residents so as to be relevant and timely
4. Enhancing the human and physical infrastructure

Meeting these challenges, the *New Basic Agenda* states, "requires the cooperation of many stakeholders...through the diligent efforts of a comprehensive partnership of all those involved in community college education." Locally elected boards as the governing bodies of the 71 community college districts, are actively involved with their local chief executive officers, faculty, staff, and students in addressing these important statewide issues.

The Board of Governors' New Basic Agenda provides the State and the locally-governed districts with a long-range vision and implementation plan, providing broad direction at both the systemwide level and for the 107 local community colleges.

#1: Delivering Education for Student Success

Sixty-five percent of all students enrolled in higher education in California attend a community college. More minority students - Asian-Americans, African-Americans, and Hispanics - attend community colleges than the total number of minorities attending all other California higher education institutions combined.

For every ten students enrolled in community colleges, five seek preparation for transfer, three seek occupational training, and two want to improve basic skills or other educational objectives.

As recently as the mid-1970s, most community college students were recent high school graduates who attended as full-time students. Since that time, however, the profile of the community college student body has changed dramatically. With the average age now at 29, today's community college students need an educational program that enables them to balance schoolwork with the time demands of jobs and families.

For these students, the ability and willingness of their local community college to respond to student needs - to be flexible and innovative - is essential. For example, the future will bring increased student diversity and greater differences in academic skills between the "haves" and the "have nots." Students will continue to seek education opportunities on the job, on weekends, in remote locations and even at home.

The colleges will need to be prepared to explore alternative ways of offering courses, possibly using new technologies, in new ways that respond to students' diverse education and skill proficiencies and learning styles.

This effort will require the districts receive the funding and the regulatory flexibility necessary to meet new and diverse education challenges.

#2: Meeting Expanding Education Needs

Few believe community colleges, under current funding constraints, can continue to achieve their mission of providing widespread access to quality higher education.

Enrollment was 1.3 million in 1996; roughly the same number as in 1976, despite an increase of eight million in California's adult population. In large measure, this is due to funding limitations (that forced cutbacks in faculty and class sections), the increased level of student fees, and to narrowing the range of courses eligible for State support. This parallel decline in enrollment rates and funding must be reversed if these colleges are to better serve California.

Experts report that California higher education is facing a projected enrollment surge—called "Tidal Wave II"—that is expected to bring an additional 455,000 Californians to higher education campuses in the next ten years. The system anticipates this wave of students will be a diverse student body, including recent high school graduates prepared for university-level academic instruction, middle-age students seeking job skills, and recent immigrants seeking language and literacy training.

In 1995-96, the real revenue collections for the state increased by \$1.6 billion (3.7%) over the 1990-91 level. The community colleges, however, for the same five year period, experienced four consecutive years of real revenue decline followed by one year of real revenue increase, the net resulting in a \$148 million (4.2%) loss of purchase power by 1995-96.

**Chancellor's Office
1997**

The participation rate, defined as community college enrollment per 1000 California adults over 18 years of age, declined to a new recent year low of 55.7 in Fall, 1995. Total headcount enrollment declined by almost 22,400 (1.6%) over the prior Fall 1994 term.

Enrollment declines in the 1990s were largely attributable to two external changes: revenue shortfalls resulting in inadequate funding to maintain class offerings, and major student fee increases (especially for students holding a baccalaureate degree).

The decision in the early 1990s by the legislature to charge most adults who hold baccalaureate degrees a high, differential fee for credit classes had a largely unintended impact on the students and the colleges: It reduced enrollment by approximately 61,000. A similar enrollment downturn came as a result of the legislature and governor increasing fees in 1993 from \$6 to \$10 per unit to offset budget difficulties.

To help meet this challenge, locally elected boards believe the State of California has a responsibility to provide community college districts with reasonable funding and to keep student fees as low as possible.

#3: Making Education Relevant, Timely

California is the most diverse state in the United States. Hispanics and Asian-Americans are the largest and fastest growing segments of the population.

Our economic future lies in preparing our diverse workforce to be competitive in a global economy. Colleges will be challenged to provide instruction that meets the diverse proficiencies of learning styles of this diverse student body. Locally governed colleges will need the staffing flexibility to provide curriculum that will meet these diverse needs at times and locations that are convenient to the working student.

Community colleges can also take leadership in helping ensure that students are prepared as well to understand and appreciate the dynamic society found here in California. By the turn of the century - just three years from today - the state will no longer have a single ethnic or racial majority. Capitalizing on our differences and shaping our multicultural reality into a harmonious and vital pluralistic society will be a continuing endeavor.

A workable society in California requires that all citizens obtain equal access to economic and social opportunities. The challenge of diversity can only be met if all residents have access to high-quality, low-cost higher education.

#4: Human, Physical Infrastructure

Proposition 13 had a dramatic impact on the ability of local districts to control their capital outlay budgets, particularly as they apply to campus construction and infrastructure. The districts are now dependent on statewide bond measures or Legislatively approved funding for capital

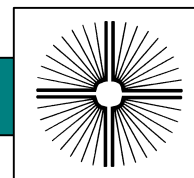
"The State's Education Code imposes a mass of provisions with expensive activities, complicated restrictions, or inappropriate controls on what are (or should be) local institutions. An examination of these provisions reveals that few have direct benefit to students—many were the product of special interest lobbying or were restrictions adopted before the State's collective bargaining law."

