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Historical Background

By virtue of its eligibility criteria promoting open access and the multiple missions of the California Community Colleges, we attract and serve the largest and most diverse body of students seeking higher education in the world. Among them are first generation college students, unemployed and under-employed workers, immigrants, the economically disadvantaged, high school graduates and drop-outs, college graduates, the able and disabled, and veterans representing all ages, races, and ethnic groups. The extent of their academic preparedness for college level work varies greatly as does their knowledge of how to navigate the educational system. How can any system take such a large and diverse group of individuals with such differing characteristics, identify their needs, provide appropriate education, training and resources and guide them to successful attainment of their educational goals?

In 1986, then-Governor Deukmejian signed Assembly Bill 3, providing community college students with an educational support process known as *matriculation*. The intent of AB 3 was to furnish services to students that would enhance the students’ **opportunities and access** to community college courses and programs, and to assist students to identify their educational goals and match these needs with institutional resources. The Seymour-Campbell Matriculation Act of 1986 was written into California law as Education Code in Sections 78210-78218, ensuring “*equal educational opportunity for all Californians*” (§ 78211[a]).

Unlike other specially funded categorical programs with specific eligibility requirements, the matriculation process **offers services to all students** seeking higher education opportunities. Its purpose is to provide students with accurate, timely information and services to help them define and attain their educational goals. The **Matriculation core components** include:

- admissions
- assessment
- orientation
- counseling and advising
- student follow-up
- coordination and training
- research and evaluation
- Prerequisites, corequisites and advisories

To help insure an appropriate and equitable “fit” between diverse students’ needs and skill levels, and the available college resources, the Education Code and Title 5 regulations direct colleges to collect comprehensive information about individual

students in order to facilitate student success. While there is no direct evidence that a lawsuit filed by the Mexican American Legal Defense & Education Fund (MALDEF) on behalf of a number of plaintiffs against state and local college defendants influenced the development of the Title 5 regulations to implement the Matriculation Act, it is clear that current regulations responded to the **issues of equity** raised in the lawsuit. Students are professionally advised on the basis of multiple criteria that can be used to form a holistic “portrait” of each student, denoting strengths, areas of needed improvement, support services needs, placement test scores, study skills, learning and physical disabilities, and computational and language skills.

Matriculation was established as a categorical program in the state budget in order to insure that funds would be available for the mandated purpose, to secure a 3:1 funding match commitment from local colleges and to provide for accountability. Matriculation funding has been cut in the past and the **2009-10 budget reflects a 62% cut** in State funding. **Flexibility provisions** in the State budget regarding use of matriculation funding will most likely result in a further **erosion of funding** to support these services at the college level as funding is redirected to other purposes. Most matriculation professionals, and many others, believe that given the sheer volume of students and the extent of diversity among these students, even the previous funding levels were insufficient to fully accomplish what was envisioned under the Seymour-Campbell Matriculation Act.

Key Points

- California Community Colleges provide easy **access** to higher education for a **very large and diverse population**.
- The *1988 Matriculation Act* linked **access and student success** by providing the means to set realistic goals and understand the pathways and resources needed to achieve individual goals.
- Matriculation components serve **all students**. Matriculation is a process that is integrated college-wide.
- Matriculation services help to insure **equitable** opportunity for student success.
- Funded as a categorical program to insure that funds would be available for the mandated purpose, to secure a 3:1 funding match commitment from local colleges and to establish accountability.

Student Success

Historically, California Community Colleges have attracted a large and diverse population of students because of our commitment to open access. Many are economically disadvantaged or unemployed. Some are immigrants, or veterans or foster youth. Most face the challenge associated with juggling a work schedule and some are also caring for children or elderly parents. They come with medical conditions, disabilities and histories of abuse, incarceration, chemical dependency or other challenges. Many are undirected in their lives and data shows that the majority are less than fully prepared academically for college level work. They struggle to stay in school

and many “stop out” only to start up again at a later time...sometimes even years later. Prior to passage of Seymour-Campbell Matriculation Act (AB 3) and the subsequent Education Code and regulations, there was no standard process or procedure to help students identify their educational goal, match their needs with institutional resources and guide them toward achieving their defined goal. For many, the California Community Colleges ‘open door’ of access, became a **‘revolving door’**. This syndrome refers to the ease with which students were able to enroll in community colleges and the equal ease with which they could drop out without having achieved their goals.

