

Charge Statement for Chancellor’s Commission on the Engagement of Young Men

For far too long, our region has struggled with disparities in economic prosperity, health, crime, and education. Many of the challenges of our time stand a greater chance at resolution with an educated citizenry. We understand that the economic and social benefits of a well-educated population is well documented. A recent investment analysis has shown, “For every dollar society invests in California’s Community Colleges, an average of \$11.70 in benefits will accrue to California over the course of the students’ careers.”¹ While the economic benefits of education is impressive, the societal impact and the impact on the quality of life of a well-educated population is also been well documented.² However, to fully receive these benefits, all members of our region must be engaged in education after high school.

At its core, efforts to engage men and boys often tend to focus on recognizing how social norms of power and gender can impact educational attainment. Men often face various socio-cultural barriers that can prevent or inhibit educational advancement. The pressure to provide for one’s family as well as the changing social image of manhood will continue to be factors in decision making. What is needed is a new value statement, or a redefined understanding of the positive impact of education on men’s lives.

Issue

Our core mission, transforming lives through education, faces a dual challenge – the pandemic and decline of college engagement of men. The State Center Community College District has seen a dramatic decrease of young men attending our colleges. From the fall of 2019 to the fall of 2021 – 3,437 men dropped out of college.³

Background

According to the National Student Clearinghouse Research Center (2021), across the country, community colleges saw an average 15% decrease in enrollment since fall 2019. As the table below illustrates, the Colleges of State Center Community College District have also experienced dramatic decrease in enrollment, this represents *a decrease of 10% drop in overall enrollment, and a 35% drop in first time college students.*

While the decline in enrollment is certainly cause for concern, upon further review of the data, an alarming trend emerged along gender lines.

Location	2019FA	2021FA
CCC	8,557	7,930
CTC	1,639	1,050
FCC	23,548	20,474
MCC	4,339	4,675
OCCC	607	340
RC	7,295	6,637
Grand Total	41,029	35,490

The gender gap in college enrollment has been growing for decades, with the latest data showing that women make up 57% of U.S. undergraduates. The pandemic has only widened that gap. In the fall of 2020, American male undergraduate enrollment fell by nearly 7%, nearly three times as much as female enrollment dropped, according to the National Student Clearinghouse.

Similarly, the gender gap at State Center Community College District also dropped since the pandemic from 43.6% of all students in the fall of 2019 to 39.9 percent in fall of 2021. To put this into perspective,

¹ The Economic Value of the California Community College System, January 2022, p 7

² The Economic Value of the California Community College System, January 2022, page 51-54

³ Ibid.

this percentage decrease means - from the fall of 2019 to the fall of 2021 – enrollment dropped by 3,437 men. Even more alarming, the decrease of first-time college student males (ages 18-24) dropped by 38% (n=1,422).⁴

The Charge of the Commission:

The primary charge of this commission will be to provide expert advice to the Chancellor on how we can improve our policies and procedures related to the declining college participation among men enrolled at the colleges of State Center Community College District.

The Chancellor's Commission on the Engagement of Men will provide a Recommendation Report to the Chancellor's Office **within 60 days** of the last Commission convening. The Recommendation Report will propose the actions to enhance the College's outreach efforts and existing programs designed to engage students, as well as provide recommendations to the Chancellor for specific District action and/or policy modifications to strengthen the District's support of the colleges in order to better respond to this crisis.

A follow-up report outlining the status of the subsequent actions from the Recommendation Report will be completed and shared with the Chancellor, the Commission and the Community.

The Commission Duties:

We acknowledge that in order to enhance and strengthen the Colleges' and District's response, we need to examine the relationships between our institutions, our employers, our students, and our communities of color.

The Commission will work together to examine past practices, analyze current practices, and share ideas in order to understand the problem and to develop action-based solutions.

Key questions to ponder:

- What the pandemic has taught colleges about reaching out to young men?
- What are the silver linings of the pandemic as it relates to student success?
- Are there patterns in the exodus of men? If so, what does that tell us in terms of next steps?
- What are the success stories that we can tell our young men and our community about the college's record-breaking graduation and transfer efforts over the past two years?
- How do men view college? What is the value-added statement that resonates with men?
- What should be our clear, long-term goals and milestones related to engagement strategies and enrollment targets for young men?
- What should our early and mid-term indicators be for a successful recovery and return of young men?

Goals:

- 1) Research and identify the root causes for the exodus of men, specifically 18-24 years old
- 2) Identify and recommend a course of action to facilitate their return
- 3) Recommend detailed set of actions that will result in an increase enrollment of men of color, specifically Black, and Latino men
- 4) Research and design retention strategies for implementation
- 5) Educate key community stakeholders, business leaders, and K-16 partners on the importance of education and the tie to the economy

⁴ Ibid.

Guiding Framework, an Excerpt from Fresno City College's 2019-2022 Student Equity Plan

State Center Community College District's Mission Statement embodies that State Center Community College District is a welcoming and inclusive equity-minded, anti-racist learning environment where diverse students are supported to pursue and attain student success. State Center Community College District provides solutions to challenges, utilizes the latest techniques for preparing the workforce and provides clear pathways for completion of programs of study, transition to a university, and securing living-wage employment for our students.

As mentioned, the State Center Community College District 's Anti- Racist Resolution as well as in the District's Resolution for Diversity, Equity and Inclusion, we are committed to creating an environment of inclusion that values, honors, and respects all members of our campus community. We consistently embrace our diverse student population while fostering respect that extends far beyond the classroom into all spaces of our campus. Our communities require that we support learning environments where students, faculty, and staff engage in critical conversations regarding race, socio-economic status, sexuality, physical abilities, religious beliefs, political beliefs, and other ideologies.

Therefore, we acknowledge and affirm the value of our campus community's diversity in race, ability, age, culture, ethnicity, gender, gender identity and expression, language, national origin, religious and political belief, sexual orientation, and social class. As we continue to expand our educational system into our surrounding communities, we want to remind everyone that our campus exists to enhance the social and economic wellbeing of everyone in our service area. Creating a campus that is grounded on student equity will allow our community members to achieve their educational goals and reach economic prosperity.

Quick Reference Definitions*

Implicit bias (also referred to as unconscious bias) is "the attitudes or stereotypes that affect our understanding, actions, and decisions in an implicit manner. Activated involuntarily, without awareness or intentional control. Can be either positive or negative. Everyone is susceptible" (Kirwan Institute, 2016, p. 14).

Explicit bias refers to the "attitudes and beliefs we have about a person or group on a conscious level. Much of the time, these biases and their expression arise as the direct result of a perceived threat" (Perception Ins, n.d., 2020).

Equity-mindedness is defined as community colleges practitioners who are (a) race-conscious (in a positive and affirming manner and aware of the social and historical context of exclusionary practices in American Higher Education), (b) Institutionally focused (focused on what we have can do not the students or community), (c) Systemically aware, and (d) Equity advancing (USC, Center for Urban Education, Bensimon, 2020).