

**TESTIMONY OF
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BEFORE THE CALIFORNIA PERFORMANCE REVIEW COMMISSION
SEPTEMBER 9, 2004**

I am Peter Landsberger, chancellor of the Los Angeles Community Colleges. I am here, in part, to stand in for State Chancellor, Mark Drummond, who is in the Bay Area fulfilling a long-standing commitment, but I'd like to make it clear at the outset that I am expressing my own views today, not Mark's. Similarly, while I have no reason to believe the perspective I will be expressing differs to any significant extent from the views of my board, I am not speaking on behalf of the Board of Trustees of the Los Angeles Community Colleges, with one exception. I believe it is a very bad idea to consolidate the Chancellor's Office, CPEC, the Student Aid Commission, and the Bureau for Private Postsecondary and Vocational Education into a single Higher Education Division under a Deputy Secretary of Higher Education, and so does the my Board of Trustees. On August 11, the Board voted unanimously to oppose Education, Training and Volunteerism Recommendation Number 3, the recommendation that advances that idea.

Chapter 3 of the CPR report contains many good recommendations affecting community colleges that ought to be pursued, and several more that need to be approached with caution or simply rejected. Time constraints prevent me from discussing all of the recommendations, but let me begin by listing a few I believe are important and good:

- ETV 08, Reform Concurrent Enrollment Funding and Options.

Concurrent enrollment provides an important and valuable educational opportunity for many students who are capable of performing college level work, or for whom a college setting is simply a more compatible environment than that of a traditional high school. The basic rules under which students participate and the manner in which their participation is funded need to be clarified and strengthened, but concurrent enrollment should not be limited to classes taught at the postsecondary institution (since offering classes on a high school campus is often an important service for the schools and their students), and funding for all non-credit and basic skills courses should not be eliminated (since even otherwise very capable students often need some basic skills improvement).

- ETV 15, Make it Easier for Students to Transfer from a Community College to a University

Transfer is manageable for the rare student who, at the outset of his or her college career, knows exactly what he or she wants to study and to which university he or she wants to transfer. For all the rest it can easily become a highly frustrating process, full of traps that lead to costly mistakes. It is important to note that improving transfer will require close and effective collaboration among all three segments of higher education, an effort that is likely to be made more difficult if ETV 3 is adopted and the community colleges are consolidated into a Higher Education Division within the bureaucracy of the executive branch of State government.

- ETV 16, Provide a Fee Waiver in Lieu of a Cal Grant Award

The Board of Governors Fee Waiver is generally efficient and works well for students in the community colleges. It makes sense to expand this approach to the CSU and UC. The ability to serve students better will also be enhanced if Cal Grant funds are appropriated to and administered by community colleges.

- ETV 25, Balance Career Technical Education and College Preparation in High Schools (a recommendation on which I will comment more fully in a moment).

Most of these recommendations address important public policy issues and suggest improvements that are clearly and urgently needed to serve students better and make our colleges and universities more responsive to evolving community needs and expectations. ETV 25, in particular, deserves attention.

The line between so-called “vocational education” and “college prep” is fast becoming obsolete. Employers tell us that they need graduates who possess the requisite technical knowledge and skill for their industry, but who also have strong speaking, writing, reading and mathematics ability; who are good critical thinkers; who are adept at working in teams with people from a wide range of cultures and backgrounds; and who manifest important personal characteristics like discipline, responsibility, honesty and creativity. These are the very things one used to think of as being the natural byproduct of a good liberal arts education. Conversely, every history or art major is likely to have some sort of career and needs to know how knowledge is actually applied in the world.

The point is that career technical education and “college prep” are not mutually exclusive. Increasingly, preparation for any good career requires at least some college work, often two years. Growing evidence shows that, if done well, incorporation of applied and career technical education into school curricula not only yields more student success, but improves students’ understanding of the importance of doing well in school and encourages them to set future education and career goals. That, in turn, leads to better prepared and more motivated college students. Everything that we can do to persuade students and parents that good career technical education really *is* college prep, and to foster the efforts of our schools to establish effective career academies and similar offerings that prepare students well and give them meaningful options, is something we should all support.

Which of the recommendations in Chapter 3 do I view with less enthusiasm? There are five that deserve mentioning:

- ETV 3, Consolidate Selected Higher Education Agencies
- ETV 19, Establish [Statewide] Community College Priorities

The enrollment priorities recommended fail to recognize the complexity of the community college mission and, in particular, would frustrate the ability of the colleges to respond to workforce training needs. They also ignore the fact that local needs vary. It may be appropriate for the State to require each college to define and publish a clear set of enrollment priorities but, within very broad parameters, the precise nature of those priorities should be left to local decision-making processes.

- ETV 23, Expand Options for Obtaining a Bachelor's Degree

This recommendation could result in a major expansion of the community college mission, and certainly would result in the need to resolve complex and thorny issues of funding and jurisdiction. There is little need for the State to move in that direction, especially since good models exist under which community colleges can provide students with access to bachelor's degree programs on campus in cooperation with a partner college or university.

- ETV 27, Modify the 75 Percent Full-Time Community College Faculty Requirement

The 75:25 full-time to part-time ratio is, admittedly, a crude and somewhat arbitrary solution to a complex problem. But attempting to ameliorate the deficiencies of the ratio by excluding one category of courses (essentially a crude and somewhat arbitrary solution to the original solution) does little good and has the clear potential to create more trouble.

- ETV 33, Require Community Service of Public College and University Students

Students should be encouraged to perform community service, especially as part of a well-designed service learning program. But an arbitrary 16 hour degree requirement does not provide much value while it imposes a real burden on the thousands of community college students who work full-time and have significant family obligations. In addition, enforcing this compliance activity statewide would be expensive and impractical.

In my view, ETV 3 is the most troubling and obviously wrong headed of all of the CPR recommendations I have looked at closely. Among the three segments of higher education in California, it would single out the community colleges for radical restructuring and merge it into the bureaucracy of the executive branch along with a disparate set of agencies that have little, if anything, in common. The reasons for such a move are not clear, but the risks are. In my view, the merger would do tremendous harm to the community colleges, the largest and most efficient of the State's college and university systems.

Eliminating the BOG and merging the Chancellor's Office into a Higher Education Division under a Deputy Secretary of Higher Education, who reports to the Secretary of Education, who reports to the Governor, would inevitably diminish the standing of the community colleges among the three segments of higher education in California. It would also expose the system to excessive political influence or even outright interference. Furthermore, the move does not yield significant savings and would reduce public involvement in and oversight of the decision-making process within the system. Chancellor Drummond, who wasn't consulted about the merits or implications of this proposed restructuring, has been quoted as saying—some say bluntly—that the recommendation, “warrants no further consideration.” I agree entirely.

Thank you for inviting me to express my views on the CPR report. I would be please to answer any questions you might have.