

Facilitating Student Success in Achieving the Baccalaureate Degree

Report of the California State University
Task Force on Facilitating Graduation

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December 2002

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FACILITATING STUDENT SUCCESS IN ACHIEVING THE BACCALAUREATE DEGREE

I. Introduction

In November 1997, the Academic Senate of the California State University issued *Baccalaureate Education in the California State University*. This report asserted a “commitment to the diversity within the CSU, to its baccalaureate degree programs, and to the faculty who are the creators and guardians of baccalaureate education in the CSU.” This document reaffirmed the importance of the undergraduate degree, which is central to the mission of the CSU, stresses the integration of broad learning with in-depth study, and is the certification necessary for most entry-level professional positions in the workplace.

Patrick Callan, noted for his commentary on higher education, especially in California, emphasized the importance of the baccalaureate:

The quality of life of Americans and the civic and economic future of the country depend more than ever before on the availability and effectiveness of education and training after high school. For most Americans, college is no longer one of the many routes to middle-class life, but a requirement for employment that makes such a life possible. Between 1977 and 1997, the average income of high school graduates decreased by 4% in real dollars, while the income associated with having a college degree instead of only a high school diploma increased by 28%.

The pursuit of the baccalaureate degree is the aim of almost all undergraduates who enter the CSU, whether as native students or transfers, and this journey is made available to a vast cross-section of Californians through the access provided by the CSU. The CSU has long been lauded for its access, for opening its arms to a wide variety of students with the potential and desire to earn a bachelor’s degree. However, in addition to providing access to students, the CSU is also committed to helping them succeed in their academic careers and guiding them on the path to the degree. Known for its access, the CSU would like to be as well known for its success in graduating the students it admits. Whereas a student’s ability to enter the university depends on many factors the CSU cannot control, a student’s ability to depart from the university with a degree in hand is very much amenable to institutional influence.

This report begins with an overview of the factors that affect degree completion, then reviews data on CSU graduation rates and student time-to-degree, and concludes with the recommendations of the CSU Task Force on Facilitating Graduation.

II. On the Path to the Baccalaureate Degree: Factors that Affect Degree Completion

Study after study has indicated that people with bachelor's degrees have better health, more rewarding employment, more financial security, and greater satisfaction with their lives than do people who never achieve the degree. Given the disparity between the health and welfare of those who have a degree and those who do not, and the implication of this gap for society at large, many researchers have examined the issue of degree completion: What factors contribute to students' ability to complete bachelor's degrees? What factors seem to inhibit students from achieving the baccalaureate?

This section of the report looks at four factors: preparation for university study, student integration and involvement, student support services, and academic policies. Within each of these subsections, we (1) look at the research that has been done on various aspects of degree completion, (2) discuss how the CSU has learned from and built on these findings and note activities currently underway that are undergirded by these theoretical or empirical perspectives, and (3) indicate the range of additional policy options considered by the Task Force. Not all of the possible policy options discussed in this report are recommended by the Task Force at this time. They are presented here solely as the full array of possible strategies that could be undertaken.

A. On the Path to a Baccalaureate Degree: Preparation for University Study

The Research:

One of the most comprehensive studies of degree completion is a report called *Answers in the Tool Box*, authored by Clifford Adelman and released by the U.S. Department of Education in 1999. The report was the result of a longitudinal study of transcripts, test scores, and surveys of a cohort of students. The research began in 1980, when the students were in 10th grade, and concluded in 1993. Given the timetable of the study, students had 11 years to enroll in a postsecondary institution and earn a degree. The findings from *Answers in the Tool Box* show us not only what factors do contribute to the successful attainment of a bachelor's degree but also what factors do not contribute.

According to Adelman, by far the most important factor in achieving a degree is a student's sound, solid academic preparation for college. The report also showed that good preparation is more accurately reflected by the intensity and quality of the secondary school curriculum the students experience than by the GPAs and test scores they earn.

Application of Research Findings in the CSU:

Over this most important factor—preparation for college—the CSU has, at best, an indirect and long-term influence. As the institution that produces most of the teachers and administrators in California schools, the CSU holds some sway over the content and academic rigor of the high school curriculum. In the past several years, the CSU has made tremendous strides in improving its teacher preparation programs and in graduating teachers well qualified in both content and pedagogy.

In addition to working to better prepare teachers, the CSU has begun a massive outreach effort in which CSU students, faculty, and administrators work directly with K-12 to help ensure that entering freshmen are well prepared. These activities include the following:

- *Ensuring the rigor of the high school curriculum.* The CSU and the University of California have agreed on a 15-course pattern required for admission to either university system, effective for students entering in fall 2003. Hence, the expectations for high school students are exactly the same for both UC and CSU.
- *Agreeing on necessary curriculum and instruction.* The California Academic Preparation Initiative (CAPI) involves over 170 high schools and supports linkages between university faculty and high school teachers who instruct students in English and mathematics. In addition to fostering these partnerships, the CSU also publishes explicit statements of what the university expects of its entering freshmen in the areas of English and mathematics.
- *Developing diagnostic instruments.* The CSU works with K-12 to develop instruments that will help high school teachers identify students' strengths and weaknesses in mathematics and English. The Mathematics Diagnostic Testing Program (MDTP) provides tests that evaluate students' readiness for Algebra, Geometry, Algebra II, and Precalculus. MDTP results allow both teachers and students to know what areas of mathematics have been mastered and what areas need more work. To test students' reading and writing skills, the Diagnostic Writing Service (DWS) allows high school students to assess their competence through both a test and a written essay graded online by CSU English professors.
- *Providing early assessments of high school students' academic readiness.* Under development in 2002-2003 is an 11th-grade test that will allow students to know whether they are on-track for admission to baccalaureate-level classes. An augmented version of the California Standards Test (required of all 11th graders), the exam will serve as both a diagnostic and a placement test. Students who pass both the core area and the augmented section and who take English and mathematics in the 12th grade will be exempt from taking the EPT and ELM and will be placed in baccalaureate-level courses in the CSU. Pilot studies of this early assessment will take place on CSU campuses in 2003 and 2004.
- *Using CSU students as tutors for students in K-12.* The Precollegiate Academic Partnership (PAD) places thousands of CSU students in K-12 classrooms to provide extra one-on-one help.

In addition to these systemwide programs and projects, there are many more efforts undertaken by individual institutions, individual departments, and individual faculty. Cumulatively, these attempts to increase the readiness of K-12 graduates for university-level study are addressing the factor that is most important in earning a university degree. Before students can earn college degrees, they must persist from one year to the next in their college careers, and in order to persist in college, they must be adequately prepared for a university education.

Range of Additional Policy Options Reviewed by the Task Force:

Require that remediation be completed within one semester or two quarters of a student's fall-term enrollment in the CSU. A 1996 CSU Board of Trustees policy on remediation directed campuses to establish and enforce limits on the amount of time that students could spend in remedial coursework. In the face of this mandate, CSU campuses were creative and imaginative in finding flexible and effective ways to help students get ready for baccalaureate work. In fall 1997, nearly half the CSU institutions required students to be remediated within one year, and in fall 1998, the rest of the campuses followed suit. It may be possible to shorten further the time needed for remediation.

B. On the Path to the Baccalaureate Degree: Student Integration and Involvement

The Research:

The 1970s and 1980s produced landmark studies that explored the influence that various policies, programs, and practices had on college students. One of the major findings was that students who, formally and informally, were involved, engaged, and integrated into the academic and social life of the university generally had successful educational experiences. Researchers such as Alexander Astin, Ernest T. Pascarella, and Vincent Tinto documented the importance of frequent and successful student interactions with faculty and other students. In addition, several educational organizations produced a series of reports, such as *Integrity in the College Classroom* and *Involvement in Learning*, that supported these findings. They also emphasized new pedagogies and promoted active learning, service learning, learning communities, laboratory experiences, and internships. What is taught and how it is taught can profoundly affect a student's engagement in and commitment to the university.

Application of Research Findings in the CSU:

Because large, complex universities with commuter student bodies (like most CSU campuses) can make some students feel insignificant, anonymous, and unconnected, several CSU institutions have sought to counteract these sentiments by building on the

insights of Astin, Pascarella, Tinto, and others. To get students more involved and engaged, CSU institutions sought first to get faculty and staff more involved and engaged. In 1988, the CSU system created the Institute for Teaching and Learning to provide encouragement and support for effective strategies in the classroom. At that time, there were only a few faculty development and teaching-and-learning centers in the CSU system; now there is one on almost every campus. Furthermore, by offering released time and professional development opportunities to faculty, CSU campuses have improved both curriculum and instruction.

Improvements in curriculum. Currently, almost every CSU campus has developed curricular experiences such as learning communities, intensive first-year experience courses, and freshman seminars. These courses are characterized by small enrollments, an emphasis on class discussion and interaction, active learning, intensity, teamwork, linkages among various disciplines, and/or groups of students traveling together as a cohort through a sequence of courses. When students get to know their classmates, have closer connections to faculty members, feel part of a group, and are exposed to a challenging academic environment, students have stronger emotional, social, and intellectual ties to the universities—and are more committed to finishing a degree.

Innovations in instruction. In addition to curricular experiments, the CSU has also reconsidered the kinds of instructional strategies (as well as the assumptions and premises undergirding them) that help students make progress to the degree.

CSU faculty encounter a student body that is significantly different from that of previous generations. Diversity in races, ethnicities, cultures, socio-economic brackets, native languages, and ages has posed instructional difficulties never encountered when colleges had more homogeneous student bodies. To meet this challenge, the CSU system as well as individual campuses have sponsored a multitude of professional development opportunities to help faculty learn instructional strategies to reach a more diverse population.

Greater attention to the range of individual learning styles as well as to the educational rewards of a multicultural environment has also led CSU professors to re-examine assumptions about their roles vis-à-vis students. In the past it was not uncommon for a new faculty member to emerge from a Ph.D. institution assuming that his or her job was to separate wheat from chaff—to reward bright and able students and to weed out those who apparently didn't belong in college. One common indication of this assumption was the “gatekeeper” course, also known as the “flunk out” course, usually the entry-level class in the major, whose job it was to get rid of those unworthy to enter the field. Increasingly, this attitude of helping the cream rise to the top has been replaced by a commitment to helping all students master the curriculum. This fundamental rethinking of the role of the teaching faculty has led to many innovations in instruction and assessment. While maintaining rigor and high standards, many faculty members now focus on mastery rather than gatekeeping. The time-honored practice of requiring midterm and final exams has been replaced by multiple assessments of multiple kinds. Instead of emphasizing high-stakes tests, faculty now make multiple interventions into students' academic progress; they allow students, after thorough reviews and counseling,

to rewrite papers and retake tests; and they permit students to show mastery of a topic or skill in a number of different ways. In other words, faculty provide multiple attempts at and multiple routes to achieving course and program goals. These improvements in instruction, which markedly help all students progress more expeditiously to the degree, are largely the result of universities investing in the professional development of faculty and staff and encouraging instructional innovation.

Increasing the percentage of tenured/tenure-track faculty. Tenured faculty, to whom the university has made a long-term commitment, are expected to use their professional expertise to serve the university and the community. These “service” activities—such as advising, mentoring students, and overseeing student organizations and activities—promote student engagement and involvement with the university. To raise the number of tenured and tenure-track faculty, the Academic Senate CSU, the California Faculty Association, and the CSU administration have jointly developed a plan to increase the percentage of these permanent faculty. More faculty with a long-term involvement with the university should enhance student engagement.

