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## REVISITING CALIFORNIA HIGHER EDUCATION COORDINATION

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### ABSTRACT

Accountability in postsecondary education across the nation has matured for the most part over the past five years. The same cannot be said for California. In California, the limited attention to accountability is inconsistent to the heightened focus on accountability at the national level. As a result of widespread and increasing concern about the quality, efficiency, and effectiveness of California postsecondary education, its governance and the management of public postsecondary education institutions, this paper has three objectives: a) To briefly describe the state of governance with special focus on the role and responsibilities of a state postsecondary education coordinating body; b) To discuss matters associated with the state of public trust, accountability and coordination in California postsecondary education; and c), To make recommendations on what action steps are needed immediately to improve efficiency, effectiveness and accountability in the State's stewardship of postsecondary education, particularly public colleges and universities.

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In an April 2005 report, "A Framework for Incorporating Public Trust Issues in States' Higher Education Accountability Plans," author Nancy Shulock draws attention to some of the challenges then facing higher education. Among the hindrances identified was the competition for state resources at a time when the public's demands on postsecondary education are growing not only to meet the demands to educate increasing numbers of students but also to contribute to the economic engine for the state as well as to become more efficient, among other issues. Absent an ability or willingness to address these multiple issues, reservations have increased regarding postsecondary education performance.

Writing in the December 2006 CSHE report, "Accountability in Higher Education: A Public Agenda for Trust and Cultural Change," attention was drawn to the role of policymakers and elected officials in addressing the concerns. *"Without a well-formulated objective—and leadership geared up to get there – states and their higher education systems are unlikely to move toward the same destination."*

Amidst continuing consternation these prophetic observations, subsequent recommendations, and their implications for California have not generated the kind of advancement in the state that has been observed in multiple states across the nation. Unfortunately, it seems to be a continuous *"déjà vu* all over again" with respect to the challenges facing all of California education with particular focus on postsecondary education. Clark Kerr once indicated that postsecondary education in California faces unprecedented challenges, and that it was floundering in response. The additional observation that currently has applicability is that not only postsecondary education is floundering but also the State itself is in a similar condition as it relates to California postsecondary education.

This paper revisits the place of public trust and accountability in postsecondary education with specific reference to California. In addition to drawing attention to selected national trends, an effort is made to focus on specific actions or inactions in California relating to governance in general and coordination in particular that have had deleterious impacts on the state's system of public colleges and universities in particular while offering recommendations for immediate consideration and action.

Repeated in numerous reports and recommendations internal and external to California postsecondary education over the last 20 or more years is the clarion call for people, policymakers and educational leaders, to meet the challenges identified with

dedication and commitment that enables the state and its diverse population to benefit from a postsecondary education that enriches their lives and advances their contributions to the civic life, economic development, and social progress of the state.

## BACKGROUND

In 2002 "Creating a Public Agenda," Richard Novak, Executive Director of the Center for Public Higher Education Trusteeship and Governance for the Association of Governing Boards of Universities and Colleges, described the situation when accountability is part of the discussion in or among policymakers, elected officials, and/or educational leaders.

*Mention the term "accountability" as applied to higher education and a number of negative images immediately arise. State legislators see colleges and universities as secretive, over reactive, and quick to label any external imposition an attack on academic freedom and institutional autonomy. Conversely, campuses view public officials as uninformed and unrealistic. State officials are seen as too impulsive about intervening in their eagerness to demonstrate to taxpayers that only their timely intervention can assure quality and contain skyrocketing tuitions.*

More than a decade later Novak's observation remains applicable today. Little has changed in terms of behaviors and/or perceptions.

Accountability in postsecondary education has been increasingly under discussion – in political circles, where politicians want to demonstrate they are doing something about rising tuition and low graduation rates while calling for transparency and public disclosure; in policy bodies, where decision makers struggle to balance academic freedom and fiscal prudence; and in homes, where parents worry about how to select a college that will give their child a good start in life without bankrupting their own futures. At the same time, key questions are being raised about postsecondary education's quality, performance and costs at a time when it is widely acknowledged that the complexity of the workplace of the future means that most of today's young students need some form of postsecondary education – now more than ever – if they are to have any hope of being productive and successful adults.

Nationally, states are taking steps to reach a new understanding about the role and responsibilities of public institutions. Concurrently, the federal government is advancing an array of carrots and sticks to bring about changes in how postsecondary education conducts its business, how diverse populations gain access, and how higher costs can be met by students and families at all income levels.

Within California, discussions about similar topics are impacted by the state's continuing budget constraints, which have led to lower levels of investment in postsecondary education, several rounds of fee increases at all three segments of public institutions, and, by action of the Governor as of June 2011, an elimination of the California Postsecondary Education Commission (CPEC).

Across the nation, postsecondary education has been increasingly subject to demands for accountability. National trends, state accountability legislation, and general public perception have pressured colleges and universities to generate and evaluate data that links instructional productivity, academic planning, and fiscal policy making.

In most states legislators have pushed for higher standards of performance, coupled with the implicit threat that institutions that fail to perform can be punished with lower levels of public investment. In California, there has been little specific focus on accountability, but public colleges and universities have suffered along with the rest of the state through several years of budget crises that have impacted accessibility, student costs and campus operations.

Multiple examples have arisen from around the country that has raised the issue of autonomy vs. accountability and the role of public trust. Institutions argue that they are already held accountable through accreditation, financial audits and other mechanisms. They worry about the intrusiveness of legislative micromanagement and the effect on academic freedom. At the same time, the public – focused on rising costs and limited accessibility – wonders why colleges and universities are not more forthcoming about performance and responsive to the need to tighten spending. Policy makers look for ways to restrain budget growth even as they commit or provide empty rhetoric, to broad access to postsecondary education for the country's increasingly diverse population.

