

# The California Postsecondary Education Commission and Institutional Assessment of California Community Colleges, 1965 – 2002

J. M. Beach

2009

## Abstract:

Due to the environmental “susceptibility” of community colleges, it seems necessary to study the impact of educational reforms, like the accountability movement, at the state level. Brint and Karabel (1989) and Dougherty (2001) have argued, community college leaders have had some measure of institutional “autonomy” in creating institutional success, but this autonomy has always been continually negotiated and partly constrained in particular historical contexts by various stakeholders, especially university leaders and state government officials. In order to understand recent calls for institutional assessment and educational “efficiency” in community colleges, it would be instructive for scholars to study this movement in relation to the politics and institutions of a particular state. In a short research paper it would be difficult to cover both the socio-political environment and the development of particular institutional structures over a large period of time. Although reference will be made to some larger political and economic issues, this paper’s scope is narrowly concerned with the history of an educational institution and the movement to evaluate the performance of this institution. This paper will focus on the creation of the California Postsecondary Education Commission and its historical role in evaluating the institution of California Community Colleges. Archival research was conducted utilizing California state government publications, especially reports and records of the California Postsecondary Education Commission and its antecedent organizations. This paper will address two central questions: What accountability measures have been used to evaluate the effectiveness of the California Community College? And have these accountability measures been motivated by educational principles or politico-economic conditions?

## The California Postsecondary Education Commission and Institutional Assessment of California Community Colleges, 1965 – 2002

### *The Institutional Accountability Movement and the Community College*

For much of its history, institutions of higher education in the United States were traditionally given wide latitude in terms of demonstrating what were assumed to be the practical outcomes of a college education. Up until the 1960s institutional reputations, the popularity of individual scholars, apocryphal stories of the material and political success of alumni, and the general aura that clings to stately college campuses, all subtly reassured the public that college directly benefited individual students and society at large, even though no hard evidence was at hand to bolster such a claim (Zumeta, 2001, pp. 155, 161). As Grubb and Lazerson point out, there had been a “simple faith” in the value and outcomes of education (1988, p. 58). But this faith gradually dissipated during the 1960s and 1970s, as educational institutions were increasingly besieged by calls for institutional assessment, which was often framed in a “management by objectives” language of institutional “efficiency” and “productivity” (Cibulka, 2001; Grubb & Lazerson, 1988, pp. 53-55; Hursh, 2007; Mazzoni, 1995; Tyack & Cuban, 1995, pp. 78-82; Wildavsky, 1979). This change of direction in educational policy made it seem as if educational programs were “being constantly under attack by hard-nosed evaluators” (Grubb & Lazerson, 1988, p. 58).

Since the 1980s both federal and state governments, most powerfully symbolized by the actions of presidents and governors, have used the “bully pulpit” and the creation of educational commissions to galvanize widespread institutional reform centered on so called “evidence based

practice” and accountability measures<sup>1</sup> (Biesta, 2007; Grubb & Lazerson, 1988, p. 53; Mazzoni, 1995; Sroufe, 1995). Other “nationalizing” interest groups like business lobbies and think tanks have also played a strong role in framing policy issues by creating “programmatic ideas,” and thereby, influencing the rhetoric of state and federal officials (Campbell, 2001; Cibulka, 2001, p. 19; Mazzoni, 1995, pp. 63-63). The implementation of *No Child Left Behind* has become the paradigmatic symbol for the institutionalization of educational assessment legislation (Hursh, 2007), and it has become a model of sorts for current and future reforms in higher education (NCPPE, 2000; Spellings’ Commission, 2006).

It was only a matter of time before this wave hit community colleges. There had been early discussions of institutional effectiveness in relation to public financial support during the 1970s. James W. Thornton (1972) explained how community colleges would be increasingly “required to justify its procedures and its expenditures by reference to output” and standardized “objectives.” Public policy surrounding community colleges was still embryonic up until the 1980s due to a small and weak national policy-making community focused on this institution (Breneman & Nelson, 1981; Levin, 2001). But within the small circle of community college policy-makers who became more vocal and visible to national politicians, the policy rhetoric for all levels of education significantly shifted, acclimatized no doubt to the Republican ascendancy of Ronald Reagan, and a new politics of efficiency became the dominant logic, focused primarily on “quality, productivity, and accountability” (Breneman & Nelson, 1981; Dowd, 2003, p. 109; Edsall, 1989; Wilentz, 2008). But by the 1990s institutional accountability and performance measures in community colleges were still policy buzzwords and not yet established facts (Breneman & Nelson, 1981; Dowd, 2003, p. 109; Dougherty & Hong, 2006; Thornton, Jr., 1972, pp. 42, 91, 292; Garland & Martorana, 1988). In 1999 W. Norton Grubb and Associates (1999)

had noted that there was still “no general pressure on community colleges to reform” because a “national wave of dissatisfaction (as there is for K-12 education)” had not yet occurred (p. 245).

But Grubb’s study helped serve as a catalyst for a community college institutional accountability movement that began in earnest at the turn of the 21<sup>st</sup> century (Laanan, 1999). By 2004 some important reports were published on institutional assessment strategies for evaluating this institution. The League for Innovation in the Community College (2004) published a report, *An Assessment Framework for the Community College*, which called for an assessment framework for community college practitioners that would standardize terms, processes, and procedures. *New Directions for Community Colleges* published an issue devoted to assessment and student learning outcomes (Serban & Frielander, 2004). The editors explained how community colleges were “under increased pressure to produce evidence of student learning and achievement” because older assumptions of “institutional effectiveness do not fully satisfy new demands for evidence of student learning” (p. 1). This echoed the language of the report *Measuring Up 2000*, in which state systems of higher education were given “report cards,” and all states received a grade of “incomplete” for student learning outcomes (NCPPE, 2000, p. 23). By 2007 a monumental transformation had taken place. Forty-seven states, with the exception of Delaware, New York, and Rhode Island, had adopted a performance reporting data system for community colleges in terms of retention, graduation, transfers, and job placements, and 15 states had adopted some form of performance based funding (Dougherty & Reid, 2007, pp. 25-26). It seems clear that postsecondary educational institutions in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, especially community colleges, will have to prove themselves worthy of public funds by paying the state tangible dividends in the form of student learning outcomes and other accountability measures.

While there is a substantial body of historical literature that discusses early 20<sup>th</sup> century social, political, and economic influences on American higher education (Lucas, 1994; Thelin, 2004; Veysey, 1965), there is a remarkable absence of historical literature on the community college (Brint & Karabel, 1989; Frye, 1992; Labaree, 1990; Thelin, 2004, p. 404). Even in two recent studies of the California system of public higher education, only a small fraction of either book covered community colleges (Douglas, 2000; Douglas 2007). Wechsler (2001) is the only historical monograph on a single institution, focusing on La Guardia Community College in Long Island City, Queens. The historical literature on the formative period of “junior” college history suggests that the institutional structure and effectiveness of community colleges were highly determined by the socio-political environments external to the institution. For instance, James L. Ratcliff (1987) published an important study of the effects of progressive reformers on the evolution of public junior colleges. Ratcliff argued that the institutional success of junior colleges has always been environmentally “susceptible” to the external “political, economic, and social reforms” surrounding these institutions. Robert Pedersen (1987) argued that the institutional success of junior colleges has often been hampered by “conflict with state and intermediate governments, instability of operation and an ambiguous legal status.” One administrator went so far as to symbolically call these institutions “hermit crabs” because of their continual need to adapt to changing environments in order to survive (Hall, 1974).

Due to the environmental susceptibility of community colleges, it seems necessary to study the impact of educational reforms, like the accountability movement, at the state and local level (Brint & Karabel, 1989; Wechsler, 2001). Brint and Karabel (1989) and Dougherty (2001) have argued, community college leaders have had some measure of institutional “autonomy” in creating institutional success, but this autonomy has always been continually negotiated and

partly constrained in particular historical contexts by university leaders, state government officials, business coalitions, and community pressures from students and their parents. In order to understand recent calls for institutional assessment and educational “efficiency” in community colleges, it would be instructive for scholars to study this movement in relation to the politics and institutions of a particular state.

