Community College League of California

REPORT BRIEF

Serving Students, Serving California:
Updating the California Community Colleges to Meet Evolving Demands
Little Hoover Commission, February 2012

The Little Hoover Commission (LHC), formally known as the Milton Marks "Little Hoover" Commission on California State Government Organization and Economy, is an independent state oversight agency created in 1962 to investigate state government operations and – through reports, recommendations and legislative proposals – promote efficiency, economy and improved service. Pursuant to this charge, the commission reviewed California Community Colleges throughout 2011 and adopted their final report, *Serving Students, Serving California: Updating the California Community Colleges to Meet Evolving Demands*, late last month.

Commission Chair Dan Hancock presented the report to the Board of Governors at their March meeting, indicating that the commission's recommendations were, in general, consistent with the Student Success Task Force (except in going beyond the task force on several issues including their suggestion that the system develop a pilot program of incentivizing success through funding initiatives) and that Commissioners would begin speaking with legislators about their recommendations.

Full copies of the report are available at the commission's website: http://lhc.ca.gov/studies/210/report210.html

Following is a summary of the recommendations of the commission:

1) **ACCESS AND SUCCESS: California must make explicit that the primary goal of the California Community Colleges is to foster measureable student progress in three core areas of study: preparation for transfer to four-year institutions, career technical education (CTE) and adult basic education (ABE). Other missions, while valuable, are secondary to these three.**
   a) All colleges should offer enrollment priority in academic and CTE courses to current and new students who demonstrate preparedness by completing matriculation components including orientation, assessment and counseling to develop an education plan; returning students who demonstrate progress toward achieving their goals; and students, including workers who are returning to upgrade their career skills, and who have developed an educational plan.
   b) Districts should cap the number of class credits that students can accrue at the standard tuition level, subject to BOG approval and those who exceed that cap should pay fees that reflect the full cost of instruction with no enrollment priority.
   c) Students should be required to demonstrate satisfactory academic progress in the prior school term (by maintaining at least a 2.0 GPA in courses in their educational plans) in order to receive the BOG fee waiver.
   d) Students who enroll in a community college course solely for enrichment purposes should pay a tuition fee that reflects the full cost of the course.

2) **GOVERNANCE: The California Community College governance structure must be aligned to better support student success.**
   a) The state must strengthen the governance of the community college system by creating a stronger, more independent Chancellor's Office that is empowered to establish policy, create accountability metrics, monitor and oversee community college districts, hold the districts accountable for results and intervene in local district affairs when necessary.
   b) The Chancellor's Office should become an independent entity with power given to the Chancellor to hire executive staff and create financial incentives for the colleges to bolster student success.

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c) The state should give community colleges greater flexibility in how they deploy resources to achieve district and system goals.

d) The Legislature should review and revise statutes and regulations that hinder regional cooperation and coordination, and remove barriers so that colleges can improve outcomes through merger, consolidation or coordination.

e) The Legislature should grant the BOG authority to establish an appeals process to temporarily exempt districts from statutory requirements when state funding is reduced.

3) **FUNDING: Funding for the community colleges must be predictable and appropriate to support student success and completion.**

a) The funding formula should be amended to include additional measures to better align with the state's need for more community college graduates.

b) The BOG should establish a plan to determine when fees increases are warranted.

c) Additional revenue generated from fee increases should be allocated to the Chancellor's Office to support student success practices.

4) **ACCOUNTABILITY: Spending priorities for the community colleges must be aligned with the mission to help students succeed in achieving their academic goals.**

a) A portion of state funding should be used to incentivize identified student outcomes which reward colleges that increase the number of students who pass milestones.

b) Incentives should be provided for student attainment of goals such as completion of basic skills or earning a certificate, credential or degree;

c) Colleges should be rewarded for degrees and certificates in high-need industry and workforce areas;

d) Implementation should begin (as a pilot) with volunteer districts to help identify and address unintended consequences.

5) **ADULT EDUCATION: The California Community College system should administer all of the state's adult basic education programs, and the state should shift responsibility and funding for adult education to the community colleges.**

a) The community colleges should offer ABE programs and provide clear and accessible pathways for students to transfer into credit academic and CTE programs.

b) The state should increase funding to reflect the added responsibility of the adult education programs. The amount of increase should be proportional and equitable to the amount the state currently earmarks for adult schools in the K-12 school districts, with the colleges required to use this new money to support ABE programs.