Range of Additional Policy Options Reviewed by the Task Force:

Offer intensive first-year experiences. The CSU has developed many models for first-year experiences for both new freshmen as well as transfer students. Building on the traditional orientation sessions that welcome new students to the university, these models take three general forms: (1) first-year experience courses, (2) learning communities, and (3) intensive seminars.

The first is an expansion and enhancement of university orientation. Understanding that many enrolling in the CSU are first-generation students who are unfamiliar with the rituals and practices of higher education, the first-year experience courses, for which students earn GE credit, cover a range of topics, including academic skill development, the values of higher education, introduction to the academic disciplines, knowledge of campus support services, leadership skills, and transitioning to college. Examples of these types of courses in the CSU include those at Fresno, Fullerton, and Northridge.

Learning communities, the second model in the CSU, are characterized by courses that are thematically linked and through which students proceed as a cohort. At CSU Hayward, the learning community is called the Freshman GE Cluster Program, and it is structured so that entering freshmen complete all lower-division GE in their freshman and sophomore years. Freshmen enroll as a cohort in a three-quarter thematically linked sequence. At Humboldt State, freshmen can choose to enroll in the Freshman Interest Group (FIG), which clusters from two to four courses related by a theme such as “exploring natural resources.” These courses meet GE or major requirements.

The third model in the CSU is the intensive seminar for new freshmen. At San José State, for example, the Metropolitan University Scholar's Experience (MUSE) program for new freshmen includes over 100 seminars that are limited to 15 students per seminar. In addition to intensive study, freshmen are expected to participate in a variety of other

colloquia and cultural activities.

Given the richness and diversity of programs for new students and the imaginative approaches taken by various CSU campuses, the CSU could benefit from more discussion and sharing of these best practices via workshops and listservs.

Continue to expand instructional effectiveness. Consistent with its mission as a teaching university, the CSU contributes significantly to advances in pedagogy. As has already been noted, the Cal State system has a highly developed network of professional development through on-campus faculty development or teaching-and-learning centers as well as through the systemwide Institute for Teaching and Learning. The CSU has also embraced the scholarship-of-teaching movement, in which faculty members conduct research and publish on instructional improvements in their courses and in their disciplines. Campuses such as Cal Poly Pomona have provided grant programs to encourage faculty to engage in the scholarship of teaching, and CSU San Bernardino has established a research center on instructional improvement. On other campuses, departments have revised their retention, tenure, and promotion policies to acknowledge instructional effectiveness and research on instructional effectiveness. Increased support for grant programs and for faculty professional development via conferences and workshops would help to disseminate the latest advances in the field.

C. On the Path to the Baccalaureate: Student Support Services

The Research:

The preceding section focuses largely on issues surrounding the university classroom: what students study, how they are taught, and what academic choices are available to them. These have to be at the heart of any attempts to improve student progress to degree. Nevertheless, as shown in the work of Astin, Tinto, and Pascarella, many aspects of the environment outside of the classroom can keep students on track to the baccalaureate. According to the research recently conducted by Richard Light and presented in *Making the Most of College*, one of the most potent influences on students is effective advising. On the basis of interviews with over 400 undergraduates, Light notes that “students point out repeatedly that getting constructive, somewhat personalized advice may be the single most underestimated feature of a great college experience.” Light consequently recommends that campus leaders “should make a thoughtful, evidence-based, purposeful effort to get *in* each student’s way.”

Application of Research Findings in the CSU:

Advising. In a 2002 survey of best practices in facilitating graduation, almost all CSU campuses recognized the critical importance of advising, as well as the difficulty of finding effective advising practices in extremely large commuter institutions. Among the

advising issues that they engaged are the following:

- *Special task force.* Several campuses indicated that all constituencies must be involved if advising is to be effective, and, in that vein, convened university-wide, cross-division task forces to tackle the issue.
- *Training for advisors.* Some campuses offer training workshops; others provide an advising hot line for faculty who need guidance during a consultation with a student. Some institutions make use of a well-trained group of advisors: graduate students in disciplines such as counseling or education.
- *Enforcing mandatory advisement.* CSU institutions pointed out that there must be policies that make advising mandatory and that there must be ways of enforcing those policies.
- *Ways of organizing advising services.* Depending on the special characteristics of the individual institutions, CSU campuses have different ways of conducting student advising. Some have an Advising Center, staffed by trained professionals, through which all students must pass. Others decentralize advising to individual departments; yet others specialize by having different advising mechanisms for students taking GE, students with undeclared majors, and students with declared majors.
- *Using group advising.* Given the large number of students at CSU campuses, frequent one-on-one advising for all students is nearly impossible. Many campuses have experimented with various formats of effective group advising for majors.

Communicating with students. Several campuses alluded to the efficacy of providing clear, positive, and encouraging messages to students in both oral and written communications.

- *The meaning of “full-time.”* Enrolling in college “full-time” means different things to different people and groups. In the CSU a “full-time equivalent student” is a unit of measure equal to 15 semester or quarter units per term. For financial aid purposes, “full-time” indicates 12 units per term. The National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA) understands “full-time” to mean 12 units *applicable to a degree*. These various meanings could have profound cost implications for students. The CSU estimates that in the 2002-2003 academic year the total cost (including books, meals, housing, transportation, fees, etc.) is \$8,754. This is for commuter undergraduates who live with their parents and who take more than six units per term. At today’s rates, a degree completed in four years would cost \$35,016; a degree completed in five years would cost \$43,770; and a degree completed in six years would cost \$52,524.
- *Clear, consistent communication.* Within a single institution, students sometimes get mixed messages. While some advisors suggest that students take a light courseload in their first term, others recommend full-time enrollment. For fall 2002, San Diego State, for example, has made a deliberate effort to communicate one message: take at least fifteen units to set high standards from the beginning.

- *Positive messages.* Cal Poly San Luis Obispo changed a negative letter, one that pointed out what a student did wrong, to a letter of encouragement, identifying a right course of action. The Academic Records Office changed the tone of the letter from “you are missing these courses” to “you need only these few more courses.”
- *Encouraging messages.* Several campuses stay in touch with students who have “stopped out” by using a series of letters and flyers. Students who have departed without a degree are invited to campus events such as concerts, sporting events, lectures, etc.

Range of Additional Policy Options Reviewed by the Task Force:

Create roadmaps to graduation. Universities that have developed 4-year, 5-year, and 6-year graduation “plans” for students have found the exercise to be beneficial for faculty as well as students. Departments are asked to review their curriculum and scheduling to be sure that students can graduate on a 4-, 5-, or 6-year timetable. The departments publish these plans, which are term-by-term depictions of the courses in which students should enroll over the entirety of their academic careers. The plans address both day and evening programs. Then it becomes the obligation of the department to communicate this information to students and to offer the courses in the sequence indicated. The students’ responsibility is to follow the plan. Such a process helps the faculty to consider more carefully the nature and sequencing of the curriculum it offers to students. In addition, having a 4-year or 6-year roadmap to graduation encourages the students to see the totality of an academic career and to think about the future instead of just the individual term. For an example, see the website at CSU Chico <[http:// www. csuchico.edu/catalog/ programs.html](http://www.csuchico.edu/catalog/programs.html)>.

Make online progress-to-degree audits more widely available. To enable students and academic advisors to better understand the individual student’s progress to degree, CSU campuses should develop a web-based degree audit program. In conjunction with other advising and retention services, this audit could provide students, advisors, and evaluators with clear information about credit earned at the current institution as well as at other institutions, in-progress work, and the application of this academic work against a specific catalogue or set of program standards.

Provide readable and usable university catalogues. After years of piecemeal adding, deleting, revising, and editing, many college catalogues are barely comprehensible even to faculty, most of whom are thoroughly conversant with higher education programs. If even the faculty have difficulty using the catalogue, then students, who are responsible for reading and understanding the catalogue, have a much harder time and face far greater negative consequences if they cannot understand and follow the rules. Online and hard-copy university catalogues need to be improved so that they are well designed, well organized, readable, and useful documents.

D. On the Path to the Baccalaureate: Academic Policies

The Research:

Clifford Adelman's 1999 study identified a sound preparation for college-level work as the most important contributor to degree completion. However, the report also identified additional factors that might have policy implications for the CSU system. *Answers in the Tool Box* described the behaviors of students who did *not* complete a degree: (1) they earned fewer than 20 credits in their first calendar year of postsecondary education; (2) they transferred to the 4-year college with less than one semester of full credit; (3) they had excessive numbers of drops, withdrawals, and incompletes (DWIs) in comparison to the total courses attempted; and (4) they "stopped out" for more than a year.

Answers in the Tool Box also provides a sketch of students who *do* earn degrees. These students have a good high school preparation; earn at least 20 credits in their first year; stay continuously enrolled; and do not drop, withdraw from, or get incompletes in their classes.

Application of the Research in the CSU:

Given these characteristics of baccalaureate-earning students, there are several CSU policies that encourage the experiences and behaviors typical of degree-earning students.

Policies for transfer students. With two-thirds of its graduates having attended a community college, the CSU is very attentive to a smooth transition from the 2-year to the 4-year institution. Its policy of giving admission priority to students who have completed 60 hours at a community college virtually ensures that few California Community College (CCC) students jump to the CSU with less than a semester of full credit. Many other policies and programs attempt to ensure a seamless transfer:

- *Common General Education Requirement.* There is a precise statement of courses totaling 39 semester units that any community college student can take and transfer to the CSU.
- *4CSU.* This program executes an academic plan and academic advising that will facilitate transfer.
- *Core Alignment Project.* The goal of this project is to enable CCC students to transfer sooner and more efficiently, with fewer unnecessary courses and fewer courses that will not transfer. CSU faculty in nine disciplines are identifying lower-division requirements in the major that, if taken by CCC students, are guaranteed to transfer to CSU institutions.

Fee incentives for students to enroll in more courses. *Answers in the Tool Box* indicated that students who completed at least 20 credits in their first year were more likely to earn baccalaureate degrees than those who earned fewer credits. Because full-time enrollment seems to promote a greater engagement with the university, some institutions have offered fee incentives to encourage students to carry a full load of courses each term. At Baylor University, for instance, all students pay a tuition of \$15,700 a year, regardless of how many units they attempt. Two colleges in the University of Texas at Austin are participating in a new pilot program to encourage budget-conscious students to take more courses each term. The average UT undergraduate enrolls in 12.7 credits per term and pays by the credit hour. In the new program, students will pay the same flat rate for all credits over the threshold of 13. The long-time fee policy of the CSU Board of Trustees also encourages students to take 11 or more units each term. In 2002-2003, students who take six or fewer units pay \$828, whereas undergraduates enrolled in more than six units pay \$1,428. Those enrolled in 6 units therefore pay \$138 per unit, whereas those enrolled in 12 units pay only \$119 per unit.

Reducing the number of overall units required for the degree. In the past decade many universities have tried to bring students closer to degrees by reducing the number of units required for the degree. Many of these efforts were spurred by data from the National Center for Education Statistics, which showed that the number of units taken by students had been increasing. Students who graduated from high school in 1972 averaged 128.9 units in completing their bachelor's degrees, whereas students who finished high school in 1982 averaged 135 baccalaureate units. Attempting to rein in the profusion of courses required in a curriculum, some universities set specific minimums. The City University of New York (CUNY) reduced the number of hours to the degree from 128 to 120 units for most programs; the Florida legislature mandated that all baccalaureate degrees require 120 units unless granted an exemption. In 2000, the CSU Board of Trustees began to phase in the reduction of CSU baccalaureate semester-units required for graduation to 120.