California is perhaps the best state to address the issue of institutional accountability because California led the national junior college movement in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century and, thereby, served as a national model for developing junior colleges across the nation. California was the first state in the U.S. to unify a state system of higher education, which also served as a national and international model – the California system. And because of these first two factors, California also has a sizable repository of government publications documenting a century-long accountability movement (documents that have been largely unexamined by scholars, especially historians).

This paper is part of a larger monograph on the history of the of the community college in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. While this paper selectively discusses portions of the political environment surrounding the California Community College, this paper will focus specifically on the history of this institution in relation to the creation of the California Postsecondary Education Commission and its historical role in evaluating California Community Colleges.<sup>2</sup> Archival research was conducted utilizing California state government publications, especially reports and records of the California Postsecondary Education Commission and its antecedent organizations. This paper is a small part of a larger project on the history of institutional evaluation on California community colleges over the 20<sup>th</sup> century. This paper will address two central questions: What accountability measures have been used to evaluate the effectiveness of the

California Community College? And have these accountability measures been motivated by educational principles or politico-economic conditions?

### *Institutional Evaluation and The California Postsecondary Education Commission*

The California *Master Plan* of 1960 announced the formation of the first state system of higher education in the United States, and it signaled the transformation of the California Junior College into an expanded institution that would come to be called over the next decade the California Community College (Douglas, 2000). In the wake of this policy document, a new emphasis outside of coordination emerged. During the 1960s, state policy groups become very focused on evaluating the effectiveness of the newly christened California *Community Colleges*. But with a growing body of effectiveness data and in the quest for more reliable effectiveness markers over the past forty years, there has been an uneasy tension between improving institutional effectiveness for educational and social purposes and reducing resources for economic and political purposes. Thus, even though effectiveness markers over the past half century have been very unimpressive, and community colleges have not been very effective on a host of effectiveness measures, one must also consider that ways that lack of resources have inhibited this institution from accomplishing an increasingly complex educational mission,

While junior colleges in the state of California have been institutionally evaluated for close to a century, a movement for institutional evaluation sprang up after the release of the *Master Plan* in 1960. Two important assessments of the California community college system were released in 1965. The California Junior College Association put together a Committee on Institutional Research with grant money from the National Defense Education Act (CJCA, 1965). The Committee wanted to survey the 77 junior colleges in the state, which were serving

roughly half a million full-time and part-time students, and 70 percent of the full-time freshman and sophomores in the state. Up until 1965 there had been some individual scholarly monographs and articles on California community colleges, but no multiparty “organized” research programs that sought to study institutional effectiveness on a larger scale (pp. 1-8). According to Edmund J. Gleazer (1968), California was one of the first states in the nation to conduct such a survey.

A second report released in 1965 was conducted by the Coordinating Council for Higher Education (CCHE, 1965). This legislative sanctioned policy group organized the *Master Plan* and it became the coordinating policy body for postsecondary education in California. Since there was no state level coordinating body for Junior Colleges as an institutional unit within the higher education system, this group “assumed a greater responsibility” to provide a comprehensive assessment of the California Junior Colleges as a whole, and to provide policy recommendations that would be congruent with this postsecondary segment’s foundational position within the newly coordinated state system of higher education. The Council engaged several community college experts to research and write this report, including Dale Tillery and Leland Medsker, both of whom would later work together on a Carnegie Commission on Higher Education report on the community college (Tillery & Medsker, 1971).

Despite the publication of the *Master Plan* in 1960, the proposed coordination of California’s postsecondary education system over the next decade remained more of an ideal than a reality. The seventy-five California junior colleges turned out to be the largest and most difficult part to coordinate. Even getting policy makers to utilize the new terminology of “community” colleges, rather than junior colleges, was a tall order. The Council called it a “loosely affiliated system” of postsecondary education that was still “deeply rooted” in the

secondary school system via the state's educational code and administrative agencies (CCHE, 1965, p. 11). Junior college faculty were still strongly connected to high school standards and routines, with almost 30 percent of all junior college faculty being former high school teachers, and with all faculty required to hold junior college certification, which was very similar to the credential held by secondary school teachers in the state. The *Master Plan* dictated that the junior colleges play clean-up in the higher education system of the state. Junior colleges were supposed to serve whoever could not gain access to the other more prestigious and selective segments of public postsecondary education. The Council explained that "Junior Colleges are particularly charged with providing services and programs not offered by the other levels of higher education and to educate a more heterogeneous student body" (p. 12). However, the Council acknowledged that this complex task was currently beyond "the resources and the teaching talents" of California Junior Colleges as they existed: "The doubts about the identity of Junior Colleges have not been put to rest in spite of *Master Plan* declarations and Junior College assertions. History sheds considerable light on this lingering ambivalence about Junior College education" (p. 33). The Council's report sought to evaluate the actual state of California Junior Colleges in relation to the demands placed upon this loosely affiliated collection of institutions by the *Master Plan*. The Council needed to deliver to the state legislature a detailed report on the work that needed to be done, and on the financial resources that needed to be invested, in order to make the state's Junior Colleges a viable and efficient postsecondary educational system.

In 1961 about 32 percent of California public high school graduates entered California Junior Colleges, compared to 8 percent who enrolled in State Colleges, 5 percent enrolled in the University of California, 5 percent enrolled in private California colleges, and 2 percent enrolled

in out-of-state colleges (CCHE, 1965). The *Master Plan* called for raising the eligibility standards for CSU and UC, which would have diverted some 50,000 students to the newly expanded Community Colleges by 1975. In the early 1960s, about 56 percent of California high school graduates were ineligible to enter the State College or the University of California segments, thus, these students had to enter Junior Colleges if they were to attain some level of postsecondary education. The overall academic ability of California Junior Colleges was mixed, with some high-achieving and low-achieving students. One study suggested that low-ability students accounted for only about 10 percent of all junior college students, but most junior college students had some “deficiencies” in subject matter knowledge, basic academic skills, or motivation. However, about 20 percent of University-eligible students enrolled in a Junior College instead of a university, many for financial reasons. Many, if not most, junior college students in the 1960s had to be employed out of necessity. All together, California Junior Colleges enrolled approximately 40 percent of all full-time undergraduates in the state and accounted for 70 percent of full-time freshman and sophomores (CCHE, 1965, pp. 11, 15-17).

While California Junior Colleges in the 1950s and early 1960s were responsible for a majority of freshman and sophomores in the state, these institutions were not very good at retaining students through to the sophomore year, nor were they getting large numbers of students to transfer to four-year universities (CCHE, 1965). Only about 68 percent of freshman made it through two semesters of junior college to their sophomore year, and less than 50 percent of freshman completed four semesters of junior college. More academically prepared students had greater chances of success. One study suggested that University of California eligible students enrolled in California Junior Colleges had a 73.6 percent rate of finishing four semesters, while students who were ineligible for these university segments had between a 30

and 36 percent chance of completing four semesters. These persistence numbers were ahead of the curve nationally. On the whole, only 50 percent of junior college students in America persisted to their sophomore year and only 30 percent completed two full years. The numbers of transfer students to the University of California stagnated overall between 1950 and 1962, but the number of transfer students to the State Colleges steadily increased over this same period, with over 2,200 more students transferring in 1962 than had in 1957. Overall, based upon the data available for 1960, about 11 percent of full-time junior college students were able to transfer to either the University of California or a State College. But full-time junior college students only accounted for about 30 percent of all enrollments during the 1960s, so the transfer rate would decrease to about 3.3 percent of all junior college students, which is a rough approximation (CCHE, 1965, pp. 18-19).

The California Postsecondary Education Commission was created by the California legislature in 1973 as a planning and coordinating agency, eventually replacing the Coordinating Council for Higher Education. This commission was also responsible for systematically collecting data on higher education in California, which was to be used as a tool to gauge “educational equality goals,” following the Civil Rights Commission reports on segregation in California, and the widespread acknowledgement of a gap in access to higher education between white and non-white minority groups. The California Postsecondary Education Commission was responsible for developing an “equitable educational system,” and progress toward this goal “would be measured in terms of evidence.” As one agency report noted, “Our intention [is] to measure outcomes as well as opportunities.” But the data collected by this agency would gradually be used for other purposes: developing institutional assessment measures on the

effectiveness of individual community colleges for accreditation standards, formalizing the curriculum, and ranking individual schools (CPEC, 1978, p. 21; CPEC, 1988, pp. 4-5).