Unfortunately, prior to the passage of AB3 and the implementation of matriculation services, very little formal, statewide data was being gathered by which to quantify student success and there was no real accountability. There is no statewide data available that is comparable to current student success measures by which to compare current student outcomes to those of students enrolled prior to passage of AB 3. However, as a result of these laws and regulations, in addition to fiscal information, statewide student outcome data is now routinely reported through the Management Information System (MIS) including data on participation in each direct service components of matriculation.

Because we now routinely gather this information, the data can be used to begin to assess the impact of matriculation services in relation to student success. Two studies completed in 2007-08 using the statewide MIS data investigated the effect of matriculation services on several outcomes of first-time college students in their first semester. **The student outcomes of units attempted, degree-applicable units earned, and GPA were positively impacted by the matriculation services of orientation, assessment, and counseling and the development of an educational plan.** 2005-06 research conducted by Riverside Community College (RCC) demonstrated similar student outcome results. Analysis of the data in the RCC study showed that the interaction of orientation, assessment, and counseling had a significant effect on student persistence. We expect that similar matriculation research being done by individual community colleges will show the same positive impact on student success when students receive one or more of the matriculation services. In 2007 significant improvements were made in the MIS data gathering for matriculation services, however because of the complexity and interrelatedness of these services, additional improvements need to be made to strengthen what we believe is a strong correlation between student success and the provision of matriculation services.

Key Points

- **Access** without **success** does not equal opportunity
- AB 3, Education Code and California Code of Regulations provide for both fiscal and student performance related **accountability**
- Statewide research shows student outcomes were **positively impacted** by provision of the matriculation services of orientation, assessment, and counseling and the development of an educational plan.

- Improvements to data collection and additional research are ongoing to further substantiate the positive impact of matriculation and to inform the process of **continuous improvement** in the delivery of services.

2009-10 California State Budget Impact

In the 2009-10 State Budget, funding for the matriculation program was cut by 62%. Funding anticipated to help backfill all categorical programs from American Recovery and Reinvestment Act State Stabilization (ARRA) monies was assumed to total \$130 million, but turned out to total only \$35 million. Furthermore, based on direction from the Federal government, the ARRA funds could not be specifically directed to backfill categorical programs, but rather had to be distributed as general funds leaving local districts discretion in how to use the funding.

In the State budget all categorical programs took deep cuts, but programs with the deepest cuts including matriculation, were placed into a separate budget category. In order to help districts manage the deep cuts to these programs, AB x4 2 (an education budget trailer bill) provided **categorical flexibility** to districts for these programs). The allocation methodology, as well as the flexibility noted below, **is locked in through 2012-13**.

- Districts are **allowed to redirect funds** from any of the categorical programs in this category to support any other categorical program funded in the state budget.
- Before exercising this flexibility, districts are required to discuss the redirection of funds at a regularly scheduled public meeting and take testimony from the public.
- Districts exercising this funding flexibility are **relieved of all state statutory, regulatory, and provisional requirements associated with all the programs** contained in the flexibility category.
- For categorical programs in the flexibility category, funding **allocations** for each district are set at the **same amount received by the district in 2008-09, less the 2009-10 cut**.

Based on feedback from Matriculation professionals around the State we are already hearing of actions or plans to redirect previously committed Matriculation funding, reductions to counseling faculty and classified staffing in support of Matriculation and the reduction or elimination of core services such as orientation, assessment, counseling and follow-up. Although we appreciate the perspective of granting flexibility over funding and from state statutory, regulatory, and provisional requirements due to the severity of the budget cuts, we remain highly concerned about the implications of dismantling a proven framework designed to support equitable access and student success. Our immediate concerns include:

- An increase in unprepared students enrolling in inappropriate classes due the erosion of practices and standards associated with assessment, placement, prerequisites and counseling.
- Deterioration in the positive outcomes for student success due to reduction/loss

of matriculation services e.g. fewer well trained workers, fewer transfers, fewer awarded degrees and certificates, course completion rates, Grade Point Average (GPA), etc.