Range of Additional Policy Options Reviewed by the Task Force:

Reconsider policies on drops, withdrawals, and incompletes. The *Answers in the Tool Box* report states that students with a high ratio of drops, withdrawals, and incompletes (DWIs) in comparison to total courses taken are much less likely to finish a degree. No one doubts that there are good reasons why students do not complete courses. But institutions such as Western Illinois University that have tightened policies on DWIs have found that more stringent policies have kept students from being casual or lackadaisical about their academic pursuits.

Reduce the number of course repeats allowed. The institutions comprising the University of Wisconsin System recognized that many resources were being consumed by students who repeatedly enrolled in courses they had already attempted. Five of the 13 UW institutions ultimately reconsidered their repeat policies.

Academic policies that involve course credits pose true dilemmas for university faculty and administrators. On the one hand, we want students to succeed, and we want them to have the freedom to choose majors and the initiative to be ambitious and over-achieving in their course taking. Therefore, if the students do overextend themselves, the punishment for these lapses in judgment is fairly gentle; the penalty for drops and withdrawals is no course credit awarded—a statement of “no harm done.” On the other hand, we have to be good stewards of faculty time and university facilities. When faculty teaching a course see the same faces reappear term after term, year after year, because these students have dropped or withdrawn or are repeating to get better grades, these professors are increasing their workload and circumscribing their freedom to teach other classes. In addition, a student who sits in a course only until midterm and then withdraws effectively prevents another student from sitting in that same seat for the entire term and earning credit. The balance between “no harm done” and the stress on physical resources is likely to be threatened by increasing enrollments throughout the next decade.

Eliminate preferences for “perennial” students. Universities, like institutions outside of the academy, reward seniority: upper-class students, such as juniors and seniors, get various kinds of perks for having made progress towards the degree. For example, many colleges have policies that enable seniors to have first priority for registration or for parking or for football tickets. The University of Georgia, in its campaign to encourage students to graduate, has considered reversing these priorities for students who have not completed a degree in four years. In short, students who attend for more than four years would be demoted to pre-freshman status in terms of perks and priorities.

Require students to enroll full-time. Some universities have required students to carry a minimum of 12 units per term (i.e., to be a full-time student according to financial aid purposes), assuming, again, that enrolling in more courses will keep students focused on academics as well as promote greater socialization into campus life. In the fall of 2002, for example, the University of Minnesota required all students to enroll in at least 13 units per term unless granted a special exemption.

Require students to enroll in at least one summer term. Several CSU campuses have noted that the transition to a state-supported summer school has helped to expedite students’ progress to the degree. The offering of more class sections that could be used to fulfill either GE or major requirements, the availability of financial aid, and the implementation of the standard academic year fee schedule should make summer attendance more attractive to students.

Provide incentives to students who graduate with the minimum number of credits needed to earn the degree. Past experience in the CSU has shown that behaviors can be modified if the punishments or rewards are substantial enough. For instance, when a fee increase was announced in the midst of the 1990s recession, student behavior changed quickly and dramatically: undergraduates took as many units as they could before the increase kicked in. Time has shown that many such incentives and disincentives can motivate students to graduate expeditiously. Some universities help to encourage a 4-year academic career by guaranteeing that they will not raise tuition over the course of the four years. Because many CSU students are not on a 4-year pace to the degree, it

makes more sense to provide incentives for students who graduate with the minimum number of credits needed to earn the degree.

Impose fee surcharges for excess units. The cost of getting a college education has always been an important influence on student behavior. One of the main reasons that private institutions have higher graduation rates than public universities do is that students enrolled in the former face tuition costs that can exceed \$20,000 per year; at these prices few students can afford to devote more than four years to achieving a baccalaureate degree. At public institutions, with college tuition subsidized by the state's taxpayers, students do not face prohibitive costs if they want to take extra courses. In recent years, however, the taxpayers, represented by governing boards or state legislatures, have begun to balk at supporting what some would call "professional students." Hence policies have been developed to force public university students taking excess credits to pay fees at private-university rates. In North Carolina, students with more than 140 credits pay a tuition surcharge that is 25 percent greater than regular tuition. In 1997, the Texas legislature authorized public universities to increase the tuition for students who had attempted 170 or more semester credit hours without earning a degree. In 1999, this policy was modified to apply to students who had accumulated more than 45 hours beyond the degree requirement. The Texas Education Code specified that the tuition rate for students taking excess hours should fall somewhere between the costs of resident and nonresident tuition.

III. Graduation Rates

The most common public indicator used to measure a university's success in graduating its students is called the "graduation rate," and it comes in various forms. The best known and the one that is annually required of all postsecondary educational institutions is a number that characterizes the percentage of students who graduate in six years. This measure of success is not highly valued by the CSU and many others because of the fine print in the reporting instructions. The rate is calculated by including only first-time full-time freshmen who remain at the same institution for the entire length of their academic careers. It goes without saying that this indicator is predicated upon a type of student who frequented college campuses in the 1950s: someone who enters college at age 18, lives on campus, takes a full load of courses every term, is enrolled continuously, works fewer than 20 hours (if at all), and has no family responsibilities. This is a far cry from the typical CSU student at the beginning of the 3rd millennium.

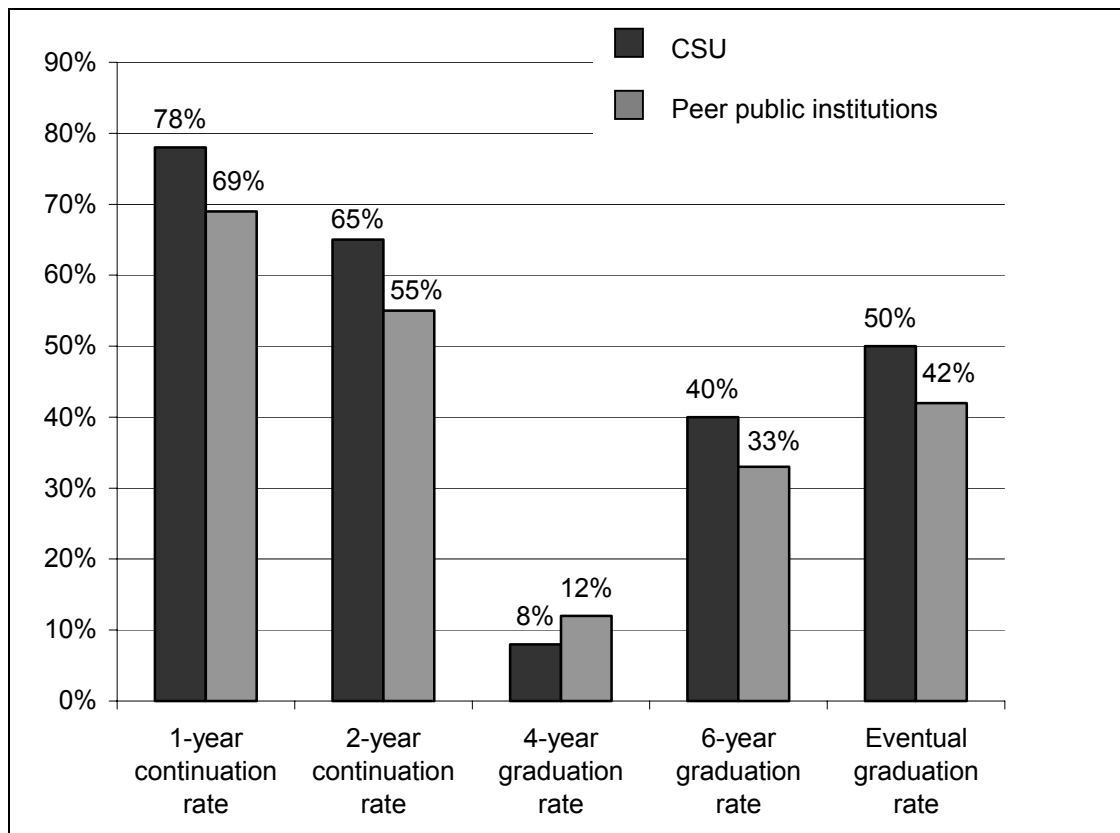
Hence there is no point in comparing CSU graduation rates to those at Harvard or Stanford or to any university that is highly selective, targets a traditional student body, is residential, or charges high tuition. Although the most common calculations of graduation rates are not appropriate to the CSU, reasonable benchmarks can be helpful in allowing similar types of institutions to gauge their relative success, and thus numerous methodologies have been developed to allow for more meaningful comparisons. The following is an analysis of graduation rates in the CSU.

A. Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS) Graduation Rates: CSU and Comparison Institutions

CSU continuation and graduation rates are comparable to and usually better than those of peer public institutions, that is, comprehensive institutions serving students with similar levels of academic preparation. See Chart 1 for these comparisons.

Chart 1

Continuation and graduation rates of first-time full-time freshmen at their campus of origin in the CSU system and peer public institutions

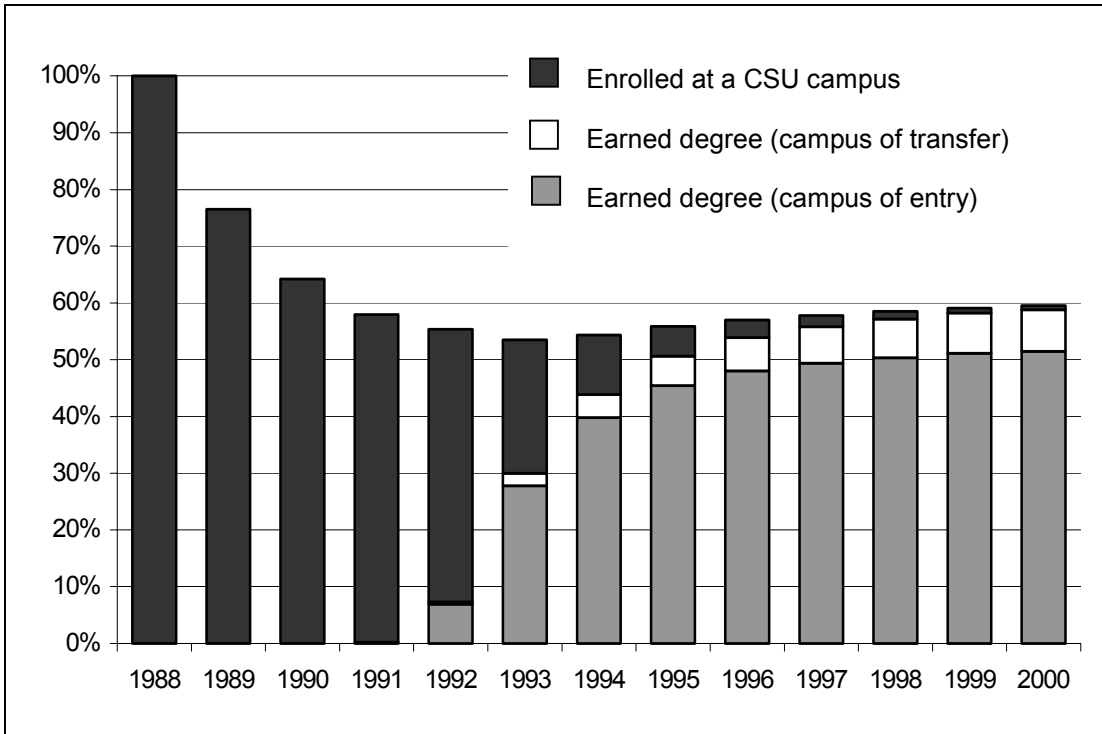


Under the terms of the California Master Plan for Higher Education, the CSU focuses on undergraduates and serves as the primary transfer institution for students from the California Community Colleges. The CSU strives to keep a general balance of 40 percent lower-division and 60 percent upper-division students. Because the CSU's transfer population is so large, it is useful, when graduation rates are calculated, to distinguish between students who entered the CSU as first-time freshmen and those who arrived as transfer students.