The Coordinating Council for Higher Education began to investigate the performance of the California Community College in 1970. This agency published four reports from 1973 to 1974 collectively titled, *Through the Open Door*, and these reports mark the first significant usage of the term “Community Colleges” in the California policy literature. The final report was prepared by the California Postsecondary Education Commission, which had replaced the Coordinating Council in 1974. *Through the Open Door: A Study of Patterns of Enrollment and Performance in California’s Community Colleges* was published in 1976, and it was the most comprehensive institutional evaluation of community colleges in the state since the Coordinating Council for Higher Education’s 1965 report (CPEC, 1976, p. 5).<sup>3</sup>

*Through the Open Door* explains how enrollments in California Community Colleges kept “exceeding” the projections made in the *Master Plan*. Total enrollments between 1969 and 1974 had grown from 722,480 to 1,137,668, an increase of 57 percent. Further, the student populations were gradually changing to include more diverse and needy populations, including more ethnic minorities, working class students, and the physically disabled. The report also noted that the number of part-time students was outpacing full-time students, and many part-time students would attend on an “intermittent basis,” sometimes taking a semester or two off before re-enrolling. By 1974, part-time students made up half of all students taking college credit courses. These changes in student composition was having an effect on the functions of the community colleges, as these institutions began to adjust to the diverse needs of these new students. The report argued, “continuing education for part-time, adult students has become the dominant function of the Community Colleges, with no resultant neglect of the occupational,

transfer, and general education functions for more traditional students.” Thus, the Commission argued that Community Colleges should create more programs and services to meet the needs of these new populations because the primary strength of community colleges was an “ability to respond individually and collectively to state and local needs for new programs and services relatively quickly” (CPEC, 1976, pp. i, 2-3, 17).<sup>4</sup>

The report also explained that performance evaluations of the community colleges were difficult because of the “complex nature of the new student clienteles and the idiosyncratic nature of their objectives.” In fact, the report criticized community colleges for their “inability to quantify and measure their success.” The Commission argued that traditional measures of grades, grade-point averages, transfer students, and awarded degrees and certificates were no longer “appropriate,” and that new measures should be found, which would capture the objectives of the new student population, and more adequately measure how community colleges were helping students reach those objectives. Besides, these early performance measures had not been very informative, nor were they focused completely on the community college. For instance, the majority of community college students did not want to attain the associate degree, so how was this a measure of the institutions success? And yet, associate degree attainment was one of the primary markers of institutional success, although the degree was largely meaningless in terms of transferring to a state university, and it had limited currency in local labor markets.

Another example of improper measurements of success was transfer students. Most of the studies on transfers had focused on how many students successfully transferred to the University of California or a California State College, and also the kinds of grades students earned in these new institutions. However, while two-thirds of the California Community College student population declared intent to transfer, less than one-third would transfer. But no study ever

focused on community college academic programs or transfer counseling services, nor did any study ever focus on the community college student population and why so many students failed to reach their stated goal. Likewise, it was known that only about 78 awards were earned per 1,000 students in college credit courses, but no study had ever investigated the student populations who earned awards, their intended goals, or why they earned a particular degree or certificate (CPEC, 1976, pp. ii, vi-vii, 2, 6, D1). A better performance marker to gauge the quality of community colleges themselves was student persistence, especially if broken down by particular types of students. However, this performance marker had not often been used in institutional evaluations of the community college, and never was there any attempt to compare the persistence rates of different student populations. This particular report stands out as the first to do so.

Traditionally, the most legitimate student performance marker for California Community Colleges was transfer rates to four-year universities and colleges. Given the origins of the California Junior College as a transfer oriented institution, it had always been assumed that the primary function of the California Community College was and continued to be the transferring of students from the junior college to the university. This performance marker was also assumed to be relatively easy to measure; however, that turned out not to be the case. The first comprehensive statewide study of community college transfer rates was not conducted until 1979 and it was published in 1980. But it turned out that this early study was plagued by incoherent institutional definitions of a “transfer” student, which made it exceedingly difficult to measure transfer students. It was also almost impossible to establish some sub-population of “potential” transfer students, which could be measured against “actual” transfer students, so as to more accurately compare how well the California Community College was doing in preparing students

for the university (CPEC, 1978, p. 21; CPEC 1980; CPEC, 1985, p. 48; CPEC, 1989, p. 28; CPEC, 2005). Defining an adequate measure of transfer rates for comparative purposes proved impossible during the 1980s and researchers are still to this day trying to sort out this difficult task (Bradbum & Hurst, 2001).

The California Postsecondary Education Commission did its best to come up with basic measures and they kept a sustained focus on transfers by publishing around 30 reports focused on this issue between 1980 and 2005. To take a very blunt and generalized analysis of this data, from 1960 to 1985 a slight but significant trend was clear. If the raw numbers of transfers were divided by the total student population then the transfer rate went from 3.3 percent of all junior college students in 1960 to 5.2 percent in 1985. The total junior college population also increased from around 400,000 to over 1 million during this time. The rise in transfers outpaced this general enrollment growth and went from 10,977 transfer students in 1960 to 52,043 in 1985. Clearly the transfer process and a refined statewide articulation system was becoming more effective, although reports on the ethnic breakdown of transfer students during the 1980s revealed that White and Asian students accounted for 80 to 83 percent of all transfers, even though they were only 74 to 75 percent of the California Community College student population (CPEC, 1978; CPEC 1980; CPEC, 1985; CPEC, 1989; CPEC, 2005).

In 1984 the California Postsecondary Education Commission began a statewide reassessment of the state system of higher education. During 1984 the state legislature passed SP 1570, which called for the creation of a Commission for the Review of the *Master Plan* for Higher Education in order to evaluate the changing education needs of the state, and how the system of higher education was meeting those needs. The work of this Commission would culminate in a revised *Master Plan* by 1987. The public postsecondary student population

during the 1990s was expected to increase by over 250,000 students, and the California Community Colleges would be the primary postsecondary institution to accommodate this growth, taking up over 200,000 of those new students (CPEC, 1985, pp. 133-35, 140, 184; CRMPHE, 1986, p. 125).

The state legislature also passed SP 2064 in 1984, which called for a special reassessment study of the California Community College as the “first priority” of the *Master Plan* review. By 1986 the Commission had published a report on this institution, *The Challenge of Change*, which criticized community colleges and ended with a call for a new *Master Plan*. While the Commission acknowledged that community colleges had been “a gateway to opportunity” for many Californians, simply being an “open door” was not enough: “Access alone does open the door to higher education, but without success it is a door which too often leads to broken dreams and shattered promises. Too frequently it is forgotten that access without success does not equal opportunity.” The Commission argued that access to higher education “must be meaningful; and to be meaningful, it must be access to a quality system that helps ensure the success of every student who enrolls.” While the report did not go into details, it was clearly criticizing the low rates of persistence, completion of degrees and certificates, and low transfer rates of the California Community College system. What made this poor performance even more galling was the fact that 80 percent of all underrepresented students who enter postsecondary education in the state did so through community colleges. Given the California’s history of *de jure* and *de facto* racial segregation up to the 1970s, it made it seem as if the community colleges were second-rate institutions designed to further deny opportunity to minority populations just breaking into higher education. What made the situation even worse was the lack of information on various aspects of student academic performance broken down by race and gender, both in

terms of secondary preparation and in terms of postsecondary educational experiences (CRMPHE, 1986a, pp. 44, 126; CRMPHE, 1986b, pp. 1-2, 5,7; Fischer, 1987; Schrag, 1986).

To address charges of poor institutional performance, the Commission argued that California Community Colleges should not try to be comprehensive institutions offering everything to everyone, but instead they needed to prioritize and focus on two fundamental missions: “high quality” academic instruction to help students obtain associates degrees or transfer to a four-year university, and helping vocationally oriented students “prepare for an occupation.” Remediation in basic skills was important in relation to helping prepare students for academic instruction. Both Adult Education and English as a Second Language were deemed important functions, but these program areas were placed as adjuncts to basic skills education. All other community oriented services were still technically “authorized,” but they were deemed non-essential to the revised mission, and they would no longer be funded by the state.