The late Martin Trow, Professor Emeritus, Public Policy at the University of California, Berkeley, had this to say about accountability in a 2005 Roundtable Discussion held at Berkeley's Center for Studies in Higher Education:

*Accountability can be defined as the obligation – legal, financial, moral and intellectual – to report to "specific others" about the institution. This report involves explaining and justifying activities and the use of resources, as well as answering questions. Other words and names are sometimes used interchangeably with accountability: accreditation, evaluation, assessment, and audit. All have different implications, and it would take a separate, lengthy meeting focused on just the definition to sort them all out.*

*In essence, accountability is about linking institutions to the larger society. Higher education already has many forms of accountability that do so. The catalogue of courses, for example, is a form of accountability; the Web sites that institutions post; financial reporting; anything that involves the institution "talking" to the rest of the world. Within higher education, there is substantial recognition and acceptance that institutions have to tell the world what they are up to and answer questions about issues that are not transparent. Higher education may pride itself on autonomy, but there are already many, many forms of accountability in place. Accountability cuts both ways: It constrains institutions from fraud and malfeasance, but it also helps institutions legitimize themselves to the external world. Without accountability, higher education would be hard put to defend itself to the world that supports it.*

"Public trust" describes a relationship between the postsecondary education sector and its support systems – governments, contributors and the public. In a 1996 paper, Professor Trow described trust as a "fundamental link between higher education and society" and defined it as "the provision of support, by either public or private bodies, without the requirement that the institution either provide specific goods and services in return for that support or account specifically and in detail for the use of those funds."

Currently, one position on public trust is that postsecondary education is in good shape, particularly compared to other institutions. With several corporate bankruptcies, the conviction of some business leaders for crimes and ongoing investigations of other corporations, the financial and business world is not held in high regard at the moment. The corporate sector is not alone; one only has to see the plummeting ratings of politicians and the federal and state policymakers. Recent steroid scandals in baseball and off-the field behavior of professional and collegiate athletes have diminished respect for athletics. These examples are a reminder that postsecondary education has, for the most part, nothing of which to be ashamed – but also the public trust can be fickle.

Other indicators that public trust in postsecondary education remains high: 1) during the 1990s, budgets for colleges and universities rose dramatically, only declining when the economy entered recession and state budgets were constrained; 2) enrollments have increased (though accessibility has become a significant issue where declining financial resources have limited actual enrollments), signifying that the public continues to believe in the value of postsecondary education; and 3) philanthropic support for colleges and universities increased greatly until the economy weakened and public giving declined.

Polls and surveys indicate that the public understands that postsecondary education is important, not just for individuals but also for the future economic interests of society. Most indicate that people believe that when a student completes a baccalaureate degree, they walk out of college with a good education. There also seems to be confidence that, in general, faculty are qualified and do a reasonably good job.

The above position on public trust, however, has a growing counterpoint that argues there has been an erosion of trust in postsecondary education – not to the extent that the public has grown disenchanted with K-12 education perhaps, but an erosion of trust nonetheless. Several polls indicate that public trust has fallen in recent years even though it remains relatively high when compared to other social institutions.

There are many indicators of public dissatisfaction, often driven by media stories about specific issues that make the public uncomfortable or angry. Examples include increasingly astronomical figures cited as the average cost of a four-year higher education; campuses inviting speakers who have committed controversial acts or expressed unpopular opinions; students being taught by assistants while professors devote their time to research, some of it seemingly esoteric; professors carrying light class schedules and complaining if they are asked to teach more students; students taking longer than four years to get through college because of the difficulty of getting into necessary classes; and perennial complaints that classrooms are used as platforms for ideological/political indoctrination. In addition, the public perspective on postsecondary education is undoubtedly soured by a spillover effect from widespread dissatisfaction with the state of K-12 education.

The accountability movement is a response to these public frustrations, and as such takes in a variety of issues. A more appropriate focus for public interest and trust would be two-fold: Is the entire education system (K-12 and postsecondary

education) producing the qualified workforce needed to sustain prosperity, and are people being educated in a manner that supports a more unified society or deepens already-existing divisions? As the accountability movement gains momentum and systems are put in place, it is important to ensure that the dialogue does not just address the details of any system, but also the overall direction that the public wants to see from its colleges and universities.

One possible route for ensuring accountability already exists. While there are regional differences, today's accrediting processes are seen as a mechanism by which accountability within postsecondary education can be realized to a significant degree. If accreditors, instead of serving primarily as regional protectorates, became more transparent and genuinely public in their activities, not only would public trust be enhanced but also a significant step could be taken toward achieving and demonstrating educational effectiveness.

With any accountability system, there is the danger that accountability will be seen as a goal within itself, rather than a route to achieving some larger goal. There is a real danger that the discussion about goals will be disjointed and lack sophistication and relevance if it is left to those outside of postsecondary education. Most observers appear to recognize there are very positive results from postsecondary education; nevertheless, there is strong interest in seeing a cultural change within the colleges and universities that will lead to more transparency and some form of publicly accessible accountability.

### **CALIFORNIA: MANY CHALLENGES, LITTLE UNITY**

California has three publicly funded segments of postsecondary education: the research-oriented University of California, which has constitutional autonomy; the undergraduate-focused California State University System; and the two-year California Community College System. In addition, the state's student aid program is generous in its support of students attending California's private and independent colleges and universities.

The California Postsecondary Education Commission (CPEC), which has been deleted from the budget by the Governor, nominally served as a coordinating body and source of postsecondary education advocacy; however, the state's persistent budget shortfalls in the past several years resulted in a sharp decrease in funding, staff and capability to perform effectively. In addition to the cutbacks, the dynamic tension between the three public segments kept CPEC in recent years from being a strong, objective, and independent voice for postsecondary education interests.

California is unique, if in no other way, because of its size. It is more comparable to another nation than to the other states. Solutions that work in other states are not always feasible in California because they do not necessarily scale easily. When looking for an accountability model that will work in California, it may be more informative to look at national models.