• **CSU Graduation Rates: First-Time Freshmen**

For many years, the CSU has tracked its first-time freshmen across time and from their original campus of entry to other CSU campuses. The CSU freshman graduation rate is close to 60 percent (see Chart 2).

Chart 2
CSU graduation rates of first-time freshmen

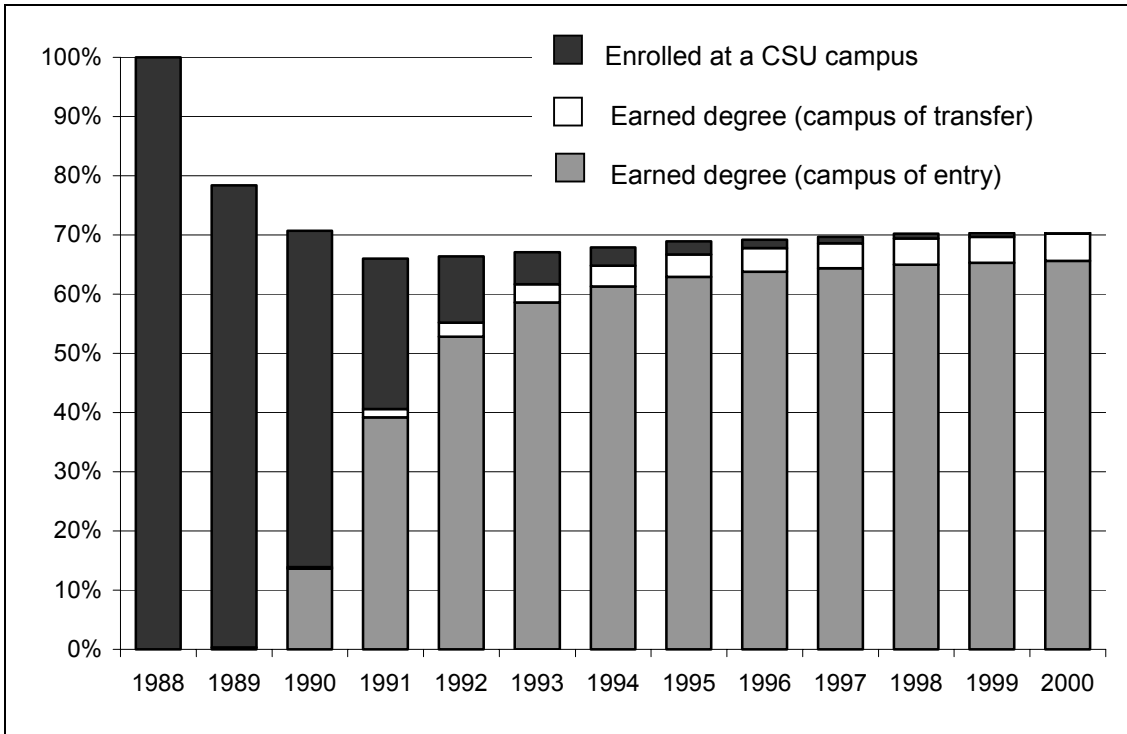


Fall	Still enrolled at original campus	Still enrolled at CSU campus of transfer	Earned a degree at CSU campus of transfer	Earned a degree at campus of entry	Persistence rate
1988	100.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	100.0%
1989	76.5	1.9	0.0	0.0	78.4
1990	64.2	3.8	0.0	0.0	68.1
1991	57.8	5.7	0.0	0.2	63.8
1992	48.1	6.3	0.4	6.9	61.7
1993	23.5	4.7	2.2	27.8	58.2
1994	10.4	3.0	4.1	39.8	57.3
1995	5.3	2.1	5.2	45.4	58.0
1996	3.1	1.4	5.9	48.0	58.5
1997	2.0	1.0	6.4	49.4	58.9
1998	1.3	0.8	6.8	50.4	59.3
1999	0.9	0.6	7.1	51.1	59.8
2000	0.7	0.5	7.3	51.5	59.9

• **CSU Graduation Rates: Community College Transfers**

As shown in Chart 3, the graduation rate of upper-division community college transfers who graduate from the CSU is over 70 percent. When native freshmen who reach the upper-division in the CSU are compared with upper-division community college transfers, their graduation rates are similar.

Chart 3
CSU graduation rates of community college transfers



Fall	Still enrolled at original campus	Still enrolled at CSU campus of transfer	Earned a degree at CSU campus of transfer	Earned a degree at campus of entry	Persistence rate
1988	100.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	100.0%
1989	78.1	28.0	0.3	0.0	81.2
1990	56.8	3.7	13.6	0.3	74.5
1991	25.4	2.9	39.2	1.4	68.9
1992	11.2	1.8	52.8	2.4	68.3
1993	5.4	1.2	58.6	3.1	68.2
1994	3.1	0.9	61.3	3.5	68.8
1995	2.2	0.8	62.9	3.8	69.6
1996	1.4	0.6	63.8	4.0	69.8
1997	1.1	0.5	64.4	4.2	70.2
1998	0.8	0.4	65.0	4.4	70.6
1999	0.6	0.4	65.3	4.4	70.8
2000	0.5	0.2	65.6	4.6	70.9

B. Joint Commission on Accountability Reporting (JCAR) Graduation Rates

In addition to IPEDS, CSU also uses another type of graduation rate, known as the Joint Commission on Accountability Reporting (JCAR), because it looks at a broader range of factors affecting graduation rates: (1) the pace at which students take courses, and (2) whether or not students transfer to another institution.

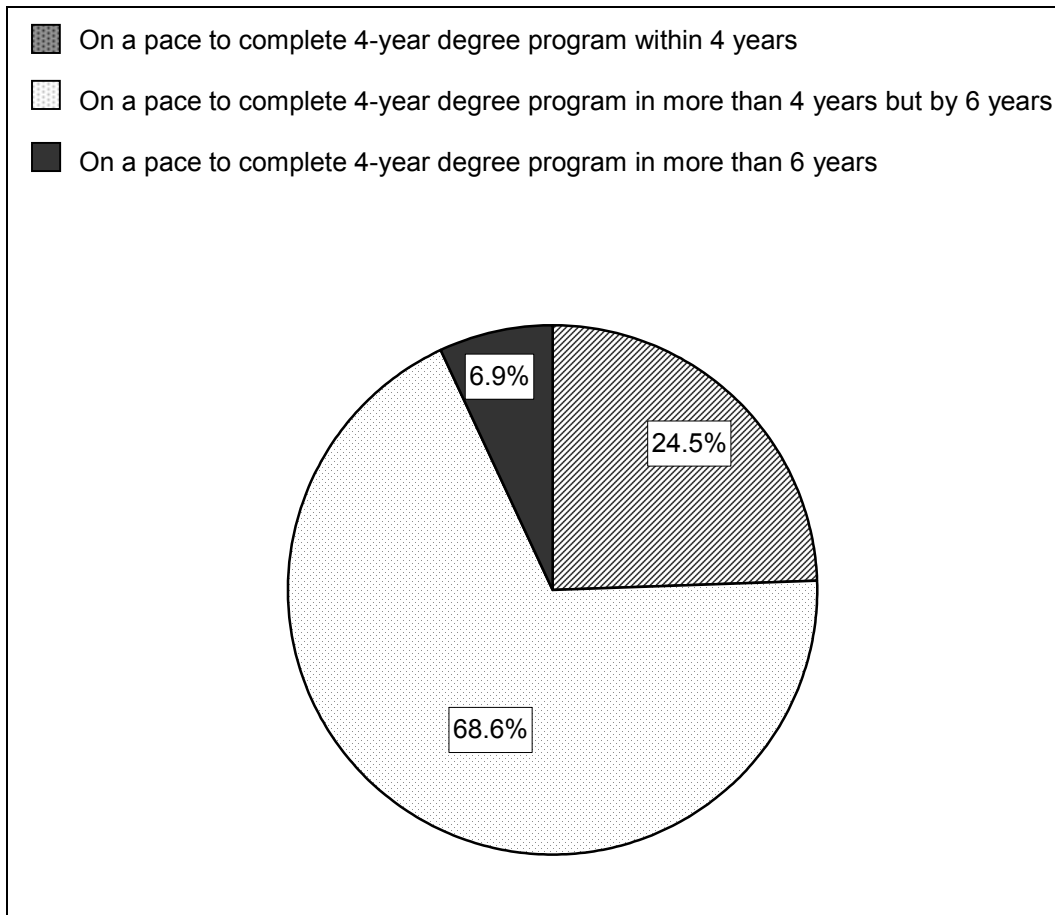
• *JCAR Graduation Rates: CSU First-Time Freshmen*

The CSU is committed to helping students make progress to degree at the pace they prefer, and JCAR graduation rates take into account the variability of students' college careers. In general, CSU students proceed to the degree in three different ways. First, some CSU students are like those at research institutions who enroll in courses at a pace to graduate in four years. Second, most CSU students take courses at a rate to complete the degree in four to six years—a pace considered full-time for financial aid purposes (12 units per term). Finally, students who must work and are able to enroll only sporadically or on a part-time basis also are part of the CSU student body.

The JCAR methodology first requires an assessment of the pace at which students are taking courses. Chart 4 shows the differences in pace-to-degree for regularly admitted first-time freshmen who started at a CSU campus in the fall of 1995.

Chart 4

CSU first-time freshmen proceeding to graduation at different paces



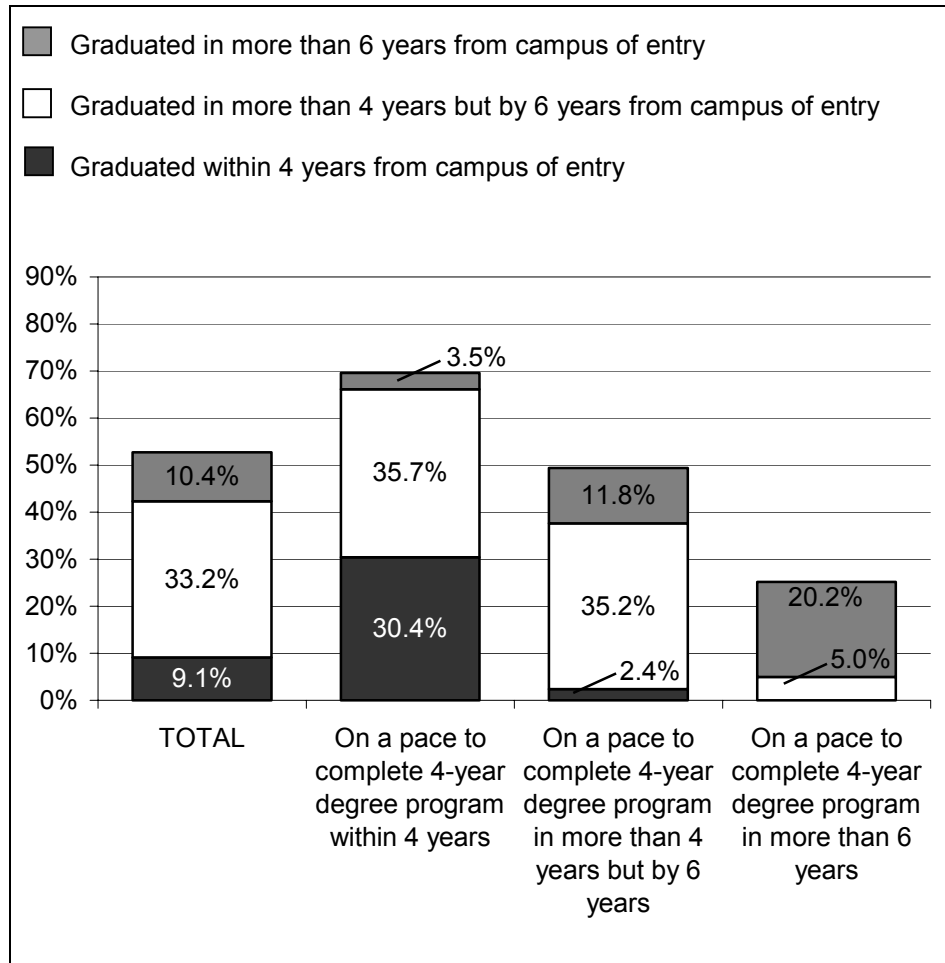
Almost 3 of 12 CSU students who entered as first-time freshmen in fall 1995 took courses at a pace to complete the baccalaureate within four years. About 8 of 12 CSU students took courses at a pace to complete the baccalaureate in more than four years but by the sixth. About 1 of 12 (almost seven percent of) CSU students attended on a very part-time basis, a pace that would require more than six years for graduation.