The Commission also urged the state to further financial support of the community colleges, which had become more dependent upon state funds since the passage of Proposition 13 in 1978. This new law put a mandatory cap on state property taxes, which was the primary source of funding for both the public school system and community colleges. In the wake of Proposition 13, state support jumped to almost 70 percent of the average community college budget, but this financial support slowly declined due to a depleted state surplus and an economic recession. By 1986 state support was down to 62 percent, and with local taxes frozen, the community colleges had to fish for external revenues by charging students fees (now 6 percent of the budget) and tapping into federal block grants (now 4 percent of the budget). In essence the Commission’s recommendation was to find “strategies to promote an increase in student access to and success in postsecondary education,” and to provide enough state funds to

promote more efficiency and equity in the state system of higher education (CRMPHE, 1986b, pp. 7, 12, 21, 25, 126).

However, this goal was not unanimously supported by the entire Commission. In the *Background Papers* leading to the final report, members of the Commission acknowledged that there was a “tension” between “competitive excellence” and “egalitarianism,” and that there was a shift “occurring from an emphasis on issues of access/equity to a concern with issues of quality and budgetary constraints.” Some members of the Commission argued,

Access has been achieved and educational quality is now the goal. In a period of limited resources, decisions have to be made, and for many the option is for quality instead of access. Thus, many believe the issue before California is not increasing access to Community Colleges, but how to limit access and who will be limited. (CRMPHE, 1986a, pp. 30-31)

Some members of the Commission argued further that the California Community Colleges were “accommodating too many under-prepared students who are ill-equipped to handle college work.” The institution was “struggling to educate problem learners who have many academic deficiencies and limited motivation.” Many Commission members believed that this situation overburdened this institution during a time of tightened budgetary constraints and limited resources. The “open door” had apparently let too many students through. It seemed to some on the Commission that it was now time to start closing that door, restricting access, and increasing quality controls (CRMPHE, 1986a, pp. 30-31).

Despite these misgivings, and some deep suspicions of the California Community Colleges, the *Master Plan* was upheld and “renewed” by the Commission for the Review of the Master Plan. The final report of this body was delivered to the Governor and the state Legislature in July, 1987. By this time California had the largest aggregate postsecondary “system” in the United States. There were 9 campuses of the University of California, 19

campuses of the California State University, 106 Community Colleges, 181 private colleges and universities, and 265 private occupational schools. All together these institutions awarded 50,000 associates degrees, 86,000 baccalaureate degrees, 28,000 masters degrees, 6,800 professional degrees, and 9,000 doctorates, not to mention the thousands of students who would be certified for occupations. The state's *Master Plan* of 1960 had created a system that, according to state officials, operated "in reasonable harmony" over the past twenty seven years; however, some developments during that time had put quite a lot of stress on postsecondary institutions (CRMPHE, 1987, pp. 1-3).

The Commission "renewed" the *Master Plan* by articulating four principle goals. The first was promoting "unity" of all the segments of postsecondary education, including the private sector, and also including the secondary sector as well, because the issue of adequate student preparation for college had become a growing concern. The second goal was "equity" and promoting the "unrestricted opportunity" of "all Californians to postsecondary education. The third goal was ensuring the "quality" and "excellence" postsecondary education in the state. And the final goal was "efficiency" and the maximizing of limited resources to produce the best possible educational product. No mention was made in the finished report on how these goals might conflict with each other, or if push came to shove, which goals would receive policy priorities by the Legislature, the Governor, or postsecondary governing boards (CRMPHE, 1987, pp. 3-4).

But this report seemed to imply that the postsecondary education system was not working as well as the *Master Plan* had designed. The community college as an institution was singled out for criticism. The final report declared, "The Community Colleges, with a weak governance system, have been unable to carry out their full responsibilities within the postsecondary

education system. The success of the whole system depends on them.” The Commission recommended a prioritizing of the community college mission. The academic function leading to associates degrees and transferring to four-year institutions was deemed the primary mission. The secondary mission would be vocational education. California Community Colleges would have “principal but not exclusive responsibility of vocational education.” Any other function would be subordinated to these two institutional missions (CRMPHE, 1987, pp. 4, 10-14).

Clearly the issue of improving “quality” and “efficiency” had to take priority if the postsecondary system was to operate, as the Commission believed it should. The multipurpose, community-oriented community college had to be redirected back to the junior-college model so that this institution could reduce the undergraduate burdens of CSU and UC campuses (allowing them to become even more selective). If the community college could just get back to its junior college roots then it would become a “revitalized” undergraduate institution, moving more deserving students toward the baccalaureate degree. Revitalization also meant improving institutional quality. The report recommended that a new agency needed to create formal evaluation mechanisms to gauge the effectiveness of the postsecondary system, but this solution assumed that the major problem facing postsecondary education in the state was *quality*, not *efficiency*. Or, to put it differently, this report assumed that the educational institutions and the students they served were the main problem to be fixed, instead of looking in another direction: resources (CRMPHE, 1987, pp. 4, 10-14).

This report could have asked why the community college and other areas of the postsecondary system had been chronically under-funded by the state legislature, and thus, this report might have pointed out that the main problem of the postsecondary system, especially the California Community College, was not really the poor *quality* of programs, but the *inefficiency*

of running institutions on less than adequate resources. It was assumed that institutions of higher education could maintain a constant quality of performance with less resources. It was also assumed that any resulting deficiencies caused by budget cuts were due to defective institutions, not to the lack of resources. It never seemed to occur to state policy makers that public institutions cannot provide efficient, quality programs without the necessary resources. It's a classic Catch 22: Public institutions are expected to do more with less, and when they cannot, it is the fault of the institution, not the political system that sets them up for failure. This problem became much more acute in the 1990s. State higher education budgets continued to decline, yet politicized expectations for institutional performance continued to increase.

### *The Master Plan Revised: Declining Budgets and New System of Accountability*

Institutional evaluations of the California Community College during the 1990s didn't reveal much improvement from the mediocre performance of the past twenty years. While community colleges were often blamed for poor performance, there was a good reason for stagnant evaluation measures: lack of resources. While the root cause of stagnant effectiveness measures was clear to some, it has rarely been acknowledged, let alone remedied, by state policy makers. Even though a lack of resources continues to negatively impact the performance of California Community Colleges, recent policy literature on institutional effectiveness continues to narrowly focus on institutional performance and educational standards as independent issues divorced from adequate funding. Furthermore, proposals for an expanded system of institutional evaluation in higher education in the state of California have often been made because of political and economic considerations that are not necessarily aligned with the missions of educational institutions.

Clark Kerr was one of the first major policy figures in California to bring attention to the systematic lack of recourses given to institutions of higher education in the state. Kerr was one of the most eminent statesman of higher education in California. Kerr had been Chancellor of the University of California, Berkeley for seven years during the 1950s, and then went on to become President of the University of California for a decade. Kerr also served as the Chairman of the Carnegie Commission on Higher Education and the Carnegie Council on Policy Studies in Higher Education. It was Kerr who was a driving force in 1959 to create and implement the *Master Plan* of 1960, and he had been a tireless supporter of California's higher education system. But Clark Kerr prophesied dark times for the 1990s (CPEC, Oct 1993).

In 1993 Kerr published a special report through the California Postsecondary Education Commission to warn higher education policymakers about "the most severe financial crisis that has ever faced higher education in California." A lingering international recession still gripped the country, federal defense spending had been cut, which drastically hurt one of California's most important economic sectors, unemployment in the state was at 9.5 percent (the national rate was at 7 percent), and annual economic productivity dropped from the post-war high of 3 percent down to below 2 percent since the 1970s. This financial crisis was especially bad news to California's system of higher education because the state was anticipating Tidal Wave II by 1997, a large surge of adolescents would be coming to college. From the early 1980s to 1993, the state legislature cut spending on higher education by over 30 percent, the biggest cuts beginning in 1990. Higher education lost some \$1.4 billion between 1990 and 1994. Kerr related the sentiments of Tom Hayes, the former Director of Finance for the State of California, who said that the *Master Plan* "is broke and can't be fixed" because the budget process is a "battle of knives" and "higher education has no knife." Hayes predicted that in such dark

economic times, California higher education would continue to face cutbacks, as other agencies and the government bureaucracy battled over the general budget (CPEC, Oct 1993, pp. 1-4, 6; CPEC, Dec 1993).