***William Pickens,
Executive Director
California Citizens
Commission on Higher
Education***

improvements. Unfortunately, the facility needs of colleges are not keeping pace with student demands.

As a result, the districts are also more dependent than ever on the effectiveness of the Chancellor's Office to provide support and leadership for the local districts in the area of physical infrastructure. Maximizing local flexibility in allowing districts to offer innovative new education programs such as distance learning will minimize the need for additional facilities.

The colleges' ability to respond to the educational challenges identified in the *New Basic Agenda* also requires that local districts have the staffing flexibility necessary to respond quickly and efficiently to rapidly changing student needs. Steps must be taken to eliminate or, at least, reduce the expensive, complex, redundant and time-consuming laws and regulations that prevent the locally-governed colleges from maximizing their human resources and providing the best service possible to students.



Conclusions and Recommendations

The California Community College Trustees board of the Community College League of California is the representative body of California's 517 locally-elected governing board members. In that role, it continues to seek and implement ways to improve the governance of the community colleges so as to assure the most effective, efficient, high quality, and accessible learning institutions.

In the development of this report the CCCT board looked at the history, traditions and accomplishments of the colleges, analyzed the numerous public reports and studies of community college governance and their recommendations, and considered the changing education needs of California's citizens. Based on that study, the CCCT board of directors has come to the following conclusions and recommendations. These will be discussed widely with chief executive officers; faculty, staff and student leaders; the Board of Governors; and state and local leaders in a continuing effort to improve the functioning of the California community colleges.

1. **The bilateral governance structure of California's community colleges, with clear legislatively defined responsibilities for locally-elected boards of trustees and the state Board of Governors, serves the needs of students and taxpayers.**
 - a. The statutory delineation of governance responsibilities should not be changed.
 - b. The legislature and governor should take no action that detracts from that delineation which is based on the principles of local control and decision-making with statewide leadership, coordination and assistance.
 - c. The legislature and governor should not approve legislation that deals with narrow or district-specific issues to the detriment of the entire system.
 - d. Periodically, under the leadership of the state board and local boards, an evaluation should be conducted to assess if the governance changes mandated in AB 1725 continue to meet legislative intent.
 - e. The legislature and governor should support steps now underway to reduce the amount of district resources required to respond to state laws and regulations and to revise the Education Code.

2. **The Board of Governors’ ability to provide leadership and assistance to the colleges in support of the mission of the community colleges should be strengthened.**
 - a. In support of the Board of Governors, the Chancellor’s Office should be granted authority to function independently of state agency status.
 - b. The role and functioning of the Chancellor’s Office should emphasize leadership, coordination, assistance, and compliance with system-established “minimum conditions.”
 - c. Minimum conditions now in place should be reviewed and revised to assure they are appropriate to the mission; essential for student learning, success and service; and necessary for institutional effectiveness.
 - d. State regulations should be limited to establishing “minimum conditions” and clarifying state law. Before adopting regulations the Board of Governors should identify the objectives sought and the state interests to be met, and be certain maximum local flexibility has been provided.
 - e. A significant number of employees in the Chancellor’s Office should have local community college professional experience.
 - f. The governor should maintain as a high priority filling vacancies on the Board of Governors in a timely way to assure full membership at all times.
3. **Local district boards should be granted sufficient authority to meet local education needs as well as serve state interests.**
 - a. Local board authority to seek voter approval for bonds should continue but the level required for voter action should be a simple majority.
 - b. Local boards should be granted authority to establish special education priority service student fees with the approval of a simple majority of the students.
4. **The college districts, working with the Board of Governors, must continue to expand efforts to provide the local community, state board, legislature, and governor with information and data that demonstrate achievement at their institutions in a variety of key performance categories.**
 - a. In addition to accreditation reviews, districts should periodically be expected to show they meet state minimum standards through scheduled Chancellor’s Office site visits and accountability reporting.
 - b. Accountability data should be analyzed and evaluated by the districts and the Chancellor’s Office to trigger appropriate local action and Chancellor’s Office assistance to improve achievement where necessary.
 - c. District governing boards should put special emphasis on being accountable to their local communities, keeping them informed of issues and encouraging broad-based community input in the decision-making process.

5. **The state Board of Governors and the locally-elected governing boards should function as partners in their lay policy leadership.**
 - a. In order to promote effective state and local leadership, the state and locally-elected board members should be expected to participate in regular trustee training and board development programs that provide local, state and national perspectives on boardsmanship, law, educational trends, human resources, facilities issues, and student needs and to guide the work of the Chancellor's Consultation Council.
 - b. Criteria should be developed for local and state board membership. Such criteria would be shared with local citizens via newspapers and with the governor's appointment staff.
 - c. The Board of Governors and leadership of the locally-elected governing boards should strengthen their working relationship, establishing formal consultation meetings to address jointly major policy initiatives.

6. **In light of the always changing challenges facing community college districts, boards should work to improve their functioning as policy boards.**
 - a. Local boards have a responsibility to set local policy direction that is visionary and future-oriented, represents multiple external community interests, and responds to state interests and direction.
 - b. The unique and complimentary roles of CEOs and locally-elected boards should be recognized in order that all parties can capitalize on the strengths and contributions of each partner.
 - c. Local board decision-making processes should effectively incorporate the expertise, experience and views of faculty, staff and students
 - d. CEO and trustee leadership training and board development programs should be widely accessible and address principles of strong board/CEO relations and effective boardsmanship. The Community College League of California should act to respond creatively and positively to meet these challenges.