The pace at which students proceed to the degree has an effect on their eventual graduation rates. The following discussion focuses on students who enrolled in and graduated from the same CSU campus.

As shown by the second column in Chart 5, students who have enrolled in courses at a pace to get the degree in four years have almost a 70 percent graduation rate from the CSU campus of entry.

Chart 5

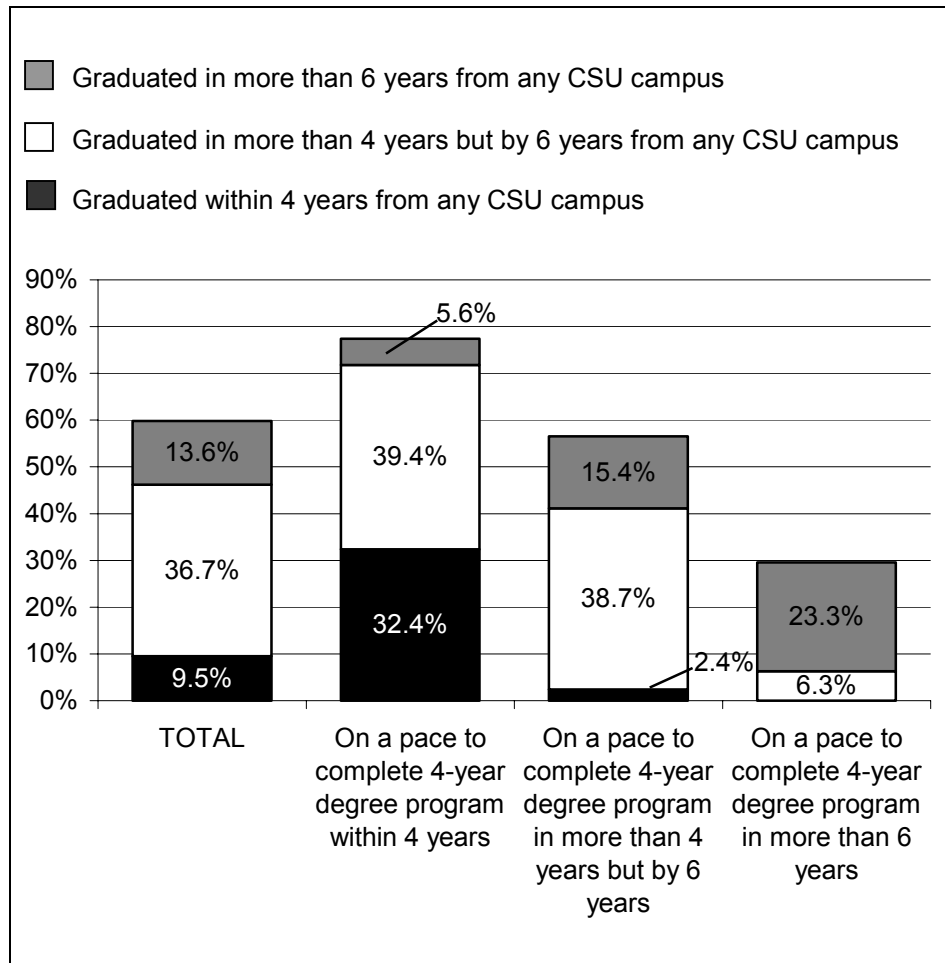
JCAR graduation rates of first-time freshmen from CSU campus of entry



As shown in the third column from the left, about 50 percent or two of every four students taking units at a pace consistent with the financial aid definition of full-time (12 units per term) get the degree from the campus of entry—about the same rate as the overall CSU graduation rate (campus of entry). Students who are enrolled at a pace to graduate in six or more years are often doing so because of their need to juggle work, family, and school. These students are much less likely to graduate from their CSU campus. Only about one in four of these students gets the baccalaureate degree from the campus of entry. The CSU experience thus confirms the findings of *Answers in the Tool Box* that students who take 20 or fewer units in their first year significantly reduce their chances of getting a degree.

With 23 campuses across the state, the CSU offers students both the chance to get away from home and the convenience of remaining in familiar surroundings. With these flexible options, some students find that they want to return home, while others pursue school and work away from home. That is why JCAR also calculates graduation rates for students who entered one CSU campus as freshmen but graduated from another CSU campus (see Chart 6).

Chart 6
JCAR graduation rates of first-time freshmen from any CSU campus



The destination of most students who transfer from a CSU campus to other 4-year institutions is another CSU campus. The proportion of CSU first-time freshmen who get a CSU baccalaureate—from any CSU campus, not necessarily the campus of entry—is 60 percent (as shown in the first column on the left). For students on a 4-year pace to degree (second column from the left), the graduation rate is comparable to many flagship public institutions.

However, the charts illustrating the JCAR graduation rates also suggest a worrisome trend. One would expect that students who enroll full-time and complete four years of full-time study would graduate at the end of four years. But this is not the case, as shown in Chart 6. Only a third of the students who have taken 120 or more semester units (180 or more quarter units) by the end of their fourth year at a CSU campus graduated at that point. Most of the students who by all accounts *should* have graduated in four years instead stay on in the CSU taking courses for an extra year or two. Why students take more courses than necessary is a subject for investigation on individual CSU campuses. Questions to be asked might include these: Does the institution in some way put up

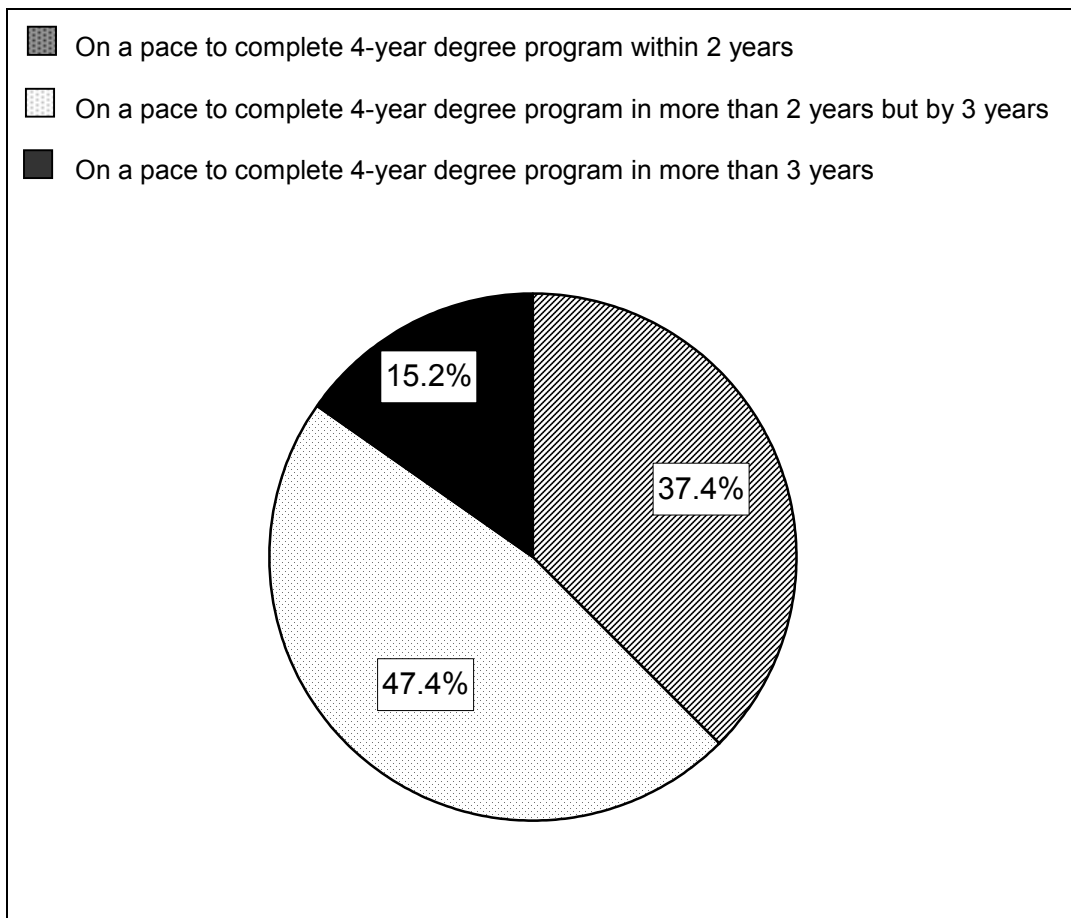
obstacles that cause full-time students to keep taking classes after four years of full-time study? Does the student take additional courses for enrichment or personal development? If so, to what extent should the state be expected to subsidize excess credits?

• ***JCAR Graduation Rates: Community College Transfers***

In general, California Community College students who transfer to the CSU as juniors are on a clear, direct track to a degree. Data were examined for junior-level students who transferred to the CSU from the CCC in the fall of 1998. The proportion taking courses at a pace to complete the degree in two years (37.4%) is larger than the proportion of native freshmen taking courses at a pace to degree completion in four years (24.5%). See Chart 7. Similarly, more than twice the proportion of CCC junior transfers (15.2%) take courses at a pace to complete the degree in more than three years compared with the proportion for comparably enrolling native freshmen (6.9%).