That same year the California Postsecondary Education Commission reviewed the *Master Plan* again and discussed its relevance “in light of 1993 realities.” The Commission affirmed the *Master Plan* and the commitment from state legislators to provide “adequate support” for higher education in California. The Commission concluded that its greatest challenge in its 20 year history would be trying to get the state legislature to honor the financial commitment it had made in 1960s (CPEC, April 1993, p. 25). Not two months later, the Commission published another report with a much more somber tone, warning of “California’s waning higher education opportunities.” The report noted that California was not staying true to its “promise of wide access to higher education” because of the budget crisis of the past three years. At a time when more and more high school graduates were eligible to enroll in the University of California and the California State University, state funding for these institutions had dropped and student fees had increased, thus, restricting access and “closing the doors to higher education.” The Commission warned, “If California cannot find the wherewithal to increase that investment [in higher education], it must develop equitable criteria for reducing enrollment and limiting higher education opportunities. If access must be limited, the state should be guided by an explicit plan rather than by the haphazard consequences of underinvestment. California cannot continue to starve its higher educational institutions of the resources they need to carry out their many missions” (CPEC, June 1993).

By the late 1990s, the reality of tighter budgets for institution of higher education in the state of California became an ever present and permanent reality, although the economic

recession had finally passed and the state Legislature had increased funding to higher education. To make up for the budget reductions of the past decade, maintenance costs and building to accommodate growth had stalled, deferring over \$1.2 billion worth of physical plant repairs and needed expansions. Student fees for all three segments had also increased. University of California fees more than doubled from \$1,624 in 1990 to \$3,799 in 1995. California State Universities doubled their fees from \$780 to \$1,584. And California Community Colleges more than tripled their fees from \$120 in 1990 to \$390 in 1995. Federal and State financial aid in the forms of grants did not keep pace with tuition inflation, and students turned more and more to educational loans to pay for school. Between 1990 and 1997 student borrowing jumped from \$1 billion to over \$3.1 billion. By the late 1990s, student loans accounted for over 60 percent of all financial assistance to California students. All the while the California postsecondary system was experiencing large increases in student demand as about 450,000 new students were expected to enroll, mostly in community colleges, by 2005.

The good news was that the state legislature gradually increased spending on higher education between 1995 and 1999, 5.9 percent increase for the California State University, 6.6 percent for the California Community Colleges, and 7.3 percent for the University of California. Altogether state spending rose from \$4.5 billion in 1995 to almost \$8 billion by 1999, with an additional \$2.5 billion in bonds raised for construction, although these increased funds were barely enough to keep pace with inflation and the growth of student enrollments (CPEC, 1999, pp. 5-6, 8-9).

The end of the 1990s also saw the reaffirmation of the guiding principles of California postsecondary education, although the goals had changed since 1987. The new rhetoric stressed four basic principles: *access*, *affordability*, *accountability*, and *cooperation*. The budget travails,

combined with Tidal Wave II, brought to the fore the issue of *access* to institutions of higher education in terms of not only academic preparation and physical space, but also financial cost. The two former principles of “quality” and “efficiency” articulated in 1987 were re-branded as *accountability*, which became a catch-all term for increasing the excellence and the competitiveness of educational programs, while investing less resources. The last principle was simply the re-branding of the previous call for unity amongst the three segments of the postsecondary system. It was a call for coordination and shared sacrifice in meeting new needs, while making due less resources (CPEC, 1999, p. 13).

From the late 1990s through the early 21<sup>st</sup> century, the California Postsecondary Education Commission kept the rhetorical priorities of equity, access, and affordability clearly in public view; however, the policy reports released during this period gradually marginalized these three principles so as to bring into focus the new, predominating educational policy of the 21<sup>st</sup> century: institutional *accountability*. In the 1990s the California postsecondary education system inaugurated new data gathering techniques, information clearing houses, better articulation agreements between segments, and improvements in educational programming. But these innovations were not created for education ends. Instead, the call for increased accountability was actually a new rhetorical tactic to normalize the explicit prioritizing of certain measures of institutional quality, while using this normative rhetoric to implicitly reframe the expectations and responsibilities of the postsecondary education community. The education and social mobility of students per se was no longer the purpose of higher education in California. One could make a good case and argue it never was. But in the 21<sup>st</sup> century institutions of higher education were narrowly focused on one objective: to be “productive,” “efficient,” and “cost effective.” The postsecondary education community accepted the stark political fact that

resources were limited and “subject to fluctuation,” while student “demand” and institutional accountability were increasing. The postsecondary policy community, including the governor, state legislators, the California Postsecondary Education Commission, postsecondary administrators, and many scholars, all rhetorically normalized the notion of “accountability” as the defining political and economic priority for higher education in the state of California. And Institutional accountability was not an educational priority; it was a political and economic priority that developed largely as a response to constricted financial support from the state (CPEC, 1999, pp. 33, 37). Thus, the ends of education became subsumed within what W. Norton Grubb and Marvin Lazerson (2004) have termed “the Education Gospel.” Clearly many people within the postsecondary policy community in California still valued the principles of education and equity, but these once foundational and independent values were becoming more and more dependent upon the limited availability of political and economic capital. During the 1980s and early 1990s, accountability measures became an increasing priority to policy makers and the state legislature, but not because of any principled educational goal. Institutional accountability was reduced to an economic necessity demanded by dire financial straits and foreign economic competition.

Taking the lead from the Hart-Hughes Act of 1983, which mandated the establishment of annual performance reports for K-12 schools, California Assembly Bill 1808 was passed in 1991, which called for the formulation of annual performance reports on California higher education. The purpose of these reports was to provide “demonstrable improvements in student knowledge, capacities, and skills between entrance and graduation.” It was also noted that these improvements needed to be made “efficiently,” in terms of “time, effort, and money” (CPEC 1991).

The California Postsecondary Education Commission submitted the first report in 1994, *The Performance of California Higher Education*, and these reports would continue to be delivered through the 2001 school year. The original report had 61 performance indicators, which grew to 75 by 1997 and 80 by 1999. The indicators were grouped over five broad areas: population context, fiscal context, student preparation (secondary), student access (postsecondary), and student outcomes (postsecondary). Two issues should be noted about these early postsecondary performance reports. The first is the breadth of performance indicators, ranging from general demographic information to secondary statistics, and also including a large range of postsecondary demographic and outcome measures. The second is the relative absence of community college performance indicators specifically focused on the effectiveness of the institution itself, not just as a feeder mechanism for the university. Only four performance indicators focus directly on community college, and of these, only three are actual performance measures: first-time freshmen enrolled, transfer students, associates degrees, and vocational certificates (CPEC, Dec 1994; CPEC, Feb 1996; CPEC, April 1998; CPEC, Dec 1998; CPEC, Feb 2000; CPEC, April 2002).

A new *Master Plan for Education* from Kindergarten through the sophomore year of college (K-16) was inaugurated in 2002. The newly sacred rhetoric of accountability pervaded the document. Creating accountability measures is often described in the document as a means to a “high quality education” for students, but this end is overshadowed by a management ethos of bureaucratic ritual: “defining roles and responsibilities,” “evaluating outcomes,” and “ensuring consequences.” The document explicitly conceptualizes the essence of accountability in terms of authoritarianism. Accountability means responsibility to “authority.” Students will be responsible to teachers, teachers responsible to administrators, administrators responsible to

legislatures, and legislatures responsible to the economic and political bottom lines. The issue of “who should be held accountable for what and to whom?” is not easily answered because it is a *political* and *moral* question, not a technical question. The moral and political cannot be rationally managed by experts (JCDMPE, 2002, pp. 77-79). There is no such thing as objective “standards,” in terms of either creating knowledge or in transmitting knowledge, as the so called “culture wars” of the 1990s made abundantly clear. Which students in what schools in whose America and with what resources will be used towards what end (Hunter, 1991; Zimmerman, 2002)? These are messy political questions focused on differing conceptions of the public good. The sociologist Daniel Bell (1978) perceptively explained that debates over public goods are normative, not technocratic, “where the problem is clearly right versus right, rather than right or wrong; of weighing the claims of group memberships against individual rights; of balancing liberty and equality, equity and efficiency” (p. 26).

