

**STUDY OF PUBLIC HIGHER EDUCATION IN CALIFORNIA
CONSENSUS QUESTIONS**

Approved by the LWVC Board of Directors August 8, 2015

• PURPOSE

Discussion Questions: What is the purpose of California's system of public higher education? Is it to supply an educated, competitive workforce for the state? Is it to offer the benefits of postsecondary school education to everyone capable of learning? Is it to ensure that the state will have a sufficiently large segment of well-educated citizens? Is it to develop future leaders? Is the purpose to increase opportunities for economic mobility otherwise lacking for first-generation and/or minority youngsters? Is it to continue emphasis on access and excellence as core values?

*It is **recommended** that local Leagues **just discuss** the boxed questions above and question 1(a-e), below, at the beginning of their consensus meeting. Then, after completing the rest of the consensus questions, return to question 1 and complete.*

1. Among the purposes of public higher education listed below, indicate your rating of each item's importance:

a. to provide educational opportunities that serve the personal, professional, and/or occupational goals of students.

1. Very important 2. Important 3. Less important 4. Not important 5. No consensus

b. to provide and maintain a steady stream of leadership from all sectors of society.

1. Very important 2. Important 3. Less important 4. Not important 5. No consensus

c. to promote upward economic mobility across all population groups.

1. Very important 2. Important 3. Less important 4. Not important 5. No consensus

d. to advance the economic and civic goals of local communities and the state.

1. Very important 2. Important 3. Less important 4. Not important 5. No consensus

e. to continue to emphasize the dual values of access and excellence that were embedded in the Master Plan and are still relevant and important today.

1. Very important 2. Important 3. Less important 4. Not important 5. No consensus

COMMENTS: (100 words or less) _____

• **EQUITABLE ACCESS**

Discussion Questions: Should everyone, regardless of preparation for college, have access to higher education? To what extent should access be apportioned proportionally according to the state population, i.e., should there be a distinctive focus on such issues as gender, race, ethnicity, and age? In admissions? Enrollments? Completion of degrees? With the elimination of affirmative action policies, there are no longer statutory requirements regarding university admission. The Master Plan’s specified criteria for eligibility still hold sway and restrict enrollment at CSU and UC. Do these criteria meet the needs of California’s changing demographics? Do they facilitate a seamless transition path from the California Community Colleges (CCCs) to four-year colleges? Do they address the need for many more graduates of four-year universities?

2. Equitable access in public higher education is evidenced by:

a. an increase in the diversity of enrollment and completion rates in the CCCs, CSUs, and UCs that reflects the diversity of the state’s population.

1. Strongly agree 2. Agree 3. Disagree 4. Strongly disagree 5. No consensus

b. an increase in the initial freshman enrollment in both CSU and UC of qualified high school graduates from low income and under-represented minority groups.

1. Strongly agree 2. Agree 3. Disagree 4. Strongly disagree 5. No consensus

c. the provision of specialized services for at-risk students in higher education to facilitate their successful certificate or degree completion.

1. Strongly agree 2. Agree 3. Disagree 4. Strongly disagree 5. No consensus

d. a transparent and seamless transfer path from the CCCs to four-year colleges.

1. Strongly agree 2. Agree 3. Disagree 4. Strongly disagree 5. No consensus

COMMENTS: (100 words or less) _____

• FUNDING & AFFORDABILITY

Discussion Questions: Should tuition for public higher education be free? Currently, only the CCCs do not charge tuition although they do charge “fees” per credit. The State Universities and the University of California charge both tuition and fees with exact amounts varying from year to year due to dependence on changing allocations from the state budget. In addition to this lack of stability, there are issues of affordability for students and families, especially for those with special needs, e.g., for remediation, for assistance due to disabilities, and for those who have to interrupt their studies to seek gainful employment. Assistance through financial aid is available to those qualified, but is it sufficient? Are the tuition and fees charged an obstacle for students and families? How can students cover the full cost of attending college, which is much more than just tuition and fees? What is the state’s responsibility for assisting students for whom affordability is an issue?

3. In funding California’s system of public higher education:

a. the state should pay for all higher education tuition and fees.

1. Strongly agree 2. Agree 3. Disagree 4. Strongly disagree 5. No consensus

b. government and students or their families should share the full cost of attendance in public higher education based on their ability to pay.

1. Strongly agree 2. Agree 3. Disagree 4. Strongly disagree 5. No consensus

c. the state should provide additional funding for services for students with special needs, such as students with disabilities, aged out foster care students, and veterans.

1. Strongly agree 2. Agree 3. Disagree 4. Strongly disagree 5. No consensus

d. the state should provide stable and predictable funding that is sustainable, adequate, and timely to support public higher education.

1. Strongly agree 2. Agree 3. Disagree 4. Strongly disagree 5. No consensus

e. the state should develop additional funding streams to support public higher education.

1. Strongly agree 2. Agree 3. Disagree 4. Strongly disagree 5. No consensus

f. a broad based tax should be levied to specifically increase state funding for public higher education.

1. Strongly agree 2. Agree 3. Disagree 4. Strongly disagree 5. No consensus

4. California's financial aid policies should:

a. ensure that higher education attendance, including tuition, fees, housing, transportation, books, or other educational materials, is affordable for all students regardless of their family's financial circumstances.

1. Strongly agree 2. Agree 3. Disagree 4. Strongly disagree 5. No consensus

b. provide that student and family share of the full costs of attendance be reasonably proportionate to their discretionary income.

1. Strongly agree 2. Agree 3. Disagree 4. Strongly disagree 5. No consensus

c. include effective counseling to enable students to plan and access financing for their college education.