Chart 7

CSU transfer students proceeding to graduation at different paces

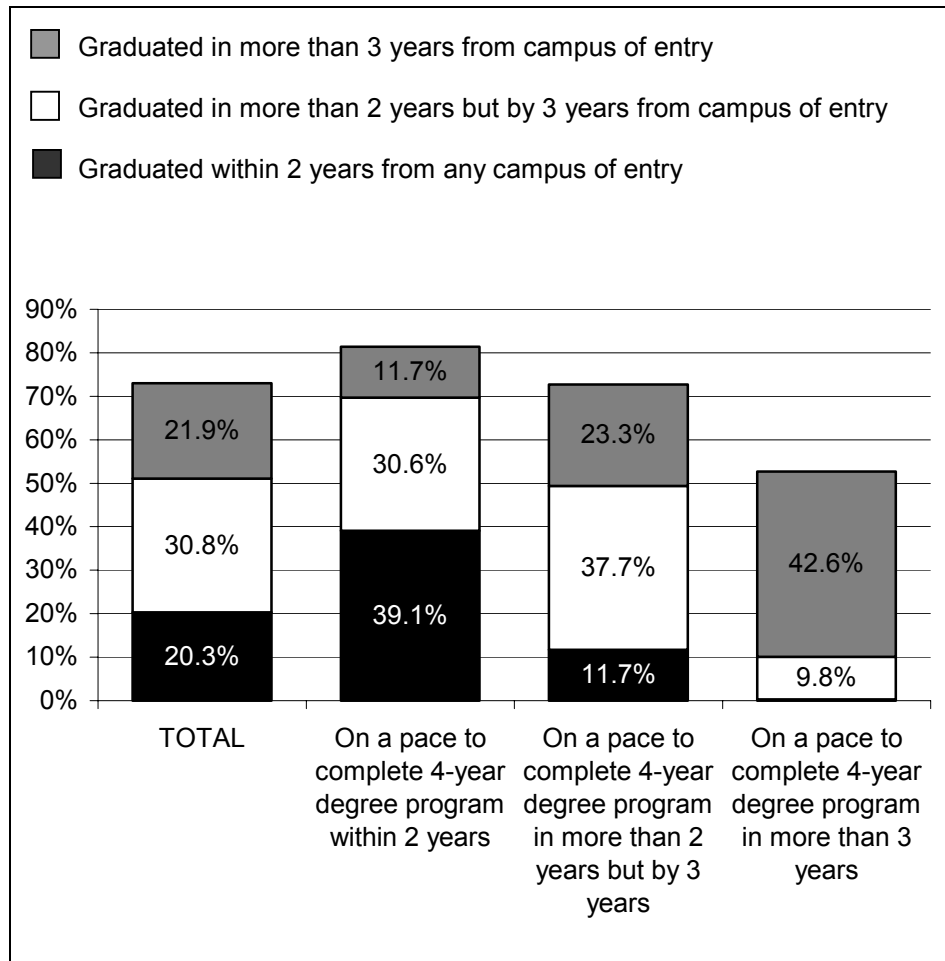


Once again, just as with native freshmen, the pace at which transfer students proceed to

the degree has an effect on their eventual graduation rates. The following discussion focuses on students who transferred to and graduated from the same CSU campus.

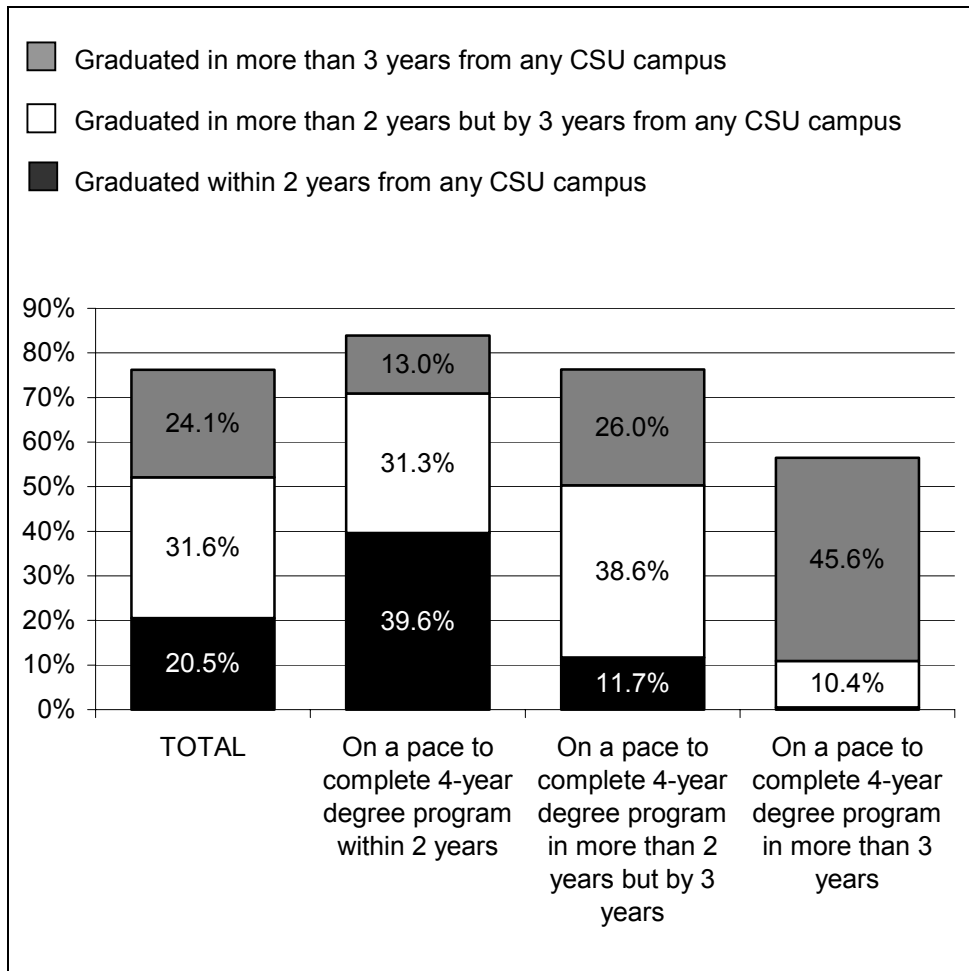
As shown in Chart 8, CCC junior transfers who enrolled in courses at a pace to get the degree in two years have over an 80 percent graduation rate from the CSU campus of entry (see second bar from the left). About 70 percent of students taking units at a pace consistent with the financial aid definition of full-time (12 units per term) get the degree from the campus of entry—about the same rate as the overall CSU graduation rate (campus of entry). Students who need to juggle work, family, and school are less likely to graduate from their CSU campus. Only a little over 50 percent of these students get the degree from their campus of entry.

Chart 8
JCAR graduation rates of transfer students from CSU campus of entry



Unlike CSU first-time freshmen, junior CCC transfers to a CSU campus are not apt to transfer yet again. Most are bound to the area by work and family. As such, the graduation rates from any CSU campus of junior CCC transfers are high (see Chart 9).

Chart 9
JCAR graduation rates of transfer students from any CSU campus



As indicated on page 14 of this report, IPEDS graduation rates for the CSU are similar to those at other large, comprehensive, commuter institutions. Using the JCAR methodology, we can see that the graduation rates for certain cohorts of CSU students (such as those on a 4-year pace to degree) rival those at public research universities. Although our graduation rates are respectable, we would, nevertheless, like them to improve; we would like to be able to say that, whether it takes them 4 years or 12 years, almost all of our students earn a baccalaureate degree. Learning is never wasted, even if it fails to culminate in a degree, and we believe that the 30 percent of CSU students who never do earn a degree have grown, changed, developed, matured, become wiser, and benefited in a myriad of ways from the educational experience. Yet we also know that this 30 percent of our students likely do not benefit from the advantages that research has shown to accrue to degree holders.

IV. Degree Completion and Time-to-Degree

The strategies discussed in this report suggest ways in which universities can help students attain baccalaureate degrees, but several of them are also directed towards a subsidiary goal: helping students get degrees sooner rather than later. Strategies like fee surcharges and 4-year guarantees are designed to get students not just to graduate but to do so in a timely manner. In the early 1990s, there was considerable concern nationally after a report from the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) revealed that the percentage of students graduating in four years or less had declined to 31.1 percent in 1990 from 45.4 percent in 1977. The California State legislature as well as the Board of Trustees expressed alarm over the number of years it took CSU students to graduate, and this led to several internal studies of time-to-degree.

At the CSU system level, a 1994 report indicated that, on average, a CSU first-time freshman earned a baccalaureate degree in 4.9 years and that, on average, a CSU transfer student took 3 years to complete the degree. The report also showed that 80 percent of degree holders who started as freshmen graduated within 6 years and that 81 percent of transfer students completed their degrees in 4 years. Analysis of student enrollment patterns showed that two factors extended students' time-to-degree. First, students who had undeclared majors or changed their major at some point significantly increased their time-to-degree. Second, students tended to take time off: of the baccalaureate-earners who started in the CSU as freshmen, two out of every three took at least one term off. Of the degree earners who were upper-division transfers, three of every ten "stopped out" for at least one term.

To supplement these systemwide analyses, two CSU campuses undertook a more detailed exploration of the reasons that CSU students did not graduate in a timely manner. CSU Hayward examined the traits and behaviors of a cohort of first-time freshmen, and CSU Dominguez Hills examined the factors relating to undergraduate transfers.

The group at CSU Hayward compared the transcripts of students who finished in four years with the transcripts of those who graduated in five. The Hayward study showed that there were important differences in at least two areas: remediation and overall number of units earned (see Table 1).

Table 1
Factors affecting time-to-degree at CSU Hayward

Percentage of sample who had traits listed below	Graduated in 4 years	Graduated in 5 years
Needed remediation	23	63
Accrued excess units (200 or more quarter units)	20	48

The Hayward experience confirms that students who enroll in pre-baccalaureate coursework at the university extend their time-to-degree. It also reinforces the contention of *Answers in the Tool Box* that the rigor and soundness of high school preparation is the major factor in baccalaureate degree completion.

The time-to-degree study at CSU Dominguez Hills concentrated exclusively on upper-division transfer students and was based on information collected from surveys, focus groups, data analysis, and transcript study. It examined the interplay between student choices and institutional structures. The researchers concluded that upper-division transfers would complete their degrees in two years if they “1) did not stop out, 2) had a major at entry (requiring a total of 124 units for graduation), 3) did not change majors or campuses, 4) took a full load (at least 15-16 units) each term, and 5) had no major external commitments.”

The studies of the early 1990s demonstrated fairly conclusively that the CSU—with its dramatically diverse student body—was never going to conform to the straightjacket of a 4-year time-to-degree. The research did point out, however, that there were many areas in which the university could clear obstacles to graduation through better advising, more focused interventions, and better procedures. The philosophy that has guided the CSU in the past decade is best summed up in the CSU Hayward report:

One might hold that there is nothing wrong if a student enrolls for eight years and accumulates 250 [quarter-units] on the way to the B.A., so long as the student feels enriched and wants to do it that way. Expressed in exaggerated form, this purist position would be practical only in a world of unlimited resources. It also flies in the face of the fact that most of our students want to finish as soon as possible, a goal they frequently express.

We believe the values of efficiency and of education as personal development are both valid. To the extent they compete, it is necessary to strike some balance between them. We think this balance is best struck by taking as given the overwhelming diversity of our students’ backgrounds and circumstances, recognizing that our students will necessarily complete bachelor’s degree requirements according to many different timetables.

The primary concern of this report is, as the title says, “facilitating student success in achieving the baccalaureate degree.” Nevertheless, we know that the flood of Tidal Wave II students will force us to find more creative ways to meet our commitment to the top third of California’s high school students, and we know that students who “stop out” for prolonged periods or who take fewer than 20 credits a year are in danger of never completing the degree at all. We have to assume that it is in the best interest of both students and taxpayers for the students, first and foremost, to earn degrees. A secondary interest is for students to progress to the baccalaureate expeditiously.

Although CSU students complete degrees at different paces, some slower and some faster, the data indicate that the quality of the degree they earn is high. In the past year, several CSU campuses participated as a consortium in the National Survey of Student

Engagement (NSSE). This highly respected survey collects information to assess the extent to which students engage in good educational practices. In 2002, the NSSE sample included over 200,000 students from 366 four-year colleges and universities. In reporting the results, NSSE compared the CSU to other institutions classified as Master’s I & II in the Carnegie classification system.

Table 2 shows some of the data from the 2002 NSSE survey. The CSU equaled or exceeded comparable institutions in 9 of 15 descriptors referenced to the question “To what extent has your experience at this institution contributed to your knowledge, skills, and personal development in the following areas? Very much (4), Quite a bit (3), Some (2), Very little (1).”