The new *Master Plan* even admitted this sticky point, acknowledging not only that different segments of public higher education have different missions and functions, but also noting the disagreements over what is to be taught: “There is no common body of knowledge for which consensus exists about what is expected to be taught to every student,” and therefore, “there has been no basis for establishing a measure of student achievement.” If only this acknowledgement were so forthrightly admitted by all the proponents of institutional accountability. Yet the report pretends as if it never made this concession. It goes on to boldly proclaim that the new California accountability system will have “clear statements” of a “common body of knowledge” that will enable measurable achievement goals that can be captured by standardized tests and institutional report cards. But how can this contradiction be? The whole notion of objective standards and a common body of knowledge is an idealized *telos*

at best and a mystified fantasy at worst. But there was no acknowledgement of these ends as idealized. Instead, they are simply assumed to be objective realities in a bald statement of faith. Public policy built on such a utopian foundation is bound to fail (JCDMPE, 2002, pp. 83, 85-88).

Who decides on the contours of the “common body of knowledge”? Who will decide what is standard and what is not? The *Master Plan* admits that “not everything that may be important to the successful implementation of this *Master Plan* and to improving the achievement of every student is easily measured. Nor is everything that can be measured important” (JCDMPE, 2002, pp. 64, 88). But in seeking to quantify and standardize the complex and messy endeavor of education into measurable learning outcomes is difficult, if not dangerous. It is difficult in terms of identifying all of the tangible and intangible “outcomes” of the learning process. It is dangerous in terms of the tendency of administrators, policy makers, and the general public (and perhaps even educators themselves) to narrowly focus on particular measurable “outcomes” that may be politicized or expedient, and thereby, the value of the larger educational process, or even the specific objectives of the educational institution, can be lost.

### *Conclusion: Constricted Resources and The Limits of Institutional Perfectibility*

In 2004 California Assembly Bill 1417 was passed. This bill required the California Community College system to design an annual evaluation structure to measure district-level performance in meeting statewide educational outcomes. The Chancellor’s Office released the first draft of the report in 2007, *Accountability Reporting for the Community Colleges*.

Institutional accountability is now going to be yet another mission for an already burdened and under-funded community college system. At present accountability measures are simply being

reported and analyzed by the Chancellor's Office for data purposes; however, other states have begun to enact data driven performance funding.

Given the astronomical increase in the student population and the huge increase of disadvantaged minorities gaining access to public higher education, the historical achievement trends in California are quite positive: more and more students are being served by the community college and more and more students are becoming successful in terms of gaining larger amounts of education and credentials. Certainly California Community Colleges could be doing better on a host of issues: pedagogical practices, developmental education, and organizational efficiency (Grubb et. al. 1999; Shulock & Moore, 2007a). But institutional effectiveness markers should be reflective of the diverse missions of the institution, and they should be deliberated and decided by the relevant stakeholders and not decreed from above by policy makers and legislators. Effectiveness markers should also be qualified because student success is not entirely dependent upon the institution, nor are measure markers of success the most important or lasting effects of education.

While the California Community College as institutions should be held accountable for their role within the state system of education, why do other parts of that system receive less scrutiny? California community colleges must balance multiple and often competing missions (transfer to university, economic development and vocational programming, basic skills, and community education), while serving the majority of undergraduates in the state. How could any institution hope to manage such a task while being chronically under-funded and under-resourced for the last half century? Some policy makers have begun to focus on this issue (Shulock & Moore, 2007b); however, this perennial question is again being put to the test as the worst economic recession since the 1930s has hit California and the national at large during

2007-2009. California has been harder hit than most states and the governor was looking to cut more than \$1 billion dollars from the higher education budget, with around 322 million set to be cut from Community Colleges. Many community colleges are beginning to shed temporary faculty, put on hold many needed full-time faculty and counseling positions, stifle faculty and staff cost of living increases (in a time of rising inflation), and cut the general operating budget.

The current national movement for performance based standards and institutional accountability needs to be understood in historical perspective so as to receive its own share of evaluation and accountability. Education policy has never been a disinterested “scientific-technical enterprise” (Callahan, 1962; Grubb & Lazerson, 1988, pp. 57, 99). And as Grubb and Lazerson (1988) point out, “formal evaluation methods are not necessarily neutral” (pp. 57, 99). All policy and performance measurements should be analyzed and critiqued as a form of political argument advancing partisan interests. While many current community college policy makers focus on important issues, ask important questions, and suggest important policy prescriptions, there is a marked tendency towards short-sightedness and condemnation, which mirrors larger debates over public education in general over the course of the last forty years. There is also a tendency to emphasize only certain student outcomes while ignoring others, which is a political act privileging certain assumed normative values while dis-privileging others. But these types of political acts, where efficiency outcome markers are given preference over equity outcome markers, are often made by policy makers or community college administrators without proper consideration of the qualitative and ethical differences between different types of outcome markers, and how often the most ethically profound objectives, like equality or justice, are the hardest to objectively measure and, therefore, the most likely to be ignored or displaced for more observable and more ephemeral variables, like test scores. Also missing is a broader analytic

framework to determine how institutional effectiveness measures, like standardized testing or student learning outcomes, actually affect the lives of students, their learning, and their long term social and economic development. Recent accountability trends have brought forth a host of policy recommendations, which have been based on the crassest form of positivistic reductionism, whereby, empirical minutiae is swapped for phenomenological substance, and education is replaced by behavioral manipulation (Breneman & Nelson, 1981, pp. 55-59; Dougherty & Hong, 2006, p. 52; Grubb & Lazerson, 1988, pp. 57, 99; Zumeta, 2001, pp. 172, 185-86).

Study of American schools and the politics of reform over the last century seem to reinforce four basic conclusions (Cibulka, 1995; Cremin, 1989; Tyack & Cuban, 1995, p. 135). The first is that no one can articulate, let alone measure, all the important parts of a complex human endeavor like education (Zumeta, 2001, p. 185). The second, instructors need to anchor educational assessment to “the learning goals and pedagogies of particular educational contexts” (Anson, 2008, p. 122). On behalf of teachers at every level, Chris M. Anson (2008) argues, “The most meaningful assessments provide formative information to those closest to the learners whose abilities are being assessed, in the context of their own curriculum and educational outcomes” (122). This means, as Grubb and Lazerson (2001) have argued, that educational institutions “should strive to be as good as they can be *in their own terms* [authors’ emphasis]” (p. 102). And finally, in the judgment of David Tyack and Larry Cuban (1995), “Better schooling will result in the future – as it has in the past and does now – chiefly from the steady, reflective efforts of the practitioners who work in schools and from the contributions of the parents and citizens who support (while they criticize) public education” (p. 135). However, over the past century rarely, if ever, are practitioners, parents, and citizens allowed to contribute

to the framing of institutional accountability measures: which issues are most important, why, and who should be accountable to whom? The traditional ideal of democracy in public education still eludes us as a nation, as governmental and professional elites dictate policy for the public to follow without debate. And finally, scholars like Gloria Ladson-Billings (2006) have pointed out over the past decade that schools cannot operate efficiently or equitably on a shoestring budget. Financial resources matter, and until the United States can overcome its “educational debt” (Ladson-Billings, 2006), all talk of performance indicators and institutional effectiveness is fundamentally limited in terms of actually producing lasting positive outputs.

Higher educational institutions should be effective at what they do, but education is more of an art than a science, more of an affective experience than an effective enterprise, and its highest goal is the internal transformation of human beings, not the external measurement of particular behavior. But more important than ontological discussions of the human endeavor of education, is the more practical imperative of democratic deliberation over the ethical parameters of what educational effectiveness *should* mean. And this deliberation must include practitioners, students, and the larger community, not just policy makers, for the ultimate effectiveness of any institution of education is enabled or constrained by the social, economic, and political context in which it operates. Public focus on the perfectibility of social institutions will only take us so far before we realize that no utopian scheme has yet succeeded, no matter how well engineered with the best intentions. We would be better advised to focus on the *process* of perfection, and the practical hope it breeds, than on the unattainable measures of perfectibility.

But maybe the accountability movement is not about the perfection of education. Perhaps is not about education at all. The widely influential scholar of policy analysis, Aaron Wildavsky (1979), warned that the growing accountability movement in education might be

more about economic issues and political posturing. Wildavasky perceptively asked, “Is education being made into, or accepting the role of, the fall guy” (pp. 131, 148, 309)?

