



ASSOCIATION OF INDEPENDENT
CALIFORNIA COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES

Assembly Select Committee on the Master Plan for Higher Education in California

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Introduction

Good morning, Chair Berman and members. Thank you for this opportunity to speak on the important role of the independent higher education sector in the California Master Plan for Higher Education from when it was first written, as it is now, and where we go from here.

My name is Kristen Soares, and I am president of the Association of Independent California Colleges and Universities, or AICCU. AICCU is the organizational voice for the private, nonprofit colleges and universities in the state.

We have distributed briefing packets to the committee to provide information and statistics about our colleges and universities and the students they serve. What I hope to do today is share with you an overview of our role as an explicit partner in the state's Master Plan and what we are doing to help ensure the promise of access to a high-quality education for all.

The independent sector, as we are often known, **serves over 186,000 students or just over 22% of enrollment among the 4-year segments, each year.** We offer college opportunities to **27,000 Cal Grant students.**

The ability of our institutions to provide individualized attention in small classroom settings, within a specific campus environment that seeks to serve the needs of their

students, translates to higher graduation rates. **We are proud that our Cal Grant students have a higher four-year graduation rate of 63%, compared to their peers of 52%, despite the challenges that many low-income, first generation students confront in college.**

As a sector, we are the leader in preparing California's advanced/professional workforce, with over **152,000 graduate students in fields such as dentistry, pharmacy, law, all aspects of STEM (56% of enrollment among the 4-year segments).** We also prepare over **43% of the credentialed new K-12 teachers every year.**

Our student body reflects the **diversity** of the state. **On average, across our undergraduate institutions, 39% of students are Caucasian and 60% Latino, Asian American, African American and Native American.**

Before I go into the sector's role in the California higher education landscape, I would like to speak briefly about AICCU—who we are, and how we represent our member institutions.

Introduction to AICCU

The 78 institutions that are members of AICCU are private, nonprofit, and regionally accredited, with a rich diversity of academic and research missions. Some institutions are comparable to UC, while others to CSU in terms of academic focus, research capabilities, admissions, etc. Each institution is governed by autonomous boards of trustees who hire their presidents or chancellors to implement each campus' mission. We are not a system as we all refer to the CSU and UC; we are a federation of independent colleges and universities and we have no statewide office or common governing board. Instead we have AICCU to share our expertise and serve as the voice of our sector.

AICCU serves as a quasi-central office for the private nonprofit or independent colleges and universities. The organization was founded in 1955 to partner with the state as policymakers worked on the creation of the California State Scholarship Program, now known as the Cal Grant, to ensure that students had access to our sector as a recognized partner in the Master Plan. Our establishment was to support a public-private partnership with the state to ensure that students have access to a higher education institution in California—whether public or private—and to relieve enrollment pressures on the state colleges and universities, and save the state money by utilizing capacity at our institutions.

Role and responsibility to the California higher education system

The independent sector had a role, both in the establishment of the Master Plan and in its framework. In fact, the chair of the Master Plan Survey Team was the president of Occidental College at the time, Arthur J. Coons. Representatives from other private, nonprofit colleges and universities also served on the many advisory committees to the Survey Team. It is written—quote--“[The Team recognize[d] the great contribution private colleges and universities have made and will continue to make to the state. [The Master Plan] has included these institutions in the recommended state-wide coordinating agency with the opportunity for an authentic voice bearing on policies directly affecting their welfare.”—end quote. Our partnership with the state is part of the Plan, and continues to this day.

The private, nonprofit colleges and universities were recognized as having distinct missions, while serving an important role of providing access to California students to an in-state higher education institution. The Master Plan envisioned a continuous role for private institutions in providing access to an undergraduate and graduate education.

What aspect of Master Plan is working, and what is not?

As the state reexamines the Master Plan and its future commitment to higher education, and how to best serve California students, it is important to first look at where we have been, where we want to be, and how to get there.

The **1960 Master Plan recognized that the private institutions played an important role in providing access.** There was capacity at the private institutions, and with the state's help, more students were able to afford to attend the sector, which relieved enrollment pressure and associated costs at the four-year public institutions. Today, the sector continues to serve the State in this role. **Our 78 institutions have over 200 campuses throughout the state, some are in areas where there is no UC or CSU presence.** We also provide **access to programs that are serving high needs such as K-12 teachers, as well as fields of study that are in high demand and not available at our public institutions, due to funding levels and impactation.**

The State created the **California State Scholarship Program specifically to support access to California's private institutions for low-income students. Later, the program, now the Cal Grant, was expanded to serve students attending public universities.** The Master Plan makes reference to ensuring the grant provided true access for students. Unfortunately, this principle no longer holds in today's environment. This level of access no longer exists in the private sector.

The Cal Grant has not been increased since 1999 and has experienced cuts—today, the grant award is worth 48% less in real dollars (since 1999). If private institutions are to be utilized by the state as a cost-effective way to increase access for California low-income students, we must **reexamine the role and level of financial aid to both incentivize these students to attend higher education and succeed in a timely manner and ensure they have true access to the campus that best fits their academic and career goals.**

The Cal Grant is the core of the partnership between the state and private colleges in providing access for California's low-income students. On average, AICCU institutions provide **\$18,000 in institutional aid to a Cal Grant student—this means that for every dollar the state provides in Cal Grant, the institutions provide two.** Further, Cal Grants only help fund students for four years, regardless of degree requirements and student academic or economic needs.