In addition to size, the state faces other challenges. Term limits that affect both legislators and state officeholders cause a constant turnover that diminishes expertise and focuses policy makers' attention more on getting re-elected than on solving long-term issues. Because of a variety of laws and initiatives, much of the state's budget is tied to automatic spending allocations, severely limiting flexibility for policy makers. The state also has one of the most diverse populations in the country, with Caucasians no longer the majority of the population. The state struggles with how to educate those whose first language is not English, as well as how to ensure access to higher education for this diverse population.

A key challenge in California is the lack of coordinated leadership; in fact, many observers of California's postsecondary education environment have identified it as the fundamental issue that must be addressed. While the three public segments of colleges and universities that have been developed are the source of much of the strength of postsecondary education in California, the segments do not really have a mechanism that allows them to speak with one voice about overarching and long-term higher education goals.

The California Round Table on Educational Opportunity, formed in 1981, and its subsequent permutations, referred to as the California Higher Education Round Table, was originally formed to focus on issues that span postsecondary education "with particular concern for issues of access and opportunity". A voluntary entity, the Round Table is composed of the UC President, CSU Chancellor, CCC Chancellor, the Superintendent of Public Instruction (SPI), Executive Director of CPEC, and the President of the Association of Independent California Colleges and Universities (AICCU). The UC President's Office at one time fulfilled the leadership function but no longer does so, and CPEC – which would make sense as a center for such a discussion – had a limited ability to take on that role because of budget cuts and the historical reluctance of the three public segments to see CPEC become a powerful advocate that might not always reflect the self-interest of each segment.

If a unified postsecondary education body existed, it could position the accountability discussion so that it focuses on what is best for the state's future, while avoiding appearing to the public as overly concerned about the self-interest of individual postsecondary education segments. This would harken back to the tradition of land grant colleges, a tradition that respected academic freedom, quality teaching and commitment to the public interest. Such a foundation for trust no longer seems to exist, and no leader – in higher education or in the political realm - has emerged to point out in a credible manner the important relationship between a healthy postsecondary education system and the future of California.

There is some disagreement among observers of California's postsecondary education system about whether expectations for postsecondary education are clear in California. Some states, such as North Dakota, have specified what is needed in terms of workforce capability, degree productivity, quality of life and other metrics. Similarly, North and South Carolina have tied specific expectations to budget allocations. The accountability system advanced in the CSU system has been identified as an effective effort at pulling various accountability measures together as well as providing transparency and information dissemination on its ongoing efforts.

Other observers believe strongly that California lacks clear expectations for its postsecondary education system. Some draw attention to the state's Master Plan – originally only for colleges and universities and most recently revised to include all levels of education – and the individual compacts negotiated between a series of governors and the UC and CSU systems. These vehicles for state expectations, however, seem to fall short of the clarity and credibility many policymakers and postsecondary education leaders seek while the public – an important stakeholder - is left out in the cold. The compacts are criticized as a deal between individual segments and one politician – the governor – rather than the reflection of public policy as determined by widely representative legislative bodies. The Master Plan has been characterized as having broad goals rather than specific indicators attached to certain levels of funding.

While the accountability discussions nationwide and within the state are focused on a variety of concepts, there are several fundamental issues an informed public is actually concerned about: Can young people get into institutions, can they move through them in a reasonable amount of time so that others can come in behind them, and can the students and their families afford it? In California, access is declining, and productivity in terms of degree production is not where it should be. It is not unreasonable for the public to be concerned about these issues. Postsecondary education ought to be addressing them in a meaningful way. To not do so is asking for trouble: As long as postsecondary education avoids finding answers for decreasing access and increasing tuition, the public will press the Legislature to make reforms.

California has a strong history as not only a trendsetter but also a significant model for postsecondary education with its Master Plan for Higher Education. In the 1960's and then the 70's and 80's, California solidified its position as America's most populous state. A common expression among many trackers of trends and demographers was, *"When California catches cold, the rest of the country sneezes"*. At the beginning of the second decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, California has much more than a cold, and the rest of the nation is more than coughing and sputtering.

For several years, California and national policymakers have stressed the importance of institutional quality, productivity, and effectiveness within postsecondary education. These leaders look to state-level accountability measures to guide state planning, form a context for budgetary decisions, and monitor the return on public investment in colleges and universities.

Systemwide and institutional accountability is a natural consequence of autonomy and quasi-autonomy in California postsecondary education. It is also a consequence of tightened fiscal constraints and perceptions or anecdotal information that may or may not have any relationship to reality based on data and sound, independent and non-partisan analysis and recommendations.

California's goals for postsecondary education are at times difficult to discern. The rhetoric of affordability and accessibility, institutional excellence, and effectiveness in addressing the societal and economic needs of the state is sometimes in conflict with the reality of an economy and financial decisions based on factors other than sound, coherent, and consistent policy. Nevertheless, the state's coordinating body for postsecondary education, CPEC, was a strong advocate for specific policies intended to serve students and their parents in accessing an affordable and excellent postsecondary education system.

#### **THE NEED FOR HIGHER EDUCATION**

Postsecondary education across the nation and in California has two general purposes. It fulfills the needs of individual students and serves society. Students pursue a "higher" education for a variety of different reasons. For some, the joy and excitement of

learning itself is the primary goal. Others take a course or two for self-enrichment. Some enroll at a college or university to prepare for a career or as a step toward promotion within their current work environment. Others are changing careers. Yet others seek further professionalization or an advanced degree in an area of expertise. Most learners pursue practical goals.

In addition to meeting student needs, postsecondary education serves society through the preservation and advancement of knowledge, cultural and community enrichment, development of a spirit of civic and social responsibility, and the preparation of an educated workforce. In today's global economy, where boundaries between states or among nations are invisible, businesses make strategic decisions on where to locate depending on factors like taxes, transportation infrastructure, availability of communication technology, the cost of labor and, most important, the quality of the available workforce.

The American worker is learning that the strength of one's back is far less important than the currency and usefulness of one's knowledge. Broad knowledge and skills, effective interpersonal relations, and sophistication in the use and understanding of technology are important characteristics of successful employees.

