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# A Proposed Accountability Framework for California Higher Education

## Recommendations from the Advisory Group

November 4, 2003



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## The Context

### ➤ Senate commissioned a study

“...over-arching accountability system...that measures progress made in addressing clear and definable state policy goals.”

### ➤ Motivation for the study

- Higher education is of increasing importance to civic and economic health of California
- Huge challenges in higher education
- Lack of statewide planning
- Lack of data appropriate for supporting state policy and funding decisions



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## Subsequent Steps

- Report completed November, 2002
- First symposium held January, 2003
- Senator Alpert formed advisory group
  - segments, legislative staff, outside experts
- Formal meetings May – September
- Additional group work
- Consultation by group members
- Draft report prepared
- Legislation anticipated



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## Beginning with Broad State Goals

1. Educational opportunity
2. Participation
3. Student Success
4. Public Benefits



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## Educational Opportunity

*All Californians should have reasonable and equal opportunities to attend college*

Key Questions:

- Are high school graduates prepared for college?
- Are adults prepared for college?
- Is college affordable?



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## Participation

*California higher education should serve a large and diverse population*

Key Questions:

- Who is going to college?
- Are we able to enroll all eligible students who wish to attend?
- Does the college environment support diversity in all its forms?



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## Student Success

*California higher education should prepare students well for life and work*

Key Questions:

- Are students achieving their educational goals?
- Are students learning?
- Are students and employers satisfied with what our colleges provide?



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## Public Benefits

*California higher education should benefit the state and its people*

### Key Questions:

- Does college improve individual quality of life?
- Does higher education enhance the state's economic prosperity?
- Does higher education have a positive impact on social and civic life?





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## How the Framework Works

1. Data collected for key indicators
  - Segments provide some data
  - Other sources (census bureau, surveys, IPEDS)
  - Summary reports from segments
2. Data analyzed in light of state goals and policy concerns
3. Annual accountability report produced
4. Findings presented at annual forum for budget and policy committees
5. Information used to set priorities for policy and budgets



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## Key Features of Framework

1. Collective accountability for achieving state goals
2. Clear distinctions between state-level and institutional accountability
3. State-level report useful for policy and budget development
4. Institutional accountability that promotes state goal achievement
5. Provision for monitoring student learning



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# 1. Promote *collective* accountability for state educational outcomes

- Whole is more than sum of parts (segments)
  - K-12
  - Independent sector
  - Economic conditions
  - Policy and funding choices of policymakers
- Purpose: identify outcomes and trends and work collectively for improvement in recognition of distinct missions



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## 2. Distinguish between levels of accountability

	<u>State-level accountability</u>	<u>Institutional accountability</u>
Primary purpose:	Meet state goals	Increase institutional effectiveness
Appropriate interventions:	State policy and funding	Institutional policy and practice
Most useful level of analysis:	State/regional/system	Campus/system



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## 2. (Cont.) Provide for both levels of accountability

- State policymakers are responsible for state-level accountability
  - Need data relevant to state policy and funding decisions
- Governing boards are responsible for internal accountability – to maintain effective institutions in line with distinct missions
  - Internal reporting must provide data
- Both must strive toward common set of goals



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### 3. State-level report to inform policy and budget development

- Annual state accountability report
- Organized by the goals and key questions
- Short set of indicators per goal/question
- State/regional/system data
- Breakdowns by race/ethnicity, gender, socio-economic and Cal Grant status where possible
- National comparisons where helpful
- Develop new indicators where necessary



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### 3. State Reporting System - example

Is college affordable?

- Percent of family income needed to pay, after financial aid, by income quintile

Possible interventions:

- State policy: student fee policy
- Budget policy: Cal Grant award levels
- Segmental policy: targeting institutional aid toward high need populations



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### 3. State Reporting System - example

Are students achieving their educational goals?

- BA graduation rates for students beginning at community college with transfer intent
  - New measure needed

Possible interventions:

- State policy: K-16 alignment of exit/entrance
- Budget policy: invest in statewide articulation efforts
- Segmental policy: earlier identification of transfer-bound; counseling; articulation





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## 4. Institutional Accountability and Reporting

Each segment is responsible for:

- Establishing internal accountability processes
- Setting internal priorities with respect to state goals, reflecting distinct mission
- Collecting, monitoring, reporting data that relate to state goals and reporting system
  - Some data reported in state reporting system
  - Annual report on additional issues



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## 4. Institutional Accountability (cont.)

Format of annual report from segments:

1. Main priorities for each state goal area
2. Major activities underway to address each priority
3. Performance indicators used to track progress (not actual data)
4. Major highlights or issues from data that have state policy significance
5. Description of process and progress in assessing student learning



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## 5. Measure Student Success; Monitor Learning

- State reporting focuses on broad measures of student success, e.g.,
  - Rates of completion of degrees and certificates
  - Success of remediation efforts
  - Pass rates on selected licensing exams
  - Employer satisfaction with graduates
- Segments continue with qualitative assessment of student learning
  - Report annually on processes and how used to improve programs and learning



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## 5. (cont.) Student Learning: Monitor v Measure

Learning is an important educational outcome but:

- Good state-level measures not yet available
  - Huge diversity of missions in higher education
  - No standard learning outcomes
  - Will revisit as work develops on college-level learning assessment
- Results of campus-level assessment not usable at state level
  - Faculty and institutional role to assess learning and make program improvements

# Tiered Accountability



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**State Policy Goals**

**State Reporting System**

**Statewide Indicators**

**Regional Indicators**

**Segment Indicators**

Annual  
Report

Annual  
Report

Annual  
Report

Annual  
Report

**CCC Reporting  
System**

**CSU Reporting  
System**

**UC Reporting  
System**

**Independents  
Reporting System**



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## Common Weaknesses in State Accountability Systems

1. Too much focus on institutional performance
  - too little on statewide performance and policy
2. Attempt to use measures of student learning in state reporting system
  - available measures not well suited for state policy
  - fail to consider governing board role in assessment
3. Lack of workable mechanisms for using data to influence budgets
  - reliance on formulaic performance budgeting
  - many states now abandoning or suspending



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## How This Proposal Aims to Avoid These Common Problems

- Keep focus on statewide goals
- Build system on existing governance roles
- Link two levels of accountability
- Use analytic data in existing decision processes to influence policy and budget
- Follow set of principles that can assure broad support from policymakers and educators



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# Principles

## **1. Purpose of state-level accountability**

To help policymakers design, maintain, and fund an education system that meets state goals and guides segments toward maintaining effective institutions consistent with state goals

## **2. Institutional accountability and governance**

Monitoring performance of individual colleges is responsibility of governing boards

## **3. Linking state and institutional accountability**

Segments should conduct institutional accountability within framework of state goals





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## Principles

### **4. Outcomes information**

State reporting system should have only data that help policymakers evaluate funding/policy options

### **5. Student learning**

Assessment of student learning is the responsibility of the segments; state should monitor those assessment processes

### **6. Relating accountability to budgets**

Data should help identify priorities for funding with data-driven discussions about budget sufficiency and priorities becoming routine part of existing processes



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# Principles

## **7. Making the data useful**

Data should be communicated publicly in a concise manner that conveys clearly the relevance of each measure to state policy choices

## **8. Sustaining the system**

A strong, competent, and independent steward is needed to build and maintain system so as to earn support of policymakers and educators alike