Dear Colleagues:

This morning, the California Community Colleges Board of Governors officially received the report of the CCC Baccalaureate Study Group, which, as you recall, concluded that this proposal “merits serious review and discussion.” Today’s meeting was the BOG’s first opportunity to discuss this matter, a discussion that will continue during their forthcoming retreat. Here are some summary highlights.

First, Chancellor Brice Harris spoke most supportively of the proposal, emphasizing the need for a good collaborative process with CSU and UC, as well as continuing discussion within the system. He indicated that while this was a controversial issue in prior years, in the new post-Proposition 30 funding climate, consideration of this idea is “well timed.” He said that he is “optimistic and bullish” regarding its prospects, and emphasized that as we review it, “we need to consider what’s best for California and what’s best for our students.” Chancellor Harris indicated his belief that the details should be locally worked out, with the exception that fees should be set by the legislature. He also expressed appreciation for the many e-mails and letters that he and the Board of Governors have been receiving from the field and that the media coverage of local communities’ support has also been impressive. I hope that you will join me in expressing appreciation to our Chancellor for his leadership and support as we work through the intricacies of this possible new direction.

Second, Executive Vice Chancellor Erik Skinner gave a comprehensive overview of the Study Group’s report. Vice Chancellor Vince Stewart indicated that the system review was proceeding on a “parallel track” with SB 850 (Block) and that he and others would continue to be in close contact with Senator Block as this bill moves through the legislature and is amended in several areas. He and several members of the Board of Governors commented on yesterday’s meeting with CSU Chancellor Tim White and UC President Janet Napolitano, noting that Chancellor White said that he could see some community college bachelor’s degrees in areas that did not duplicate CSU degrees and that addressed serious workforce needs in a given region.

Third, 10 speakers presented testimony regarding the baccalaureate issue, as follows, in order of their presentations:

1. Constance Carroll, Chancellor, San Diego CCD, commented on the increase in workforce degree requirements, the lack of capacity in public universities, and the positive experience of 21 states that currently authorize the community college baccalaureate (my testimony and position paper are attached).

2. Marshall Alameida, Director of Nursing, Contra Costa College, provided statistics demonstrating the need for nurses and the preference now being given by hospitals to bachelor’s degree (BSN) registered nurses. He urged support of SB 850 (inclusive of nursing).

3. Terrie Snow, Nursing Program, Shasta College, indicated that there were no available public universities in Redding, that associate degree (ADN) graduates were not being hired, and that everyone should support and help pass SB 850 (inclusive of nursing).
4. Cindy Collier, Dean of Nursing & Allied Health, Bakersfield College, informed the BOG that 70% of Bakersfield nurses are ADN-prepared, that the local CSU nursing program was seriously impacted, and that local nursing graduates are facing enormous employment obstacles due to the BSN preference, especially since they want to remain in the local community.

5. Doug Houston, Chancellor, Yuba CCD, presented the recent CEO Board survey results. There was an impressive response from 87 of the 136 chancellors and presidents, with 70 expressing strong support for the baccalaureate, 14 with questions and cautions, and 3 opposed. He also emphasized the acute needs of rural colleges and communities that have no access to public university bachelor’s degrees.

6. Tammy Rice, Nursing Program, Saddleback College, said that her college and Academic Senate supported the baccalaureate proposal, and commented, “just put a group of nurses on a task force and they will get it done.”

7. Dianne Moore, Director of Nursing, Pasadena City College, said that this was an important issue for her college, the students, the Academic Senate and the Pasadena community, noting that they hope to be the first to offer such a degree.

8. Linda Zorn, Deputy System Navigator, Health Care, said that she was supportive of the proposal, considering the community college BSN to be a real workforce training need, and offered to provide assistance.

9. Patricia Hunter, American Nurses Association – CA, spoke in strong support of the initiative, informing the audience that students in 2-year nursing programs have already completed over a year and a half of prerequisites, so in essence the difference between the ADN and BSN is only 21 units, which community colleges could easily provide.

10. Beth Smith, President, Academic Senate for Community Colleges, stated that the faculty position on the community college baccalaureate is “oppose,” based on the initiative proposed in 2010, and that this issue would be discussed at the Academic Senate Plenary in April during which she anticipates lots of discussion and resolutions, since there is lots of interest in the proposal. She will provide a report to the BOG in May.

Overall, this was a very positive meeting and, although there are inevitable challenges ahead, I am very encouraged by the way this initiative is developing. Thanks to all of you for your hard work and support!

Constance

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