A college or university education is a prerequisite for social mobility and for well-paid positions in most occupations. Mass education at the college and university level is a reality of the twenty-first century. Postsecondary education is a form of renewable energy that empowers the people and the knowledge-based industries that are California's best promise for the future. There is an inextricable link between postsecondary education and the State's economic development and vitality.

Beating up colleges and universities has become a hobby for some in Washington and Sacramento. It's destructive. And, given the reprehensible drop in state funding to colleges and universities particularly over the past decade, it is also ridiculous. California's colleges and universities are essential to its future economic prosperity. Harming them only hurts the state in the long run.

The challenge for California is clear. To compete globally, California must cultivate its human assets through a diverse, but integrated, postsecondary education system that is attractive to California residents, affordable, effective, and encompassing in its offerings and types of instruction, and dedicated to the development of a world-class workforce and an informed citizenry.

Unless the state's economy and resulting tax revenues show dramatic improvement, deep cuts made in postsecondary education funding will turn into gaping chasms. The damage to date grows more apparent. Fewer faculty members mean fewer classes. Fewer classes reduce a student's ability to graduate in a timely manner. It is not uncommon for students to have extended months or years in postsecondary education because the number of classes available has decreased and many times the required classes are full. The longer it takes to graduate, the more tuition and fees rise increasing the financial burden on students and their parents.

The real issue here is this: What do Californians consider a wise investment for the state's future social, cultural, and economic viability and vitality?

### **ACCOUNTABILITY REPORTING**

Accountability consists of three facets: the accountable parties, the content for which the parties are held accountable, and the procedures by which they are assessed and held accountable.

Increased accountability, as it is discussed today, became a prominent issue on campuses in the 1980s. At that time, issues concerning campus assessment of teaching and learning were debated in the context of a general interest in and concern for the quality of higher education. Accountability issues have been enlarged to include productivity and various measures of institutional effectiveness. By 2000, approximately one-third of the states had some form of "performance indicator" system in place. Many of the accountability reporting systems were mandated by state legislatures or statewide postsecondary education coordinating boards. Not in California.

Given the important purposes of postsecondary education, what is the status of California's system? Can a current snapshot of the system provide a baseline, or a point of departure for expected benefits of the State's system of postsecondary education? Moreover, can such a snapshot provide valuable data for statewide policy-making and planning?

Accountability reporting is problematic. An accountability report for postsecondary education that is merely a "report card" errs on the side of displaying outcomes without providing an explanation of special circumstances, level of state support, new initiatives, and progress made. On the other hand, an accountability report may appear concerned only with academic and institutional issues.

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California's goals for postsecondary education are at times difficult to discern. The rhetoric of affordability and accessibility, institutional excellence, and effectiveness in addressing the societal and economic needs of the state is sometimes in conflict with the reality of a situation in which the state's economy regularly goes through periods of success followed by periods of failures and financial decisions based on factors other than sound, coherent, and consistent policy. Nevertheless, several entities, including CPEC, the latter having its state budget eliminated by the Governor in June, 2011, have been strong advocates for specific policies intended to serve students and their parents in accessing an affordable and excellent postsecondary education system.

#### **CALIFORNIA'S SYSTEM OF HIGHER EDUCATION**

The California system of postsecondary education is guided by a tripartite governance structure. The governing boards of California's colleges and universities are accountable to the public for the fulfillment of each institution's mission, the furtherance of statewide goals, and the effective management of the institutions. CPEC had statewide responsibility for planning, coordination, and intended objective policy analysis and recommendations pertaining to postsecondary education to the Legislature, Governor, and the public at large. CPEC was responsible for program review and the nurturing of collegiality and cooperation among public and independent institutions to achieve statewide goals, while providing information and research on postsecondary education and advising the institutions themselves, the public, Governor, and Legislature. Furthermore, CPEC was the only body that had representation of the State Board of Education and CPEC's Statutory Advisory Committee included such representation as well, demonstrating the important continuum and "seamlessness" desired and referred to by some as K-20.

When making national comparisons, one of the most important characteristics of California's postsecondary education system is a sizable enterprise, whether measured by numbers of institutions, students, or dollars spent on its operation. The system is large in terms of both the number of students and faculty, and the number of institutions. The unique role and enormity of the community college system in California has no comparison nationally or internationally and is something that California can take great pride in. All of these conditions and several others affect the number of degrees conferred per capita and research funding per capita.

California's system of postsecondary education serves consumers and the state through a mosaic of public and independent institutions. For the purposes of this report, the institutions are grouped into four "segments": community colleges, state university system, research university system, and independent institutions (which include colleges, both teaching and research universities, and other degree-granting institutions). A fifth "segment" that continues to emerge in size and scope is the private, for-profit, occupational and proprietary schools and colleges. There is diversity of mission within each sector; for example, urban institutions in all sectors share certain common goals that are not central to suburban and rural institutions.

Each California college and university supports teaching, research, and public service in varying proportions, depending upon its unique mission. Similarly, the faculty's involvement in those three major aspects of an institution's mission varies by type of institution, as does their professional development. Public service has many faces within the California system of postsecondary education. In some cases, pure research at a research university may result in applications of biotechnology, such as cleaning up the environment. Collectively, the independent four-year colleges and universities exhibit all of these patterns. In addition to

teaching and research, faculty and students may be actively engaged in their communities, thus providing assistance to groups and individuals (including the elderly, inner city residents, businesses, schools, etc.). This is true at all types of institutions.

### **BRIEF HISTORY OF COORDINATION OF POSTSECONDARY EDUCATION IN CALIFORNIA**

The history of coordination in California prior to 1960 was one of voluntary coordination between the two governing boards for postsecondary education, the Regents of the University of California and the State Board of Education, which governed the state colleges and oversaw the junior colleges.

The creation of the 1960 Master Plan for Higher Education was crafted amidst a steadily increasing demand for education beyond high school and legislative concern about the escalating cost of accommodating that demand primarily at baccalaureate-granting colleges and universities. Key objectives of those engaged in forging the compromise embedded in the Master Plan included managing costs, through the differentiation of function and redistribution of students among lower and higher costs institutions, expanding access to prospective students, reduced or elimination of undesirable competition among public colleges and universities, and coordination of public postsecondary education with opportunities provided by regionally accredited private colleges and universities.

