

## Letter To the Presidents on the Way to Increase Productivity: Allow More Campus Autonomy

As a system, the CSU graduates just over 50% of its students in six years. CSU management wants to improve the Graduation Rate by 8% in 2015, and cut in half the existing gap in degree attainment by CSU's under-represented minority students. How will this be accomplished?

Let's start by reviewing some of the actions taken to increase the graduation rate during the past five years. We have stressed the importance of selecting majors early, and added advisors, advising coordinators, as well as student mentors. We instituted skill workshops and provided more tutoring services. We added various early assessment warning systems, streamlined graduation plans, and added more University 100 classes. We summoned students to remediate in the summer before they arrive under the threat of expulsion. We reduced general education and other requirements. We remodeled student centers, complete with \$60+ million recreation centers with a TV at every treadmill. We spent more money on student health centers, counseling services, and have redecorated student lounges. We built Vets centers, LGBT centers, and updated disability centers, career centers, financial literacy centers, and coffee shops. We updated the computer labs and added more lab support. We updated classroom technology. We put in beautiful landscaping to make the campus attractive. We redesigned classes. We created e-books. We offered more online classes for the convenience of not commuting. We built more student parking lots for the students who do commute. We built more dormitories complete with in-house student services. We gave out more student awards as encouragement for timely progress to degree. We cut financial aid for students who failed and made it harder to re-enroll in classes. We even hunted down students who dropped out just shy of completing graduation requirements, and informed them that they have now graduated. In short, we have been very busy. And graduation rates have increased: six -year graduation rates rose from 48% to 52% systemwide for cohorts starting in 2000 to 2004. It seems like we have tried everything...

So ...what more can we do?

Oh ...allow students to enroll in the classes they need .... and take better care of the faculty (i.e. hire replacement faculty and pay faculty an equitable salary).

Unfortunately, those two options were just too "politically unattractive" to try during the past five years.

Perhaps the previous chancellor believed that there was little correlation between pay and performance - for faculty. Only management performance could benefit from pay increases. Yes, faculty and managers were subject to a different set of laws of physics and psychology. The Chancellors Office held true to the well-accepted fact that these groups respond differently to rewards.

Recently, Governor Brown seems to suggest that the faculty are to blame for system's poor productivity. Perhaps the solution is adding another class to the faculty workload and reducing research. Next, the Governor indicates that we should handle all the remaining bottlenecks holding up graduation, which we could not handle with almost \$5 billion budget, with an additional \$10 million for online courses and a MOOC or two.

I would like to offer an alternative strategy. Perhaps we should move away from so much ineffective and cumbersome central control, and let campus presidents and provosts work with strong faculty governance to set their own enrollment targets and give them more control over their own finances in ways that benefit direct instruction. Why? Because central control is NOT going to increase our graduation rates 8% by 2015. It has thrown a lot of money at increasing efficiency already. We need another plan.

Now there is talk of a small across-the-board salary increase.....

Productivity will not be increased by an across-the-board salary increase!

Please do not reward those with higher salaries even more money. It is not a strategic use of money. It does nothing to boost morale or address deeply felt inequities in our system.

A changed strategy would acknowledge that campuses vary in enrollment, faculty, majors, graduate programs, SFR, student preparation, passage and graduation rates, and financial resources. The 23-campus are not all the same. Much as we are a system, faculty members have not been treated equally at the various institutions.

The faculty member's salary trajectory is determined by starting salary, years to promotion, and increase at the time of promotion. These practices differ campus by campus and, as a result, salary inversion and compression issues vary in degree of severity. Compounding the non-uniform salary structure, the cost of living varies widely from region to region.

Equity pay and merit pay can help increase productivity, but appropriate policies require more local control. Productivity will improve if there is more latitude in deciding on enrollment targets based on faculty workload and pay issues. Faculty members will surely be more productive if they are consulted and compensated more fairly.

A general salary increase is NOT FAIR -- it rewards the top end more actual dollars and does nothing to address salary inversion and compression problems.

It is time to see that top-down management from the Chancellors Office to the student will not achieve the desired production targets. The faculty members are key players who have been left out of the conversation. Executive Orders, Directives, Initiatives, and Mandates will not increase productivity. This paternalistic behavior is regarded with disdain. Only a partnership with the faculty can yield the desired outcomes.

Increases in productivity will come from allowing for more local control and allowing campus presidents and shared governance to address problems on their campuses. This is a strategy that will increase productivity and student achievement.