

Testimony Presented To The Joint Committee  
For Review Of The Master Plan  
For Higher Education

By  
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The numbers 40 and 60 have taken on a special, almost magical, quality recently, and I would like to take this opportunity to explore their significance to the community colleges.

When the 1973 Joint Committee on the Master Plan for Higher Education re-affirmed legislative support for the 40:60 ratio of lower-to-upper division students in the University of California and California State University, there was little reason for concern about the matter, for both segments were then at the 40% lower division enrollment recommended by the 1960 Master Plan Survey Team (*Conflicts in State Policies Governing Undergraduate Enrollment at California's Public Universities, CPEC, Dec. 14, 1986*). CSU has remained at the 40% figure and consequently is not a focus of the remarks which follow (*Conflicts in State Policies Governing Undergraduate Enrollment at California's Public Universities, CPEC, Dec. 14, 1986*). But after 1976, the UC began to move away from the 40% lower-division target as freshman admissions gradually increased, and the UC now has 46.7% lower-division student enrollment.

There is no easy way to assess the effect upon the community colleges of this increased freshman enrollment, but there are several viewpoints from which the situation might be examined:

1. The large number of incomplete applications to the UC.
2. The community college transfer and reverse transfer rates.
3. Talent development at the community colleges.

As the UC expands its lower-division enrollment, there is, of necessity, a corresponding drop in the percentage of community college transfers to the UC. The statistics suggest that even as the percentage of lower-division students has increased recently, so has the number of community college transfer students seeking admission to the university. But a disproportionately large number of transfer students turn away from the university and are labeled "incomplete applications." There are a multitude of reasons for these incomplete applications, but whatever the reason, it is significant to note that while 5,099 of 38,103 (about 13%) UC freshmen in 1986 had incomplete applications, there were 6,739 of 17,401 (40%) community college transfer students who did not successfully enroll. This high rate of incomplete applications for transfer students must be viewed as a discouraging factor for other community college students who might want to transfer to the UC. One can safely assume that some of those transfer students who do not successfully enroll in the university are under-represented minority students, and they should be encouraged to persist and complete the application process (*A Study of California's Community Colleges, Vol. 1: Summary and Conclusions, Berman, Weller Associates, April 1985*). The university and the community colleges should cooperate in addressing the reasons for this situation in an attempt to reduce the high rate of incomplete applications for community colleges transfer students.

The community colleges' transfer rates can profitably be examined in terms of the experience of first-time, full-time, less-than-25-year-old enrollment (the UC cohort). Among this pool of students at the community colleges, "about 3 of every 5 potential transfer students successfully transfer within 2 years after their initial lower-division enrollment" (*San Mateo Community College District Board Report No 85-4-1C, April 24, 1985*) Additional numbers of students transfer after more than two years at a community college. More startling, however, is the fact that in fall of 1983, there were 35,600 junior level transfers to the UC and CSU, "while 38,400 students 'transferred' from UC and CSU to community colleges. One of every five community college students previously attended a four-year college or university" (*San Mateo Community College District Board Report No 85-4-1C, April 24, 1985*). One wonders how well the state is serving these students presently and how much more efficient, both educationally and economically, the system could be if more students were encouraged by the UC to attend a community college before enrollment in the UC. Both the community colleges and the UC should look at projects such as the UCLA Transfer Alliance Program as a positive means to enhance education in both segments.

Studies have shown that UC-eligible students who choose to complete their lower-division work at a community college before they transfer perform on a par with native UC students (*San Mateo Community College District Board Report No 85-4-1C, April 24, 1985*). In addition, non-UC-eligible students who transfer and persist receive grades "nearly as high (close to 3.0 GPA) as those received by native and transfer students who were originally eligible." When the university increases its percentage of freshman enrollments, it undoubtedly enrolls students who would otherwise have attended a community college. The benefit to the community college of having those students is educationally significant, for they provide an example to other community college students, initiate class discussion and engage others in debate, and set a higher standard to which others aspire. In the classroom, that intellectual challenge is essential.

Finally, the issue of talent development emerges as a critical concern, especially when Secretary of Education William Bennett is calling for talent development as part of the accreditation process (*Chronicle of Higher Education, Sept. 9, 1987*). The presence of UC-eligible students in the community colleges enhances the educational experience of other community college students, provides a more stimulating academic environment, and allows the colleges to maintain higher standards, as the UC has suggested is necessary. But cooperation is needed from the UC. As the university increases its freshman population, of necessity, slots available for junior-level transfers diminish. This situation is truly one of "diminishing returns."

The Academic Senate for California Community Colleges therefore strongly recommends that the Joint Committee consider what can be done to ensure that the segments work together to accomplish the 40:60 ratio of lower-division-to-upper-division students in the UC and to ensure that the community colleges maintain an academically sound educational program so that junior-level transfer students are well prepared for admission to the university.

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