With the Master Plan in 1960, California joined the nationwide movement towards statutory coordination by creating its first coordinating board - the Coordinating Council for Higher Education (CCHE). One of the key provisions of the Master Plan was to review and coordinate the orderly expansion of campuses and academic programs throughout the state.

The CCHE was comprised of 17 members:

- 6 members representing the public
- 3 members representing private colleges and universities
- 3 members representing the public junior colleges
- 3 members representing the California State Colleges
- 2 members representing the University of California

From 1960 to 1972, CCHE met regularly and offered recommendations on priorities for funding public colleges and universities in the state and levels of state student financial assistance needed to continue accommodating fiscal needs of an expanding student body. A critical review of the first decade of Master Plan implementation generated a concern among policymakers and legislative staff that the CCHE structure was not necessarily in the best interest of the state in that the beneficiaries of the CCHE budget recommendations were the institutions run by the members of the coordinating council.

The Coordinating Council functioned with various levels of success for a decade, but when the Legislature's Joint Committee on the Master Plan finished its lengthy review of the Master Plan in late 1973, it concluded that although structure and governance of California's multi-segmental system was in general adequate, its principal deficiencies - insufficient coordination and planning - could be traced to various problems of the Council. *"Coordination is the critical element in a multisystem organization of postsecondary education"*, it declared. *"California needs an independent agency capable of articulating statewide needs and providing advice to the segments and elected public policy makers"* (Joint Committee on the Master Plan for Higher Education, California Legislature, 1973, p.19).

While rejecting the notion of a super board - a board above the existing governing boards - the Joint Committee recommended the abolition of the Council and the creation of a new agency with (1) a majority of public representatives appointed by the Legislature and the Governor, (2) a broader scope to include all postsecondary education, (3) semi-governing powers in such areas as approving all changes in admission policy of public institutions, administering some programs, and collecting comparable data from the segments, and (4) a mandate for an active role in continuous planning that took into account the state's projected educational needs as well as its present institutional resources. It also recommended constitutional status for the new agency - the California Postsecondary Education Commission (CPEC).

The legislature rejected the Joint Committee's proposal for giving the new Commission constitutional status, and it retained the essentially advisory role of the Coordinating Council, but agreed with the Joint Committee about the Commission's basic structure and function. It established planning as the Commission's prime responsibility and directed it to provide advice on segmental budgets, review and comment on proposed programs, act as a clearinghouse for data, advise on the need for and location of new public institutions and campuses, review all proposals to change eligibility requirements, and pursue a variety of

other activities. It also designated the Commission as California's federal "1202 Commission" to administer certain federal programs and receive federal planning funds.

CPEC provided at various times in its existence strategic planning, coordination, and monitoring and policy analysis for postsecondary education in California. Basically, it was charged by state law with representing the broad public interest above the interests of the individual colleges and universities. CPEC served as an objective and impartial advocate for the overall system of postsecondary education with the Governor, the Legislature, and the public. CPEC also collaborated with the public and private two- and four-year institutions, other state governing boards, and the Superintendent of Public Instruction to create a seamless system of public education geared toward student success.

The public interest was addressed by requiring that the majority of the CPEC membership be comprised of public representatives appointed equally by the governor and leadership of the Senate and Assembly, and requiring that all elected officers be public members. The remaining members of the 17-member commission were to be appointed by the governing boards of the three public postsecondary systems, the Association of Independent California Colleges and Universities (AICCU), the oversight agency for private postsecondary and vocational education, a representative of the public schools appointed by the State Board of Education, and two college/university students appointed by the governor. In addition, the authorizing statute that created CPEC also called for the establishment of a statutory advisory committee to CPEC comprised of the CEOs of the California Community Colleges (CCC), CSU, UC, AICCU, Private Postsecondary and Vocational Education (PPVE), and the Superintendent for Public Instruction (SPI) for public schools.

If history is any guide, examples of "cooperation" and "collaboration" among the various public segments of higher education in the state (as well as with the "independent" sector) are evident when the resources are plentiful, and only then. However, California's policymakers and educational leaders will not continue collaborative efforts very long without a centralized body to coordinate postsecondary education in the state. Without some sort of centralized coordination, the competition among colleges and universities for limited resources and prominence in emerging markets is likely to intensify.

"Mission creep" will likely accelerate as each sector of postsecondary education seeks to position itself to best respond to demands for postsecondary education enrollment. Accompanying the push for attracting and accommodating enrollment demand will be efforts to attract public dollars to cover the expanded costs of instruction, grant funding and talented researchers needed to enhance success of grant applications, and additional financial assistance to students from low-income backgrounds.

In response to such competition, policymakers may well revert to familiar behavior: micro-management by statute. A typical response has been a "one size fits all" orientation in addressing the issues facing postsecondary education and that is as misguided today as it was more than a half century ago. The conditions that preceded the adoption of the 1960 Master Plan for Higher Education were very similar, generating numerous legislative bills to regulate some aspect of education in the state and ultimately serving as a catalyst for the state's educational leaders to collaborate and agree on a series of compromises embodied in the Master Plan.

Despite the fiscal woes of California, there is no perceptible diminution in support for the vision and goals of the original Master Plan to promote and accommodate education beyond high school for every California resident who desires and can benefit from such education, while managing the associated costs. The challenge before state policymakers is how best to reaffirm this commitment in the current fiscal and political environment of California. Coordination remains a key component of effectiveness and efficiency. Examples from other states and objective analysis of its past provide policymakers with several options for creation of a successor to CPEC.