- Negative impact in performance areas such as lower persistence rates, lower course completion rates, longer time to degree, lower GPAs, higher rates of academic probation and dismissal; less overall efficiency and effectiveness.
- Increased risk to colleges, including the potential for legal action, based on inequitable opportunity for certain student groups.
- The potential loss of articulation with four year colleges and universities resulting from issues of course comparability stemming from inadequate prerequisite validation.
- A very real threat to compliance with accreditation standards. Specifically, Standard II.B3.e which states, "The institution regularly evaluates admissions and placement instruments and practices to validate their effectiveness while minimizing bias." The State Chancellor's Office has already suspended their approval of validated assessment instruments. Colleges may not only abandon their validation, reliability and disproportionate impact studies for test instruments, but in fact may discontinue assessment testing entirely to rely only upon other, as yet, unproven multiple measure or alternative testing approaches.
- Loss of fiscal and performance accountability associated with these services.

Matriculation professionals understand the severity of the state budget crisis and accept that there will be no complete restoration of funding in the immediate future.

Matriculation professionals and other student services leaders are already exploring and implementing alternate, cost effective methods for delivering matriculation services that would remain in compliance with Education Code and Title V of the California Code of Regulations Matriculation standards.

We also understand the logic for fiscal flexibility and relief from state statutory, regulatory, and provisional requirements. However, we believe that such flexibility and relief should be more strategically scrutinized to avoid broad sweeping abandonment of standards and practices in a proven process that effectively ensures California Community College access, equity and student success.

Key Points

- 2009-10 Matriculation budget cut by 62%
- No guarantee of ARRA funding backfill
- Fiscal flexibility (AB x4 2) may result in further funding reduction due to redirection of state matriculation funds to other categorical programs
- Broad statutory and regulatory relief (AB x4 2 and/or BOG action) may cause:
 - Further funding reduction at college level (3:1 college match no longer required)
 - Erosion of practices and standards associated with assessment, placement, prerequisites and counseling.
 - Potential noncompliance with accreditation standards

- Increased risk of lawsuits stemming from equity issues
- Potential loss of articulation with 4year colleges/universities
- Decline in positive outcomes for students. Negative impact on other performance indicators
- Loss of fiscal and performance accountability
- Less efficiency and effectiveness in preparing individuals for California's workforce and for transfer to 4 year colleges/universities

Recommendations

- 1) That the Board of Governors strongly recommends local Districts adhere to the Matriculation regulatory standards and practices that may directly affect compliance with accreditation standards or otherwise negatively impact equitable access to opportunities for student success. At a minimum, the standards and practices for assessment and placement (including validation for content validity, cut score ranges, and bias), counseling, and prerequisite/corequisite validation are recommended to remain in effect.
- 2) That all colleges be encouraged to maintain services to the greatest extent possible in all core components of matriculation.
- 3) That efforts continue to develop and implement effective alternative approaches for the delivery of matriculation services.
- 4) That the validity of potentially more cost effective approaches to assessment and prerequisite validation through pilot studies be tested, but also that current practices not be discontinued until such validity can be verified.
- 5) That ARRA monies and any other redirected funds to backfill categorical programs be exempted from the 50% law. Also that, further consideration be given to permanently amending this requirement in light of the disproportionate impact it has on student services, categorical programs and faculty and staff working in those areas.
- 6) That a statewide survey of student services be conducted to better assess the direct and indirect impact of current budget cuts.
- 7) That performance outcome data be closely monitored to detect evidence of deterioration in student outcomes resulting from the budget cuts and/or subsequent relief from state statutory, regulatory, and provisional requirements.
- 8) That research continues on verifying a positive correlation between student outcomes and the provision of matriculation services.
- 9) That as soon as feasible, highest priority be given to restoration of matriculation funding up to the same level as cuts to other categorical programs. Secondly,

that priority also be given to restoration of all categorical programs funding up to the level of cuts in general apportionment funding (no disproportionate impact).