

**Little Hoover Commission Testimony  
California Community College System  
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**Competing Missions:**

Long Beach City College works collaboratively through its planning process to set priorities for the college that are based on its Educational Master Plan, Board of Trustee goals and the Superintendent President's 18-month agenda. The college has prioritized basic skills education, certificate and degree completion, transfer readiness and economic development. Thus, each function of the college must align with and support the prioritized mission of LBCC. However, because the college evolved over time to support the four missions of the system, and in doing so established personnel and process infrastructure along with fostering community expectations, it has been challenging to shift resources from non-core functions to the core functions that the college prioritized. In addition, the lack of clear public policy direction from the executive and legislative branches of the state and the lack of a unified community college system direction have led to a struggle in shifting the mission of the colleges in response to the economic needs of the regions and state. In times of limited resources and economic pressures, having clear and executable policy directives is essential for the community college system to produce the outcomes necessary to respond to the needs of the state.

**Shared Governance Structure:**

The governance structure of the California community college system has not evolved to meet the needs of the system. The governance system is a loose confederacy of 72 locally governed districts with a Chancellor's Office that primarily serves an advocacy and regulatory compliance function. Although this structure may have provided benefits early on to our colleges and communities as the state system of higher education evolved, the structure now significantly hinders the development and implementation of system wide policy, the efficient distribution and employment of resources, the response to regional and mega regional changes to the economy, the sharing of data systems and the smooth matriculation of students throughout the system. An example of this point follows:

1. Over the past 15 years, community college districts have responded to a need to make more efficient and effective college business processes and data reporting systems by implementing Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) systems. Systems such as PeopleSoft, Banner and Datatel were purchased and implemented throughout the system. Given the heavy reliance on technical consulting services, the addition of college IT personnel and significant challenges to college organization structures, college districts invested millions of dollars to implement. These systems were implemented with no system wide integration or economy of scale. Thus, millions of dollars that could have supported classroom instruction were lost because of a lack of system wide perspective. In contrast, the CSU system chose one vendor, People Soft, to implement system wide.

2. With regards to implementing student outcomes, the governance structure once again limits the system's ability to implement policy changes that would support efforts at local colleges in a timely way. For example, much work has been done throughout the U.S. in improving developmental education and increasing the completion rates of underrepresented students. Although various colleges were engaged in work at various levels to improve student outcomes, the system wide direction and advocacy lagged. Robust and timely system wide direction and support in conjunction with clear policy direction from the state would be beneficial at LBCC so that the disparate constituencies that make up the college can coalesce around a system wide direction and use local governance to appropriately respond.
3. The tiered governance structure that oversees and administers community colleges has limited advantages. Local control gives districts the ability to respond to local needs, while a system office can take on the advocacy and regulatory compliance role. Unfortunately, neither is effective at responding to the needs of the community or the needs of the state. Nor is the structure effective at advocating system wide needs. There exists 72 locally governed districts which the majority are situated in four mega regions, Northern California, Central Valley, Los Angeles/Orange County and San Diego. The state's economy and education infrastructure operate and are influenced primarily by trends within these mega regions. However, colleges do not typically coordinate programs, services, processes or advocacy within these regions, and in doing so fail to maximize resources for the benefits of these regions. In addition, the limited authority of the Chancellor's Office limits its ability to promote policy and advocacy that responds to statewide needs. As district CEOs are employed by their local boards, there is little incentive to support statewide efforts if they impact the local district. I would recommend a re-engineering of the governance structure to take into account regional need for efficiency, a more robust and independent Chancellor's Office and a consideration of the elimination of locally elected governing boards.
4. California community colleges are organized in multi-college districts and single college districts. Each has relative benefits based on the regional needs of their service areas. Multi-college districts provide an economy of scale in applying human and financial resources. For colleges that are in close proximity, they consolidate district functions which allow the colleges to focus on academic matters. However, when multi-college districts are created to maximize revenue or increase administration, the benefits are cancelled out. Single college districts maintain organizational structures that are more efficient and can implement policy changes in more timely ways than multi-college districts. Single college districts have one layer of administration that subsumes the district level responsibilities along with the college/academic responsibilities. In addition, the governing board works directly with the district CEO which leads to expedited implementation of decisions. Single college districts are beneficial so long as it serves a contiguous community and college functions are not impeded by distance or geography.

**Complex Financial System:**

State finance policy rewards colleges on the basis of enrollment. This system encourages colleges to maintain or increase enrollment. The system has led to a significant expansion of community college access. The downside to this system is that it has encouraged access (i.e. enrollment) at the expense of success (i.e. certificate and degree completion and transfer preparation). In addition, the finance system is completely reliant on the state general fund, thus predictability and continuous appropriation suffer. These elements of the finance system lead to behaviors that are counterproductive to increase the number and types of students that complete a certificate, degree, or transfer. The finance system should be amended to reward maintaining access as well as increasing completion.