1. Strongly agree 2. Agree 3. Disagree 4. Strongly disagree 5. No consensus

COMMENTS: (100 words or less) _____

• PREPAREDNESS

Discussion Questions: How well are K-12 students prepared for higher education? Is there adequate counseling? Should students be able to start earning college credits while still in high school? Do students and families have sufficient knowledge about enrollment procedures and the availability of financial aid? Will the implementation of current K-12 school reforms be sufficient to prepare students to meet college-readiness criteria? Other reforms and opportunities available to assist students in mastering the requirements have been suggested. Which of these seem appropriate or useful? How essential is K-12 preparedness?

5. To increase student success:

a. when students graduate from high school, they should be prepared for college-level coursework or career/occupational employment.

1. Strongly agree 2. Agree 3. Disagree 4. Strongly disagree 5. No consensus

b. the state should support programs that foster coordination between and among school districts and colleges, with a focus on better utilization of the senior year of high school, to ensure that more students graduate from high school prepared for college-level work without needing remediation.

1. Strongly agree 2. Agree 3. Disagree 4. Strongly disagree 5. No consensus

c. California should expand opportunities for more high school students, especially students from under-represented groups, to begin earning college credits in high school, for example by taking Advanced Placement (AP), International Baccalaureate (IB), and/or dual or concurrent enrollment classes.

1. Strongly agree 2. Agree 3. Disagree 4. Strongly disagree 5. No consensus

d. services should be available to ensure that at-risk, low income, and under-represented minority students are advised about the wide range of appropriate career and college opportunities.

1. Strongly agree 2. Agree 3. Disagree 4. Strongly disagree 5. No consensus

e. outreach to disadvantaged, low income, minority, and first generation students is needed to encourage college applications for admission and financial aid.

1. Strongly agree 2. Agree 3. Disagree 4. Strongly disagree 5. No consensus

COMMENTS: (100 words or less) _____

• OPPORTUNITIES/BARRIERS TO SUCCESS

Discussion Questions: Limited capacity and strict adherence to the 1960 eligibility requirements for four-year colleges have contributed to California’s low baccalaureate attainment. Lack of articulation and coordination among the three sectors has also created barriers to student access and success. Many students experience barriers to enrollment and successful completion of their degrees in post-secondary education, while others lack opportunities for lifelong learning as well as training or retraining. Some reforms and opportunities have been made available or proposed to assist students in meeting eligibility requirements, such as: the use of multiple measures of assessment for entry placement status, the development of a variety of innovative curricula and instructional strategies, development of satellite locations offering B.A. degrees, and the use of new and expanding technologies. Are they enough? Are they effective?

6. California should utilize multiple strategies and models to increase baccalaureate degree attainment and coordination of the three sectors, such as:

a. increase CSU and UC enrollment capacity to serve more transfers and entering freshman.

1. Strongly agree 2. Agree 3. Disagree 4. Strongly disagree 5. No consensus

b. allow more CCCs to offer four-year programs with B.A./B.S. attainment.

1. Strongly agree 2. Agree 3. Disagree 4. Strongly disagree 5. No consensus

c. promote the implementation and evaluation of evidence-based improvements in curriculum, instruction, and placement to enhance student success and degree attainment.

1. Strongly agree 2. Agree 3. Disagree 4. Strongly disagree 5. No consensus

d. promote greater flexibility among the three sectors' eligibility requirements to increase student access for transfer and completion of four-year degrees.

1. Strongly agree 2. Agree 3. Disagree 4. Strongly disagree 5. No consensus

e. develop university centers and/or university branches to increase access to baccalaureate degree attainment.

1. Strongly agree 2. Agree 3. Disagree 4. Strongly disagree 5. No consensus

f. increase articulation among the three higher education sectors to construct curriculum pathways helping students to transfer smoothly to four-year colleges, for degree attainment of baccalaureate degrees.

1. Strongly agree 2. Agree 3. Disagree 4. Strongly disagree 5. No consensus

g. develop a longitudinal student database to track enrollment, transfer, and completion rates across all three sectors and provide feedback to high schools.

1. Strongly agree 2. Agree 3. Disagree 4. Strongly disagree 5. No consensus

h. expand the use of new technologies, including online education, to the extent that they expand access and success for students.

1. Strongly agree 2. Agree 3. Disagree 4. Strongly disagree 5. No consensus

i. provide credit and non-credit adult education courses that support life-long learning and provide opportunities for training/retraining that can lead to better jobs and/or postsecondary education.

1. Strongly agree 2. Agree 3. Disagree 4. Strongly disagree 5. No consensus

j. provide programs leading to Certification in Career Technical Education to fulfill labor needs and enable people to be trained/retrained for meaningful jobs that do not require a bachelor's degree.

1. Strongly agree 2. Agree 3. Disagree 4. Strongly disagree 5. No consensus

k. create a mechanism, such as an oversight body, to provide coordination and articulation among the three sectors, to continuously evaluate the functioning and efficacy of higher education as a system, and to provide non-partisan analysis and recommendations for improvement.

1. Strongly agree 2. Agree 3. Disagree 4. Strongly disagree 5. No consensus

l. maintain a comprehensive system of post-secondary education/higher education that will have viable access points for all adult Californians, including such populations as disabled students, incarcerated students, veterans, Dreamers, those seeking to re-train or change careers, and older adults.

1. Strongly agree 2. Agree 3. Disagree 4. Strongly disagree 5. No consensus

COMMENTS: (100 words or less) _____

7. GENERAL COMMENTS: (150 words or less) Please use the space below to add any general comments or ideas about public higher education in California that were not already addressed in some prior comments, in the Consensus Questions and/or in the Study Guide.