Table 2
Student knowledge, skills, and personal development

Description	CSU Mean	Master’s Mean
Writing clearly and effectively	2.96	2.90
Speaking clearly and effectively	2.84	2.67
Analyzing quantitative problems	2.65	2.58
Using computing and information technology	2.70	2.68
Working effectively with others	2.90	2.83
Understanding yourself	2.84	2.84
Understanding people of other racial and ethnic backgrounds	2.76	2.61
Solving complex real-world problems	2.54	2.47
Voting in local, state, or national elections	1.69	1.58

Similarly the CSU equaled or exceeded comparable institutions in half of the descriptors referenced to the question “In your experience at your institution during the current school year, about how often have you done each of the following? Very often (4), Often (3), Sometimes (2), Never (1).” See Table 3.

Table 3
Student academic activities

Description	CSU Mean	Master's Mean
Made a class presentation	2.47	2.27
Prepared two or more drafts of a paper or assignment before turning it in	2.94	2.75
Worked on a paper or project that required integrating ideas or information from various sources	3.10	3.05
Included diverse perspectives (different races, religions, genders, political beliefs, etc.) in class discussions or writing	2.81	2.70
Worked with other students on projects during class	2.55	2.40
Tutored or taught other students (paid or voluntary)	1.64	1.62
Participated in a community-based project as part of a regular course	1.44	1.43
Had serious conversations with students of a different race or ethnicity than your own	2.64	2.54

These data show that although CSU students travel at different paces and take different routes to a baccalaureate degree, they still experience a high-quality education and engage in academic activities that require active learning and engagement, which, as research has shown, are strong indicators of degree completion.

V. National Concerns about Graduation Rates

As the CSU prepares this initiative on helping students progress to the degree, pressures to improve both degree completion and time-to-degree are mounting on the national political scene.

The first sign of a renewed interest in this topic came from a prominent national think tank, the National Center for Public Policy and Higher Education, led by Patrick Callan. In December 2000, Callan's organization released *Measuring Up 2000: The State-by-State Report Card for Higher Education*, a document that graded states according to accomplishments of postsecondary educational institutions. The report cards were based on five criteria, one of which included degree completion. Intended to allow state policymakers to compare their state's performance with other states' outcomes, the report generated considerable discussion and a wide range of blame and praise. While generally

supportive of the attempt to spur improvement through accountability, many commentators criticized the methodology for calculating degree completion rates, which was based on a 5-year graduation rate and included only students who graduated from the institution in which they matriculated as freshmen. While acknowledging these deficiencies and advocating systems that would allow better tracking of students across institutions, *Measuring Up* nevertheless put graduation rates on the national agenda.

Slightly more than a year after Callan's document was published, the U.S. Department of Education also showed an interest in improving graduation rates. In a draft of a new strategic plan for elementary, secondary, and postsecondary education, officials from the George W. Bush administration indicated that graduation rates in higher education would be a primary focus for the new president as well as for Secretary of Education Roderick R. Paige. The 2002 guidelines for the popular FIPSE grant programs have been revised in order to specify improving completion rates as a program area, and graduation rates are likely to figure in the reauthorization of the Higher Education Act when it comes up next year.

Indicating that an interest in completion rates is bipartisan, Senator Joseph I. Lieberman, a Connecticut Democrat and former vice-presidential candidate, delivered a major speech before a graduating class of 2002 in which he suggested that the government should reward colleges and universities for improving their graduation rates. In the commencement address, Lieberman suggested that by the year 2020, colleges should be graduating 90 percent of their students within six years.

The strong signals from a U.S. Senator, the U.S. President, and a highly regarded national think-tank would seem to indicate that federal policymakers could be playing a larger role in higher education in the future. Heretofore, the federal government has devoted its attention largely to elementary and secondary schools, but the recent comments about graduation rates reveal that the government is paying more attention to how well and how efficiently universities are educating their students.

VI. Conclusion

Despite the flurry of activity in Washington D.C., pressure to increase graduation rates should not come from commentators who seize on isolated and de-contextualized numbers published in the media. In fact, it is our job to better educate policymakers, the media, and others about the wide diversity of missions and students in higher education. The pressure to improve the rate at which our students earn bachelor's degrees should come not from without, but from within—from our own desire to see students succeed and to ensure that we do not put up obstacles or encourage behaviors that bode ill for the individual student as well as for the institution. With Tidal Wave II currently flooding CSU campuses, no one wants to turn away qualified high school students because there is no more space in the classroom (especially if the classroom is full of repeaters).

In terms of students' pursuit of a degree, one size does not fit all. Some CSU students

have returned to school after a long absence and earned degrees as septuagenarians. The CSU embraces the tenacity, the complexity, and the richness in the lives of these people who take unusual or roundabout routes to a college degree. Similarly, the CSU welcomes the young prodigy who graduates with a bachelor's degree at age 16. Most people, however, do not fall into either one of these extremes on the continuum. Most enter college in their late teens or early 20s intending to get a degree. What that degree will be and how it will be earned—these are sometimes mysteries to entering students who have uncertain direction, who need to be inspired to intellectual curiosity, or who have dreams too vast or too uncircumscribed to be realized. The job of CSU faculty, staff, and administrators is to provide direction, give good counsel, balance the interests of students with the interests of the citizens of California, and help students achieve what most of them want when they enter college: a university degree of high quality.

VII. Principles and Recommendations

After reviewing local, state, and national information on graduation rates, strategies for helping students achieve the baccalaureate, and the range of additional policy options discussed in the body of this report, the CSU Task Force on Facilitating Graduation identified several principles to which it was committed and which would undergird the recommendations that the Task Force made.

A. Principles of the Task Force

1. The primary goal of the academic enterprise is to provide a high-quality, productive, meaningful academic experience for students.
2. One of the great gifts and strengths of the California State University is the diversity of the student body in terms of age, native language, race, ethnicity, parents' educational levels, socio-economic status, and career and educational goals.
3. While recognizing the diversity of both our students and the campus environments and missions that influence how students progress to a bachelor's degree, the CSU has an overarching commitment to facilitating graduation.
4. Students as well as faculty, staff, and administrators share a responsibility in making sure that students graduate in a timely manner.
5. In undertaking new initiatives to help facilitate graduation, the CSU will focus on things that it can control.
6. The CSU has a responsibility to the state, to its students, and to the taxpayers to make sure that state funds are spent effectively. It is necessary to strike a balance

between the wishes and desires of individual students and the wise use of fiscal resources.

B. Recommendations of the Task Force

In making these recommendations, the Task Force has reviewed the research on degree completion and the many different kinds of policy options listed in “Section II: On the Path to the Baccalaureate Degree.” We understand that we have limited influence over the most important factor: exposure to a rigorous curriculum in secondary school. We understand that, given a diverse student body, imposing standardized requirements—such as full-time enrollment—is not possible. We understand that we cannot markedly affect students’ decisions about the relative priorities of family, work, and school. Hence, in offering these recommendations, we focus on aspects of students’ experiences and aspects of the CSU that are realistically subject to intervention and change and recommend only some of the policy options listed earlier.

For CSU Campuses:

Develop a plan, based on local institutional research, to improve graduation rates. The plan should include these actions:

1. Develop 4-year, 5-year, and 6-year graduation roadmaps for all academic degree programs. These roadmaps should be term-by-term depictions of the courses in which students should enroll over the entirety of their academic careers (general education and major) and should address both day and evening programs when program size is sufficient to support both patterns. After the plans have been developed, they should be accessible to students at feeder community colleges and high schools.
2. Develop and implement projected campus master class schedules designed to accommodate these roadmaps and ensure that required courses will be available during the specified terms.
3. Require a mandatory progress-to-degree audit at a specific checkpoint (such as when a native freshman accumulates 65 semester units or upon entry for a transfer student), followed by the requisite advising and regular updates on the audit.
4. Improve online and hard-copy university catalogues so that they are well designed, well organized, readable, and useful.
5. Use summer term to promote student progress to degree by analyzing student course needs so as to offer a class schedule that enables students to enroll in bottleneck courses and required courses in GE and the major.

The plan should include other strategies appropriate to the individual campuses. These could include such strategies as:

6. Offer new students an intensive first-year experience.
7. Expand faculty professional development for improved instructional effectiveness.
8. Improve advising practices.

For the CSU System:

9. Ensure that there is an infrastructure and funding to allow each campus to establish on-demand, online graduation progress reports and progress-to-degree audits.
10. Sponsor multi-campus workshops for the sharing of effective strategies for facilitating graduation.
11. Convene a group to consider the need for CSU systemwide policies on course drops, withdrawals, incompletes, and repeats.

For the CSU Board of Trustees:

12. Review campus plans and progress annually.
13. After four years, assess the improvements in graduation rates, and consider if more incentives and disincentives are needed for both students and institutions. These might include fee surcharges for excess units, fee incentives for students who graduate with close to the minimum number of semester-credits needed to earn the degree, fee rebates for graduating students who attended summer school, mandatory summer school attendance, and performance funding based on campuses' internal improvements in graduation rates.
14. Consider budgetary augmentation to implement recommendations.

VIII. List of Sources

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**Appendix A:
Alignment of Range of Additional Policy Options Reviewed by the Task Force with
Final Recommendations**

Range of Additional Policy Options Reviewed (Not all are recommended)	Recommendations that Correspond to Policy Options
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Require that remediation be completed within one semester or two quarters of a student’s fall-term enrollment in the CSU (p. 4) 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Offer intensive first-year experiences (p. 6) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Offer new students an intensive first-year experience (p. 31, no. 6)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue to expand instructional effectiveness (p. 7) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Expand faculty professional development for improved instructional effectiveness (p. 31, no. 7) ○ Sponsor multi-campus workshops for the sharing of effective strategies for facilitating graduation (p. 31, no. 10)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create roadmaps to graduation (p. 9) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Develop 4-year, 5-year, and 6-year graduation roadmaps for all academic degree programs. These roadmaps should be term-by-term depictions of the courses in which students should enroll over the entirety of their academic careers (general education and major) and should address both day and evening programs when program size is sufficient to support both patterns. After the plans have been developed, they should be accessible to students at feeder community colleges and high schools (p. 30, no. 1) ○ Develop and implement projected campus master class schedules designed to accommodate these roadmaps and ensure that required courses will be available during the specified terms (p. 30, no. 2)

Appendix A, cont'd.

Range of Additional Policy Options Reviewed (Not all are recommended)	Recommendations that Correspond to Policy Options
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Make online progress-to-degree audits more widely available (p. 9) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Require a mandatory progress-to-degree audit at a specific checkpoint (such as when a native freshman accumulates 65 semester units or upon entry for a transfer student), followed by the requisite advising, and regular updates on the audit (p. 30, no. 3) ○ Ensure that there is an infrastructure and funding to allow each campus to establish on-demand, online graduation progress reports and progress-to-degree audits (p. 31, no. 9)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide readable and usable university catalogues (p. 9) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Improve online and hard-copy university catalogues so that they are well designed, well organized, readable, and useful (p. 30, no. 4)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reconsider policies on drops, withdrawals, incompletes (p. 11) • Reduce the number of course repeats allowed (p. 11) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Convene a group to consider the need for CSU systemwide policies on course drops, withdrawals, incompletes, and repeats (p. 31, no. 11)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Eliminate preferences for "perennial" students (p. 12) 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Require students to enroll full-time (p. 12) 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Require students to enroll in at least one summer term (p. 12) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Use summer term to promote student progress to degree by analyzing student course needs so as to offer a class schedule that enables students to enroll in bottleneck courses and required courses in GE and the major (p. 30, no. 5) <p>[Possible option, after four-year review] (p. 31, no. 13)</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide incentives to students who graduate with the minimum number of credits needed to earn the degree (p. 12) 	<p>[Possible option, after four-year review] (p. 31, no. 13)</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Impose fee surcharges for excess units (p. 13) 	<p>[Possible option, after four-year review] (p. 31, no. 13)</p>

Appendix B: Sample CSU Campus Strategies for Facilitating Graduation

CSU Bakersfield

The campus has a mandatory orientation class for new freshmen, an advising center, committed faculty for advising who undergo regular training, a mentoring system, and a large number of on-campus and school-based off-campus jobs for students.