Wildavasky knew the answer of course. Educators had been waving flags since the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century when business oriented managers began taking over American schools and displacing educational ends for economic efficiency. In 1912 a perceptive New York teacher argued, “We have yielded to the arrogance of ‘big business men’ and have accepted their criteria of efficiency at their own valuation, without question. We have consented to measure the results of educational efforts in terms of price and product – the terms that prevail in the factory and the department store” (Callahan, 1962, p. 121). Instead of blindly adopting efficiency metrics from the business world and smashing them down upon the fragile human ecology of education, educators must step up and ask, as did Wildavasky (1979), “efficiency for whom and for what?” and “who will coordinate whom toward what ends” (pp. 131, 148, 309)?

### *Works Cited*

- Anson, Chris M. 2008. "Closed Systems and Standardized Writing Tests." Assessment Symposium. *College Composition and Communication*, 60, no. 1: 113-128.
- Bailey, Thomas R., D. Timothy Leinbach, and Davis Jenkins. 2006. Is Student Success Labeled Institutional Failure? Student Goals and Graduation Rates in the Accountability Debate at Community Colleges. Community College Research Center, Working Paper No. 1. New York: Teachers College, Columbia University, 2006.
- Bell, Daniel. 1978. *The Cultural Contradictions of Capitalism*. New York: Basic.
- Bernstein, Richard J. 2008. "Democratic Hope." *The Hedgehog Review* 10, no. 1: 36-50.
- Biesta, Gert. 2007. "What 'What Works' Won't Work: Evidence Based Practice and the Democratic Deficit in Educational Research." *Educational Theory* 57, no. 1: 1-22.
- Bradburn, Ellen M., and David G. Hurst. 2001. "Community College Transfer Rates to 4-Year Institutions Using Alternative Definitions of Transfer." *Education Statistics Quarterly* 3, no. 3. National Center for Education Statistics, Report 2001-197. <[www.nces.ed.gov](http://www.nces.ed.gov)>
- Breneman, David W., and Susan C. Nelson. 1981. *Financing Community Colleges: An Economic Perspective*. Washington, DC: The Brookings Institution.
- Brint, Steven. & Karabel, Jerome. 1989. *The Diverted Dream: Community Colleges and the Promise of Educational Opportunity in America, 1900 – 1985*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Buckman, Ken. 2007. "What Counts as Assessment in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century?" *Thought & Action* 23: 29-37.

- California Junior College Association (CJCA) Committee on Institutional Research. 1965, June. *Critical Problems and Needs of California Junior Colleges*. California Junior College Association. Sacramento: California State Department of Education.
- California Postsecondary Education Commission (CPEC). 1973, June. *Through the Open Door: Sources and Selected Characteristics of Students*. Sacramento, CA.
- California Postsecondary Education Commission (CPEC). 1973, Oct. *Through the Open Door: 32,000 Students in 32 Colleges*. Sacramento, CA.
- California Postsecondary Education Commission (CPEC). 1974, Feb. *Through the Open Door: The Other Side of Persistence*. Sacramento, CA.
- California Postsecondary Education Commission (CPEC). 1974, July. *Through the Open Door: A Limited View of Performance*. Sacramento, CA.
- California Postsecondary Education Commission (CPEC). 1976, Feb. *Through the Open Door: A Study of Patterns of Enrollment and Performance in California's Community Colleges*. Sacramento, CA.
- California Postsecondary Education Commission (CPEC). 1978. *Planning for Postsecondary Education in California: A Five year Plan Update, 1979*. Sacramento, CA.
- California Postsecondary Education Commission (CPEC). 1980, March. *Plan for Obtaining Community College Transfer Student Information*. Sacramento, CA.
- California Postsecondary Education Commission (CPEC). 1985, March. *Background Papers to a Prospectus for California Postsecondary Education, 1985 – 2000*. Sacramento, CA.
- California Postsecondary Education Commission (CPEC). 1985, March. *Reaffirming California's Commitment to Transfer: Recommendations for Aiding Student Transfer*

*from the California Community Colleges to the California State University and the University of California.* Sacramento, CA.

California Postsecondary Education Commission (CPEC). 1988, Sept. *The Role of the California Postsecondary Education Commission in Achieving Educational Equity in California.* Sacramento, CA.

California Postsecondary Education Commission (CPEC). 1989, Aug. *Update of Community College Transfer Student Statistics 1988-89.* Sacramento, CA.

California Postsecondary Education Commission (CPEC). 1989, Jan. *Toward Educational Equity.* Sacramento, CA.

California Postsecondary Education Commission (CPEC). 1991. *The Performance of California Higher Education: Annual Reports to California's Governor, Legislature, and Citizens in Response to Assembly Bill 1808 (Chapter 741).* Sacramento, CA.

California Postsecondary Education Commission (CPEC). 1993, April. *The Master Plan, Then and Now: Policies of the 1960 -1975 Master Plan for Higher Education in Light of 1993 Realities.* Sacramento, CA.

California Postsecondary Education Commission (CPEC). 1993, Dec. *Restabilizing Higher Education: Moderating the Impact on California's College Students and the State's Future from Cutting State Support for Higher Education by \$1.4 Billion Over the Past Three Years. Report of the Executive Director of the California Postsecondary Education Commission.* Sacramento, CA.

California Postsecondary Education Commission (CPEC). 1993, June. *A Dream Deferred: California's Waning Higher Education Opportunities.* Sacramento, CA.

- California Postsecondary Education Commission (CPEC). 1993, Oct. *Who Will Take Responsibility for the Future of California Higher Education: A Statement by Clark Kerr*. Sacramento, CA.
- California Postsecondary Education Commission (CPEC). 1999, Sept. *A Bridge to the Future: Higher Education Planning for the Next Century*. Sacramento, CA.
- California Postsecondary Education Commission (CPEC). 2005, June. *Student Transfer in California Postsecondary Education*. Sacramento, CA.
- Campbell, John L. 2001. "Institutional Analysis and the Role of Ideas in Political Economy." In *The Rise of Neoliberalism and Institutional Analysis*, edited by John L. Campbell and Ove K. Pedersen. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Cibulka, James G. 1995. "Policy Analysis and the Study of the Politics of Education." In *The Study of Educational Politics: The 1994 Commemorative Yearbook of the Politics of Education Association*, edited by Jay D. Scribner and Donald H. Layton. Washington, DC: Falmer Press.
- Cibulka, J. G. 2001. "The Changing Role of Interest Groups in Education: Nationalization and the New Politics of Education." *Educational Policy* 15, no. 1: 12-40.
- Commission Appointed by Secretary of Education Margaret Spellings (Spellings' Commission). 2006. *A Test of Leadership: Charting the Future of U.S. Higher Education*. Washington, DC: US Department of Education.
- Commission for the Review of the Master Plan for Higher Education (CRMPHE). 1986a, March. *Background Papers: The Challenge of Change*. Sacramento, CA.

- Commission for the Review of the Master Plan for Higher Education (CRMPHE). 1986b, March. *The Challenge of Change: A Reassessment of the California Community College*. Sacramento, CA.
- Commission for the Review of the Master Plan for Higher Education (CRMPHE). 1987, July. *The Master Plan Renewed: Unity, Equity, Quality, and Efficiency in California Postsecondary Education*. Sacramento, CA.
- Coordinating Council for Higher Education (CCHE). 1965, April. *A Consideration of Issues Affecting California Public Junior Colleges*. Sacramento, CA.
- Cremin, Lawrence. A. 1989. "Education as Politics." In *Popular Education and Its Discontents*. New York: Harper & Row.
- Dougherty, Kevin J. 2001. *The Contradictory College: The Conflicting Origins, Impacts, and Futures of the Community College*. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press.
- Dougherty, Kevin J., and Esther Hong. 2006. "Performance Accountability as Imperfect Panacea." In *Defending the Community College Equity Agenda*, edited by Thomas Bailey and Vanessa Smith Morest. Baltimore, MD: The Johns Hopkins University Press.
- Dougherty, Kevin J., and Monica Reid. 2007. *Fifty States of Achieving the Dream: State Policies to Enhance Access to and Success in Community Colleges Across the United States*. Community College Research Center, Teachers College, Columbia University. New York: author.
- Douglas, John Aubrey. 2000. *The California Idea and American Higher Education, 1850 to the 1960 Master Plan*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.