As suggested by the **Legislative Analyst's Office** in last year's state budget discussions, California needs to once again grow the award so that more low-income students can attend private, nonprofit institutions, which in turn will help relieve enrollment pressure on public institutions. The LAO also noted that private sector enrollments also **save the state money and increase student success.** As we move forward, protecting our students from the proposed 11.3% cut to the Cal Grant, which is an over-\$1,000 cut for our students, is a start. For students from low-income families, every dollar counts and a \$1,000 cut can mean taking longer to graduate, working more hours, having to take out more card debt, or dropping out altogether.

Secondly, the Master Plan also placed an important emphasis on **transfer** from our community colleges to four-year institutions. Those transfers do not just happen between the public universities; **our institutions also provide access to California's community college students to attain their baccalaureate degree.**

Transfer students make significant contributions to campus life and, today, nearly every undergraduate serving AICCU institution actively accepts and reserves places for transfer students. 56 of 69 undergraduates serving AICCU institutions have formalized articulation agreements with their regional community colleges.

We are always looking to improve transfer student pathways. Earlier this year, Chancellor Ortiz Oakley and his team met with AICCU and a group of our presidents to discuss how our sectors can work jointly to **streamline the transfer process** to a private college or university in a manner that is affordable to California students.

Some of our institutions have also **created innovative partnerships with their regional community college partners that can be models for increasing baccalaureate pathways** for community college students and meeting the workforce needs of their region. For instance, Point Loma Nazarene University in San Diego has partnered with multiple local community colleges to allow college students to complete their Bachelor of Science in Nursing, to advance in their profession and provide critically needed healthcare professionals in the San Diego region. Point Loma professors teach the courses; the degree is from Point Loma, but students remain on the community college campus they are familiar with. The program has already enjoyed great success.

The innovation extends to other workforce development areas, including teacher credentialing programs, where AICCU institutions educate 43% of the teachers who receive their credentials from an institution of higher education. The University of the Pacific, the only 4-year institution in the Stockton region, has a partnership with San Joaquin Delta Community College to create a pipeline for early childhood educators to earn BAs. This is just one of their partnerships, and represents a glimpse into the work campuses are doing to extend their reach to better serve students as well as meet workforce needs.

What are institutions doing to respond to the future?

As discussed, since the Master Plan was originally adopted, the state has changed significantly. The demographics of the state has changed, the economy has changed, and the perceived value of a higher education has changed.

As noted earlier, our demographics reflect modern California although our institutions are aware that they can always improve in diversifying their student bodies and faculty, particularly with certain underrepresented groups in certain regions of the state.

The core elements of a private education - wrap-around student services, small campus and classroom environments, and access to financial aid – continue to be central in our ability to enroll and graduate historically underrepresented

students. Although retention and graduation rates are strong, there is room for improvement; particularly with some institutions that may be more challenged with resources or who serve a large percentage of high-need students. Improving graduation rates among all ethnic groups is an important issue for our association and members.

To improve access, graduation, and help meet workforce needs, many of the private, nonprofit colleges and universities have **created innovative programs and expanded ways of delivery.** This includes **distance education, catering to mid-career and other non-traditional students, and strong relationships with local community colleges.**

As a sector, we are quite agile, and have a shorter idea-to-implementation timeframe. We recognized a shift in who is a “traditional student”. Increasingly traditional students are not the student who just came out of high school, but rather returning students who have jobs and families. We also cater to the needs of veterans returning home, with veteran centers on campus. 81% of our institutions (63 institutions) are designated “Yellow Ribbon” institutions by the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs. As a “Yellow Ribbon” institution, the institution accepts Veterans and provides additional institutional aid to reduce their educational costs. Several institutions provide further guidance and support to help ease the transition from military to civilian life.

To further cater to this **growing population of “non-traditional” students—and recognizing their importance in addressing California’s workforce needs**—many of our institutions have become leaders in online education and hybrid models. They utilize new technology for data collection and communication to track student progress, and to ensure students are succeeding.

It is the full scope of educational offerings and educational delivery methods that will help Californians—a traditional student or nontraditional student—achieve their academic goals in the method that best fits their life.

Today and going forward, **we must continue to find ways to meet the needs of our students** where they are--we must meet their needs locally and regionally where

higher education institutions and their communities can provide and foster a learning environment that results in a degree.

Conclusion

Private, nonprofit colleges and universities were the first higher education institutions in the state—established in 1851, before the first UC was established at Berkeley.

From then, to the establishment of the Master Plan, to now—we continue to serve California students, the community, and the state as a recognized and valued partner.

We have great working relationships with the other public segments at all levels. Our presidents/chancellors and policy staff have worked together jointly, on many policies and programs, to further student protections and access to opportunities. Thank you to the UC president, the CSU Chancellor, and the Community College Chancellor for their partnership.

And thank you Chair Berman and the members of the committee for your time today. The independent sector has been an integral partner with the state **for students**, and we stand ready to continue this important work. I am happy to answer any questions you may have.