CSU Chico

The campus has an extensive website listing all the academic majors, course by course, in a four-year/eight-semester degree plan; this, along with faculty advising the students, is felt to have contributed strongly to their students' successes in completing their degrees.

CSU Dominguez Hills

PACE – This program features a structured course sequence that enables students to complete the upper division coursework for the Liberal Studies major in six terms, or two calendar years, with courses offered on weekends in three terms per year.

GWAR – This program places a hold on registration if the student has not satisfied the GWAR by completing 72 units. Previously this hold was placed at 90 units. Students with holds sign contracts with advisors at the University Advisement Center indicating how they will satisfy the GWAR.

CSU Fresno

Unit Reduction – This program reduces the units required to 120 and 124 for Bachelors of Arts and Bachelors of Science, which increases the ability of students to achieve their degrees.

Faculty Mentoring Program (FMP) – Through this program faculty members mentor students from families in the San Joaquin Valley that traditionally have not attended college.

University I – This program is a freshman-level course designed to assist incoming freshmen in acclimating to the university during their first term.

Enhanced Advising Services – This program received increased funding, which allowed for the expansion of the advising staff and services.

Reconfiguration of Remedial Math and English Offerings – This program looks at low test scores and offers English and Math Lab courses to supplement English I and Math courses.

CSU Fullerton

Campus Retention Initiative Project – This program, implemented in 1995, has funded over 75 initiatives designed to decrease time-to-degree, academic probation, and disqualification, while concurrently promoting a more widespread, efficient, and effective use of all university resources by faculty, staff, and university students.

Appendix B, cont'd.

Freshman Programs – This program was developed to increase the persistence and graduation rates of incoming first-time freshmen. It offers a one-year learning community.

The Compass Program – This is a component of the freshman program and is designed for students who do not have a major or are unsure about the one they have chosen. This one-semester learning community links students to faculty, staff, and alumni who serve as career mentors to aid in charting a career path and selecting a major.

Live-N-Learn – This is another component of the freshman program and is a learning community designed for students who live in the residence halls on campus. Speech communications and another linked course are offered in the residence halls for these students.

Student Diversity Program – This program is designed to provide guidance and retention services to diverse student populations by developing action plans and programs to address academic, social, and cultural needs. The SDP goal has been to integrate students into university life.

CSU Hayward

Freshman GE Cluster Program – This program is structured so that students are placed into a learning community consisting of a three-quarter sequence of a GE cluster. The students progress as a cohort through the GE cluster sequence.

Reducing Math Remediation for Summer Bridge Students – This program is a Summer Bridge program for entering freshmen who need additional help to succeed at the university level. Most of these students need remediation in math. This program can facilitate their graduation by reducing the time they spend in remedial courses. This ensures that students get through remedial math coursework in one year or less.

Humboldt State

Freshman Interest Groups (FIG) – This program typically clusters two to four courses together and normally attaches an additional one-unit seminar. The courses in a FIG usually meet general education or major requirements and are clustered around a theme or major emphasis.

Academic Information & Referral Center – This is a “one-stop” center for academic information for students and faculty. It is a clearinghouse for information regarding academic regulations and graduation requirements and provides academic support for Undeclared, Liberal Studies (non-teaching), and Interdisciplinary Studies students.

CSU Long Beach

Mandatory Advising for Freshmen – This program will direct students to appropriate classes. The university made a commitment to provide enough class sections to guarantee that every freshman can have a full program (at least 12 units) of appropriate courses and that every student can complete basic skills courses early in the college career. Once registered, first semester freshmen may not change their programs without the permission of an advisor. Freshmen also are required to see an advisor before they are allowed to register for a second semester.

Appendix B, cont'd.

CSU Los Angeles

Minority Biomedical Research Support/RISE – This program is designed to increase the number of underrepresented minority biomedical scientists. Students accepted into the program must have at least a 2.5 grade point average, demonstrate potential, and be interested in pursuing a Ph.D. in a biomedically related area. Students are assisted by a faculty mentor and participate in a bona fide research experience with, or supervised by, this mentor. Students attend a seminar series presented by distinguished scientists and travel and present at regional and national scientific meetings.

CSU Maritime Academy

Job Placement – This campus places an emphasis on careers and 100 percent job placement in the recruitment of students. This is the key to increasing the graduation rate at the Maritime Academy.

CSU Monterey Bay

Admission and Records – This department developed a process that includes timelines and reminders to potential graduates for submission of graduation petitions. A website was designed that includes deadlines for each term as well as the graduation process. The Admission and Records office is currently placing all graduation forms online as well.

CSU Northridge

PACE - This program enables adult working students to complete their bachelor's degrees while keeping full-time jobs or other commitments. PACE students complete their degrees in about two years by attending accelerated eight-week courses that meet on evenings and weekends.

Freshman Seminar – This program introduces first-time freshmen to the university as an institution, a culture, and an intellectual experience.

Cal Poly Pomona

Many departments have developed practices for course scheduling to meet student demand. These strategies include the following: 1) the highest priority for scheduling is given to graduating seniors; 2) schedules are designed to accommodate working students, with sections distributed throughout the morning, afternoon, and evening; 3) after initial registration, resources are reallocated to meet the demand from students; this involves adding and deleting sections for many courses; 4) departments adjust the number of sections offered each term based on prerequisites and trends; and 5) each spring, departments publish a list of upper-division electives for the following academic year.

CSU Sacramento

Freshman Seminar - This course is designed to help students develop and exercise fundamental academic success strategies and to improve their basic learning skills. The seminar also provides students with the opportunity to interact with fellow students and the seminar leader and to build a community of academic and personal support.

Appendix B, cont'd.

Online Access – Students can go online to access their academic programs. They can view their class schedules, financial accounts, grades, and degree progress.

CSU San Bernardino

EOP – This program was introduced 30 years ago. EOP students, many of whom entered the university as special admits, graduate at the same rate as mainstream students. These students enter with deficiencies and graduate at a rate equal to students who start at the university with much stronger background preparation. To develop a community spirit, there is also an EOP Leadership Club.

San Francisco State

Mandatory Advising as a Tool to Facilitate Completion of Bachelor's Degrees in Chemistry and Biochemistry – This program is successful as a result of aggressive communication with new students, transfers, and first-time freshmen in order to convince them to come to the department office to obtain an advisor. For example, to lift the hold on their touch-tone registration, students must visit their assigned advisors. The department provides a plethora of information on career counseling in conjunction with the SFSU Career Center.

Mandatory Advising as a Tool to Facilitate Completion of Bachelor's Degrees in Engineering – This department prepares a notice that is sent to all engineering students indicating that they MUST attend a mandatory advising meeting. Separate meetings are arranged for (1) Lower Division, (2) General Education, (3) Civil Engineering, (4) Electrical Engineering, and (5) Mechanical Engineering. Individual advising is available after the group meetings.

Mandatory Advising as a Tool to Facilitate Completion of Bachelor's Degrees in Health and Human Services – The College of Health and Human Services created a Student Resource Center to provide group as well as one-on-one services for its majors. The Center also reviews the performance pattern of students who demonstrate poor academic planning and devises appropriate interventions.

San José State

Policy Change - This policy change was implemented to increase the payoff for succeeding in a course the first time it is taken and to limit the view of academic renewal as an unlimited bailout for past failures. The policy was changed to limit the number of units that can be renewed (18 units for those who enter as freshmen, and 9 units for junior transfers).

Student Support Services – This program was developed to encourage students to see institutional units such as Academic Records as part of a system designed to foster and support student success, rather than as an impediment to success. A student success center is in the planning stages and will incorporate even more academic support activities (e.g., peer mentoring center).

Intensive Freshman Seminars – (MUSE) This program includes 100 seminars that are limited to 15 students per seminar. In addition, a variety of other activities, colloquia, etc. have been planned throughout the semester.

Appendix B, cont'd.

Cal Poly San Luis Obispo

PolyProgress Project – This program developed a web-based degree audit program in conjunction with other advising and retention services that will provide students, advisors, and evaluators clear information regarding credit earned at Cal Poly as well as other institutions, in-progress work, and the application of this academic work against a specific catalog and/or set of program standards.

Letter of Encouragement vs. So Sorry Letter – This program changed the tone of the communiqué from the Academic Records Office to one of “you are almost there; you only need x to finish your degree.” Additionally, copies of these communiqués are provided to the student’s major department, which can then follow up with and encourage the student.

Lists of Students in Degree Check-out Status – This program provides department staff and advisors easily accessible tools to track those students who are expected to graduate at the end of specific terms.

CSU San Marcos

Expansion of the Schedule of Classes to Include Early Morning Classes – This program expanded early-morning classes and is expected to help some students accelerate their progress toward graduation.

Increased Flexibility for Meeting Lower Division General Education Requirements – This program allows a student to complete lower-division general education requirements at the same time that they satisfy preparation for the major. Providing this additional flexibility in meeting requirements is expected to facilitate a student’s progress toward graduation.

Rescheduling Classes Meeting One Day a Week for Three Hours – A recent scheduling change transformed class sections that met for three hours into two 75-minute classes, which has freed up additional time for making one-hour classes more available. Students who are able to increase their class loads as a result of this re-scheduling are expected to be able to expedite their progress toward graduation.

Sonoma State

Freshman Seminar - This program includes the Educational Mentoring Team Program (EMT), one of the major components of the Freshman Seminar, a 2-unit course offered to freshmen in their first semesters. Students explore their values, skills, interests, and the undertaking of personal strategies necessary to formulate career goals.

Residential Community - Sonoma State has more than doubled the size of its residential community and is currently constructing more on-campus housing. Data show that students who live on campus have higher graduation rates than those who do not, and students who live on campus and participate in freshmen seminars also have higher retention rates than those who do not.

Improved Scheduling and Rotation of Classes - This program focuses on the rotation of core and major courses so that students can take all requirements in a timely manner.

Appendix B, cont'd.

Advising - This program concentrates on the timely, effective, and accurate advising, a key component to keeping students on track for retention and timely graduation. One advising piece is the inclusion of a 4-year graduation plan for all departments. This plan provides students with a “roadmap” of suggested courses to take throughout the 4-year cycle.

Increased Semester Unit Load - SSU has attempted to increase the semester unit load through EMT advising and departmental advising. Students are encouraged to take higher unit loads each semester.

CSU Stanislaus

Center for Student Success – Several programs coordinated existing functions and promoted new strategies for students’ success and completion of the baccalaureate. Programs working collaboratively in the Student Success model include: EOP, Student Support Services, First-Year Programs and Advising, Remediation Advising, Orientation, Student Leadership, Student Activities, Counseling, and Individual Colleges. The campus has identified the comprehensive First-Year Experience as a critical factor in student success. The First-Year Experience includes a mandatory comprehensive new-student orientation, welcoming convocation and welcome week activities, and a summer reading program. Another key feature is an emphasis on pre-collegiate academic preparation via outreach and special programs to enhance student readiness for the rigors of a baccalaureate degree program.

Appendix C: CSU Task Force on Facilitating Graduation

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