- Douglas, John Aubrey. 2007. *The Conditions for Admission; The Conditions of Admission: Access, Equity, and the Social Contract of Public Universities*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.
- Dowd, Alicia C. 2003. "From Access to Outcome Equity: Revitalizing the Democratic Mission of the Community College." *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*. 586: 92-119.
- Edsall, Thomas Byrne. 1989. "The Changing Shape of Power: A Realignment in Public Policy." In *The Rise and Fall of the New Deal Order, 1930 – 1980*, edited by Steve Fraser and Gary Gerstle. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.
- Fischer, Russell G. 1987. "California Community Colleges: On the Road to Reform?" *Community College Review* 15, no. 1: 13-20.
- Frye, John H. 1992. *The Vision of the Public Junior College, 1900 – 1940: Professional Goals and Popular Aspirations*. New York: Greenwood Press.
- Garland, Peter H., and S. V. Martorana. 1988. "The Interplay of Political Culture and Participant Behavior in Political Action to Enact Significant State Community College Legislation." *Community College Review*. 16, no. 2: 30-43.
- Gleazer, Jr., Edmund J. 1968. *This Is the Community College*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin.
- Grubb, W. Norton, and Marvin Lazerson. 1988. *Broken Promises: How Americans Fail Their Children*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Grubb, W. Norton, and Marvin Lazerson. 2004. *The Education Gospel: The Economic Power of Schooling*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Grubb, W. Norton, and Associates. 1999. *An Inside Look at Teaching in Community Colleges*. New York: Routledge.

- Hall, George L. 1974. "Behind the Bramble Bushes: A Mid-Century History of the Community College." *Community College Review*. 2: 6-14.
- Hunter, James Davison. 1991. *Culture Wars: The Struggle to Define America*. New York: Basic Books.
- Hursh, David. 2007. "Assessing No Child Left Behind and the Rise of Neoliberal Education Policies." *American Educational Research Journal*. 44, no. 3: 493-518.
- Joint Committee to Develop a Master Plan for Education (JCDMPE). 2002. *The California Master Plan for Education*. Sacramento, CA.
- Kliebard, Herbert. M. 2004. *The Struggle for the American Curriculum, 1893 – 1958* (3<sup>rd</sup> ed.). New York: RoutledgeFalmer.
- Laanan, Frankie Santos. 1999. "Accountability in Community Colleges: Looking toward the 21<sup>st</sup> Century." In *Community Colleges: Policy in the Future Context*, edited by Barbara K. Townsend & Susan B. Twombly. Westport, CT: Ablex, 1999.
- Labaree, David F. 1990. "From Comprehensive High School to Community College: Politics, Markets, and the Evolution of Educational Opportunity." In *Research in Sociology of Education and Socialization: A Research Annual*. Greenwich, CN: JAI Press.
- Ladson-Billings, Gloria. 2006. "From the Achievement Gap to the Education Debt: Understanding Achievement in U.S. Schools." *Educational Researcher* 35, no. 7: 3-12.
- League for Innovation in the Community College. 2004, Aug. *An Assessment Framework for the Community College: Measuring Student Learning and Achievement as a Means of Demonstrating Institutional Effectiveness*, Version 1.0. Phoenix, AZ.
- Levin, John S. 2001. *Globalizing the Community College: Strategies for Change in the Twenty-First Century*. New York: Palgrave.

- Lucas, Christopher J. 1994. *American Higher Education: A History*. New York: St. Martin's Griffin.
- Mazzoni, Tim L. 1995. "State Policy-Making and School Reform: Influences and Influentials." In *The Study of Educational Politics: The 1994 Commemorative Yearbook of the Politics of Education Association*, edited by Jay D. Scribner and Donald H. Layton. Washington, DC: Falmer Press.
- Meier, Kenneth. 2008. *The Community College Mission: History and Theory, 1930 – 2000*. Chico, CA: Unpublished manuscript.
- National Center for Public Policy and Higher Education (NCPPE). 2000. *Measuring Up 2000: The State-By-State Report Card for Higher Education*. San Jose, CA.
- Pedersen, Robert. 1987. "State Government and the Junior College, 1901 – 1946." *Community College Review*. 14: 48-52.
- Ratcliff, James L. 1987. "'First' Public Junior Colleges in an Age of Reform." *Journal of Higher Education*. 58, no. 2: 151-180.
- Schrag, Peter. 1986, June 23. "California Screamin': Proposition 13 Cuts Deep." *The New Republic*. 14-16.
- Shulock, Nancy, and Colleen Moore. 2007a. *Rules of the Game: How State Policy Creates Barriers to Degree Completion and Impedes Student Success in the California Community Colleges*. Institute for Higher Education Leadership & Policy. Sacramento, CA: Author.
- Shulock, Nancy, and Colleen Moore. 2007b. *Invest in Success: How Finance Policy Can Increase Student Success at California's Community Colleges*. Institute for Higher Education Leadership & Policy. Sacramento, CA: Author.

- Smith Morest, Vanessa, Holly Moore, Sandra Ruppert, Kevin Dougherty, and James Jacobs. 2002. *Accountability and Learning Outcomes in Community Colleges*, Seminar conducted at Community College Research Center. Columbia University, New York, NY.
- Sroufe, Gerald E. 1995. "Politics of Education at the Federal Level." In *The Study of Educational Politics: The 1994 Commemorative Yearbook of the Politics of Education Association*, edited by Jay D. Scribner and Donald H. Layton. Washington, DC: Falmer Press.
- Sullivan, Patrick. 2008. "Measuring 'Success' at Open Admissions Institutions: Thinking Carefully about This Complex Question." *College English*. 70, no. 6: 618-632.
- Theelin, John R. 2004. *A History of American Higher Education*. Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press.
- Thornton, Jr., James W. 1972. *The Community Junior College* (3<sup>rd</sup> ed.). New York: John Wiley & Sons.
- Tyack, David, and Larry Cuban. 1995. *Tinkering Toward Utopia: A Century of Public School Reform*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Tyack, David B. 1974. *The One Best System: A History of American Urban Education*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Tyack, David, and Elisabeth Hansot. 1982. *Managers of Virtue: Public School Leadership in America, 1820 – 1980*. New York: Basic Books.
- Veysey, Laurence R. 1965. *The Emergence of the American University*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

- Wechsler, Harold S. 2001. *Access to Success in the Urban High School: The Middle College Movement*. New York: Teachers College Press.
- Wildavsky, Aaron. 1979. *Speaking Truth to Power: The Art and Craft of Policy Analysis*. Boston: Little, Brown, and Company.
- Wilentz, Sean. 2008. *The Age of Reagan: A History, 1974 – 2008*. New York: Harper.
- Zimmerman, Jonathan. 2002. *Whose America? Culture Wars in the Public Schools*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Zumeta, William. 2001. “Public Policy and Accountability in Higher Education: Lessons from the Past and Present for the New Millennium.” In *The States and Public Higher Education Policy: Affordability, Access, and Accountability*, edited by Donald E. Heller. Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press.

---

<sup>1</sup> Most scholars trace the origins of the institutional effectiveness movement to the 1970s and 1980s when international fiscal and labor market crises constrained government expenditures on education (Hursh, 2007; Mazzoni, 1995; Levin, 2001; Smith Morest et. al., 2002). However, other scholars, mostly historians, trace this movement farther back to the so-called “progressive” social, political, and educational movements of the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. Many “progressive” school reformers utilized the widespread logic of “scientific management” and called for “efficiency” and “standardization” in education (Cibulka, 2001; Kliebard, 2004, pp. 19-20; Tyack, 1974; Tyack & Cuban, 1995, pp. 50-51; Tyack & Hansot, 1982).

<sup>2</sup> The phrase “community college” is considered a general noun and not normally capitalized as such; however, the state of California has specifically designated legal names for the segments of the tri-partite higher education system. Thus, California Community College will be used in this study to refer to the specific state institution, while lower case usage of “community college” is a more generic reference the national institution.

<sup>3</sup> The other four reports were: Through the Open Door: Sources and Selected Characteristics of Students (June 1973); Through the Open Door: 32,000 Students in 32 Colleges (Oct 1973); Through the Open Door: The Other Side of Persistence (Feb 1974); and Through the Open Door: A Limited View of Performance (July 1974).

<sup>4</sup> The collection of racial and ethnic student data was in a transition period. Requiring students to submit such data and recording it had been against state law, but in 1968 the federal government began to require colleges and universities to report such data, which put institutions of higher education in the state in a difficult situation, but by the late 1960s more and more institutions began to comply with federal requirements (p. 19).