Interestingly, the genesis for much that was underscored in the 1960 Master Plan and its statutory enactment was the result of a 1955 State Department of Education report, "A Restudy of the Needs of California in Higher Education." This report emphasized the necessity of providing a highly diversified pattern of postsecondary education serving a wide range of personal and social needs. The report declared that the great need in public postsecondary education was for constructive, cooperative, and comprehensive planning and for purposeful sharing, as well as purposeful division, of responsibilities. To this end, the report proposed both common and differential functions for the three groups of institutions comprising California's tripartite system of postsecondary education – the community (previously junior) colleges, the state colleges, and the University of California – and underlined the necessity for establishing a coordinating mechanism which would foster diversified institutions and varied educational programs and coordinate the efforts of the three groups of institutions in providing the relevant educational services desired and/or needed by state residents.

The need for coordination of California colleges and universities is as prevalent today in concept and substance as it was more than 55 plus years ago.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

Postsecondary education, particularly California's public colleges and universities, is not broken, but it can always improve – just as any corporate organization can be made better. There are few within postsecondary education who resist changes that are beneficial. Many individuals and organizations in California postsecondary education have been working hard to deal with the challenging issues facing it today. California has many great faculty teaching, engaged in world class research, and doing service in their communities, state, and nation. All of this goes hand in hand with one another.

Among the things that need to be done, in addition to providing the financial commitments made to succeeding generations, is the provision of good governance, where politicizing is stripped away with the best interest of the colleges and universities placed first, when full disclosure and transparency rule from the halls in Sacramento to the board room to the basement. Stakeholders know that good governance is of paramount importance to the future of California in all levels of those engaged in the work and interest of the public.

Especially critical is the need to restore and bolster the public's badly shaken confidence with the establishment of a mechanism to ensure meaningful and effective oversight, accountability and transparency – not through blanket restoration of unnecessary and burdensome bureaucracy but through a carefully targeted overhaul of the State's existing governance apparatus. The first stop on that overhaul should be *the restoration and/or restructuring of a state postsecondary education coordinating body*. Well-intentioned though it may have been, and that is doubtful, the elimination of CPEC went entirely too far, completely eradicating the substance and machinery of independent oversight. Legislators and executive policymakers should immediately revisit this most recent action, particularly with an eye toward equipping a state postsecondary education coordinating body with independent status and the tools necessary to ensure that public postsecondary education – and its proper and effective governance and administration – are priorities in California.

A vigorous and reconstituted state governance apparatus, establishing standards for proper and effective autonomy, would serve a number of salutary purposes, not the least of which would be to insulate state colleges and universities from the political fray and provide them with a strong advocate in the halls of both Sacramento and Washington.

### **Recommendation: The Development of a Public Agenda for Postsecondary Education.**

A public agenda is a statement of fundamental principles about the role that postsecondary education plays in a state. It is a planning blueprint for the State to direct state policies and resources to the higher educational and career needs of California residents and to address the current and future economic needs of the State. The postsecondary education policy community consensus is that a public agenda effort is the best way to improve a state's system. The key is not to dampen the individual successes that California's postsecondary education institutions have achieved, but to augment them by addressing recognized State needs. The State's higher education enterprise needs to be guided by an agenda that enjoys broad agreement and a high profile. The agenda must be grounded in an analysis of resident, business, and community needs to achieve overall State prosperity.

California's future depends on the knowledge and skills of its citizens. Postsecondary education is widely recognized as a benefit to the individual and to society at large. It provides economic opportunity for people as well as the large supply of skilled workers needed to secure general prosperity. The State has an important interest in assuring that its postsecondary education system is performing in a manner that raises educational attainment and addresses fundamental public priorities.

California's current postsecondary education coordination structure and policies, or lack thereof, do not appear to effectively provide the state policy leadership and accountability mechanisms necessary to meet the State's needs. Over the last several decades, California's public postsecondary education institutions have enjoyed greater managerial autonomy, while State policy leadership has declined. The current system has had some successes but has not helped the State adequately plan for increased educational attainment or involved sufficient accountability. Developing an accountability system based on statewide needs, effective strategies, and performance incentives has not been a priority. Without changes, there are risks to the State's economic competitiveness, system efficiency, and ability to effectively close the achievement gap.

To improve performance, it is recommended the development of a **Public Agenda** for postsecondary education. The public agenda should include: statewide goals based on identified State needs; provisions for the development of strategies and monitoring of performance measures to achieve those goals; and incentive funding to ensure that goals are met. Within no more

than 90 days of initiating a Public Agenda initiative the leadership group convened by the state – the Governor and Legislature - should submit to the public, Governor and the Legislature the public agenda priorities report, as well as three other inter-related reports that inform and are consistent with it: 1) a public needs report; 2) a higher education policy audit report; and 3) a higher education finance report.

The State's postsecondary education coordinating body should annually report on progress made in implementing the public agenda, and every three to five years the coordinating body should re-assess the state's trends, needs, and goals, making adjustments to the goals as necessary.

**Recommendation: Steps Should Be Taken to Establish Standards and Ensure Accountability, Transparency and Oversight.**

Serious consideration should be accorded *legislation that would subject all state colleges and universities to rigorous and uniform standards governing financial management and internal controls – a state level, higher-education version of the federal Sarbanes-Oxley law that now applies to the corporate world*. Such legislation would serve not only to safeguard the operational and fiscal integrity of what is, collectively, one of California's most valuable resources, but it would also put the State at the cutting edge of postsecondary regulation nationally and enable the institutions themselves to market a unique commitment to "best practice" governance with an oversight agency to establish and ensure compliance.

Furthermore, efforts should be undertaken immediately to *ensure budgetary and accounting transparency at every public college and university in California*. Difficulty has often been reported and encountered in gaining ready, uniform access to critical revenue and expenditure data.

