



President
David Morse
Long Beach City College

April 28, 2016

Vice President
Julie Bruno
Sierra College

Honorable Lorena Gonzalez, Chair
Assembly Appropriations Committee
State Capitol, Room 2114
Sacramento, CA 95814

Secretary
John Stanskas
San Bernardino Valley College

Treasurer
Wheeler North
San Diego Miramar College

**Subject: Oppose Unless Amended AB 2434 (Bonta, as of 3/31/2016)
Postsecondary Education: Higher Education Policy.**

Area A Representative
Grant Goold
American River College

Dear Assemblymember Gonzalez:

Area B Representative
Dolores Davison
Foothill College

The Academic Senate for California Community Colleges is writing to express its concerns regarding AB 2434 (Bonta) as written, which would establish a Blue Ribbon Commission on Public Postsecondary Education to make recommendations on improving access to and affordability in postsecondary education for Californians, but also to express our support for the overall intent and goals of this legislation.

Area C Representative
John Freitas
Los Angeles City College

Area D Representative
Craig Rutan
Santiago Canyon College

By creating a new commission, this legislation would unnecessarily divert state resources for purposes that could be better achieved through other methods. As currently written, the bill would set up a problematic and controversial body at the expense of the state's taxpayers with little likelihood of achieving a positive outcome.

North Representative
Cleavon Smith
Berkeley City College

North Representative
Ginni May
Sacramento City College

South Representative
Adrienne Foster
West Los Angeles College

South Representative
Vacant

Representative at Large
Cheryl Aschenbach
Lassen College

Representative at Large
Randy Beach
Southwestern College

The Academic Senate agrees with AB 2434 that despite outreach programs and other efforts, historically disadvantaged groups remain underrepresented. These groups include communities of color, immigrants, LGBTQ students, individuals from low-income and working class communities, and others with unique needs and that Long-term trends with tuition increases across California's public four-year universities have made college less affordable. These issues are very real and very serious, and the faculty of California's community colleges would welcome, encourage, and be eager to participate in efforts to address them.

Julie Adams, Ph. D.
Executive Director

Furthermore, AB 2434 notes that California's Master Plan for Higher Education was submitted to the Legislature in 1960 and that today, that commitment [of investment in higher education] has changed as state resources that could have been made available for higher education have increasingly been dedicated to incarceration. The Academic Senate fully agrees with this assessment, and in fact in Fall of 2012, the delegates to the Academic Senate Plenary Session passed Resolution 15.03, which called for a conversation with all relevant stakeholders to reconfirm or revise the 1960 Master Plan for Higher Education in California and the mission of the California community colleges as appropriate. We therefore would

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welcome discussions and explorations of ways in which the 1960 Master Plan could be updated and better funded to ensure that all Californians are served in the most effective matter possible.

However, the Academic Senate has deep concerns regarding the composition of the commission that would examine these issues under AB 2434. The legislation indicates that the commission would consist of nine public members and that ð[n]o person who is employed or retained by any public or private postsecondary educational institution shall be appointed to or serve on the commission. No person who is a spouse or domestic partner of an employee, an officer, or retained by a public or private postsecondary educational institution shall be appointed to serve on the commission.ö Such a composition would inhibit and perhaps even prevent the deep understanding necessary of the issues facing higher education in California. A commission with no ties to or background in higher education will not possess a nuanced perception of the ways in which any changes or recommendations would actually impact academic institutions throughout the state. California's outstanding system of higher education is complex, and the commission's success would require that its voting members possess a full comprehension of that complexity.

We in no way mean to suggest that the public would not have a clear interest in the work of this commission or that the membership should exclude public representatives. Certainly representation from the public is appropriate. Rather, we strongly recommend that the composition of the commission be changed to include a majority of representatives from the public segments of higher education. Such expertise and informed perspectives are necessary for the commission to develop useful, meaningful recommendations. In no other industry would one suggest that decisions and recommendations should be made by individuals without connection to or experience in the field or without including the voices of industry efforts. No one would suggest, for example, that decisions regarding the medical field should be made without the participation of medical professionals. We simply ask that education be afforded the same respect.

For these reasons, the Academic Senate for California Community Colleges opposes AB 2434 in its current form and asks that the composition of the blue ribbon commission identified in the bill be altered to include a majority of representatives from the three segments of public higher education in California. Were such an amendment to take place, we would withdraw our opposition and willingly offer our support for the intent of the legislation. Should you have any questions, please feel free to contact us.

Sincerely,



David Morse

President

Academic Senate for California Community Colleges

pc: Assemblymember Rob Bonta

Members, Assembly Appropriations Committee