Lack of transparency and delays in fully responding to requests for data and information are also notably acute within the State Legislature of its own finances as evidenced by recent information requests by newspapers and its own membership. Their decisions affect every Californian, from how much money the neighborhood public school receives to whether their taxes will go up to pay for new roads. But since 1975, California lawmakers have operated under a shield of secrecy that has allowed them to avoid releasing basic information about how they do the people's business, including how much they spend on office staff, where they fly at taxpayers' expense and how they spend their time outside legislative sessions. After weeks of pressure from good government groups and news organizations information was released relating to each lawmaker's office budgets showing staff salaries, travel expenses and car leases, among other office items. It showed that the Assembly with 80 lawmakers had spent more than \$86 million by August in 2011, and the Senate, which has 40 lawmakers, had spent \$69.3 million. At least one Assemblyperson questioned the accuracy of the spending figures or the necessary detail to ensure clarity in taxpayers' understanding of how its taxes are being spent by elected officials.

None of state government should be immune from such transparency and its failure to do so when it - the Legislature in this case – calls for and demands through legislation that another entity – in this case higher education – be more forthcoming in its financial actions there appears to be a case of arrogance and entitlement that is present. There is no excuse for any confusion or obfuscation in this realm, particularly in an era in which scarce fiscal resources have compelled the State's colleges and universities to make painful programmatic cuts. The students, their families and the public at large deserve nothing less than full disclosure and transparency.

While autonomy should be maintained, change is in order, albeit to varying degrees and for different reasons and with different emphasis. For some, the motivating factor is a deep and abiding concern that the continuing void in oversight, accountability and transparency, along with the unbridled intrusion of politics, is the fertile soil of scandal. Others worry that fierce and uncoordinated jockeying for budgetary resources, status and academic standing threatens to transform state colleges and universities from productive educational institutions into self-aggrandizing competitors. Above all, there is the stark and disturbing realization that in the councils of state government, where public policies and priorities are formulated, debated and established, postsecondary education currently in California has no fixed or influential place at the table.

As action is taken to address these and other issues, the central challenge will be to avoid going to extremes – a "one size fits all" orientation. A balance must be struck for the proper governance and oversight of public postsecondary education without returning to the tightly regulated, top-heavy and overly burdensome structure of past state involvement. Institutional autonomy is important and must be retained, but it must be coupled with effective oversight, accountability and transparency.

This should be regarded as a time of opportunity. More than five decades have passed since California, after considerable study and debate, established a comprehensive system of publicly-funded postsecondary education, and much has changed.

Renewed questions abound, driven by significant events and trends. Implementation of these recommendations should serve as a powerful springboard to help move California's system of postsecondary education to the next level, to ensure strong governance, oversight, accountability and transparency and to achieve and maintain administrative and academic excellence. In this context, other major issues facing public higher education, including specifically educational policy and taxpayer and student tuition support, can be reasonably debated and resolved.

***Recommendation: Identify Data to be Collected, Analyzed, Maintained and Reported Annually that are Aligned to the State's Goals, Show Trends, and Allow for State, National and International Comparisons.***

Postsecondary education is considered a vital public enterprise that responds to a variety of crucial educational, economic, and societal needs. Because of postsecondary education's importance, and the substantial public support it receives, calls for increased accountability are heard throughout the nation. Among government and educational policy makers, there is a growing insistence upon measures of quality, effectiveness, efficiency, and productivity to guide planning and resource allocation and monitor the return on the taxpayers' significant public investment. Students, parents, businesses, and taxpayers are also looking for more and better information to help them judge the quality of available postsecondary education opportunities.

Quantitative examinations of the performance of institutions, sectors, and postsecondary education systems serve several important functions:

- they provide information to students, parents, and other "consumers" of postsecondary education;
- they inform planning, policy development, and resource allocation at the state level;
- they provide information to taxpayers, who contribute a significant share of funding for public higher education; and
- they promote institutional goal attainment and support the achievement of institutional excellence.

Governors, postsecondary education executive officers, legislators, and college and university presidents and chancellors must embrace the challenge and work together to implement the policy and data system changes that will produce accurate information.

Fundamental to any postsecondary education management would be the availability of reliable and continuous statistical data. College and university managers need to have accurate and reliable data as a basis for making any decisions. Decisions based on inaccurate and unreliable data would definitely lead to poor management. Quality statistical data on postsecondary education can be put to many uses. They can be used to examine the effects of previous decisions and to assist future decision-making. Data can help to identify and characterize issues and allow administrators to compare alternative solutions.

When resources are plentiful, most organizations flourish and the need for making difficult decisions are not so pressing. But increasing competition for available resources from all sectors of the economy, increasing enrolments and public debate about the benefits accruing from postsecondary education have brought about increased awareness that postsecondary education institutions require effective management, which may not be achieved without information. An information system is an important part of any management.

Increasing degree completion at America's public colleges and universities is pivotal for the nation's economic competitiveness and long term economic growth. To meet this goal in a time of unprecedented fiscal strain, policymakers and postsecondary education leaders need comprehensive, consistent performance metrics to shape funding strategies and pinpoint areas for improvement. While states and their postsecondary education systems have made strides in reporting and using performance data, more work in this area is urgently needed.

Comparable, reliable metrics are essential for states under current fiscal constraints. Information on the progress toward, and degree completion of, all students in postsecondary education allows state leaders to gauge whether policies are successful and helps inform future funding decisions. Collecting and reporting metrics at the campus, system and state levels is a necessary first step for states as they seek to improve completion rates and productivity in postsecondary education.

Here again, to more adequately address California's postsecondary education challenges, CPEC maintained extensive databases and produced regular, comprehensive reports to provide a wide array of objective, factual information about higher education in California. No other entity maintained all of these kinds of data.

In its history and despite concerns expressed for the security of its data CPEC never had its data “hacked” or compromised thanks in large measure to the security interventions it continuously monitored and took to prevent personal and historical data to be compromised. Yet, in a single movement of the pen, acting through its governor, the State has failed to respect and appreciate that one of the state’s most valuable resource and commodity – historical data pertaining to the State’s rich and important data – has been cavalierly put aside without any effort to maintain its credibility or its value.

It is absolute folly to not save and financially support CPEC’s staff and its data about postsecondary education institutions in California. CPEC had collected data on students, degrees awarded, institutions, etc., on all California institutions of postsecondary education in California for more than three decades. It had in place longitudinal data on students’ enrollments and degrees awarded for more than 10 years. This data includes a student identifier so that student enrollment behavior can be tracked thus informing the State about time to degree, stop out patterns and the like.

CPEC maintained a **Guide to California Colleges** that is used extensively by high school counselors and students seeking admission to higher education in California.

In addition, CPEC had national data on all higher education institutions through its participation in the Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS) data collection efforts through the Federal education agency. CPEC also maintained data on students in the K-12 system through coordination with the Department of Education. It also tracked information on School to Employment pathways.

In more recent times, amidst considerable financial and policy constraints placed on it the state budget and budgetary language, CPEC had been working with the segments of higher education to broaden and enrich its longitudinal student tracking system which is a real milestone since cooperation in the past was somewhat tenuous.

CPEC’s data system has been used by higher education policy makers, institutional researchers, the press, students, parents, high school counselors, businesses seeking to recruit for their business, the segments of higher education to name a few. All this has been done with a very modest budget for its data information resources. This is a system that worked and has been recognized as such by the Legislative Analyst’s Office when they have evaluated the effectiveness of the Commission itself. Furthermore, at a time when increased calls for accountability and transparency is being called on by various stakeholders including the Legislature which is the State’s only means by which to provide the data and its objective analysis to inform public policy is being eradicated.

This data system could not now be replicated and remains a truly valuable resource for the State and its citizens. The magnitude of the loss of this data system and the staff to keep it going is unconscionable, shortsighted and immeasurable.

***Recommendation: Strengthen State College and University Governing Boards.***

Governing boards of the three public systems are the paramount mechanisms of fiduciary accountability across the entire spectrum of state-level postsecondary education. Currently, California’s three public systems – the University of California, the California State University, and the California Community Colleges – have varying degrees of autonomy and self-governance. With periodic micromanagement and incursions by state government into campus operations, curriculum, and financing, such operational challenges imply special obligations and responsibilities. In effect, fee and tuition-paying students and parents, taxpayers at-large and others with a direct stake in the quality and administration of public postsecondary education are being asked to rely more heavily than ever on the competence, skill, dedication and attentive stewardship of institutional governing boards.

The proper exercise of due diligence, accountability, transparency and oversight by governing boards among the community colleges, state universities, and the research institutions needs to be strengthened. To ensure quality self-governance universally and to build upon whatever steps already taken, it is recommended that legislative action be taken to strengthen all governing boards.

***Recommendation: Re-establish Effective and Efficient State Oversight of Public Postsecondary Education.***

California urgently requires an influential statewide entity to act on behalf of public postsecondary education at the highest levels of government – not to run, dictate to or unduly interfere with the basic mission or operations of state colleges and universities but to ensure a proper balance between strong institutional autonomy and effective oversight, transparency and accountability. There is no need to create a massive bureaucracy to get this job done. The framework for such an entity already had existed in the form of the California Postsecondary Education Commission (CPEC) until its recent elimination. But, clearly, if the successor

state postsecondary education body – a **California Postsecondary Education Coordinating Board (CPECB)** is proposed - to provide effective leadership, it must be reshaped, strengthened and expanded in significant ways and equipped with the appropriate statutory and regulatory authority and resources to establish oversight and provide greater accountability and transparency for these institutions and the public they serve. Legislation, therefore, should be enacted to achieve these goals through a number of means, including but not limited to the following:

- Provide the CPECB with proper statutory authority and sufficient staff and resources necessary to conduct and maintain adequate oversight of the operations and governance of all public institutions of postsecondary education in California.
- Position the CPECB to serve as the premiere advisory agency to the Governor and the Legislature on all policy-making and budget advice for public postsecondary education in California. Working with the systems and their institutions, the CPECB should evaluate, coordinate and prioritize matters of concern to the postsecondary education community; develop and pursue a unified budget plan for submission to the Governor and Legislature; establish effective long-range planning and review across the entire spectrum of issues affecting postsecondary education; and coordinate the activities of all other governmental agencies that deal with matters affecting public higher education.

Along these same lines, *the process by which governing boards are appointed should be revamped to minimize partisanship created by the undue intrusion of politics*. In recent years, far more time and energy have been spent in Sacramento positioning political allies for appointment to such positions than on efforts to scrutinize college and university operations and ensure accountable and transparent governance.

## CONCLUSION

It is critical for California's institutions to take a hard look at their own operations, understand the undergraduate experience and examine their institutions' growth in spending at a time when future funding faces potential limits. Rather than waiting for accountability to be imposed, postsecondary education needs to identify issues where progress is possible and begin to make changes. This work should be grounded in research about what is working and what is not.

The discussion needs to be much broader than postsecondary education's future, reaching out to include both K-12 education (which provides the "input" into postsecondary education) and the needs of the State for the future (which should be met by postsecondary education's "output"). Broad goals and measurements for postsecondary education need to address the higher education support that is essential for California to become well managed and successful in the future.

Clear goals for California and an explicit structure for measuring the progress towards those goals including how rewards for success and/or sanction failure can be implemented is essential. Accountability measurements should be constant and long-term, similar to those in the original Master Plan – access, transferability, quality of education, etc. The budget process can be used to address specific, annual as well as long term issues but, in general, postsecondary education will be better served by an accountability system that does not go through a cycle of constant changes. Failure to address these issues will diminish the strength of our colleges and universities and further undermine the public's trust in postsecondary education.

Underlying the above recommendations is the belief that the State – as in the public, Legislature and Governor – and the systems of postsecondary education, was not well-served by the elimination of California's coordinating body. Such a shift away from the coordinating body was a major policy error based on outmoded assumptions about organization and decision processes that are not in the public interest either short or long term.

A statewide coordinating board has myriad advantages over a statewide governing board, particularly if it is allowed to exercise its statutory role and responsibilities. Among them, it has the ability to act as an umbrella under which a variety of other institutions, agencies, commissions, and councils relating to postsecondary education may be placed for state coordination. For example: independent, private, for-profit, and many occupational, vocational proprietary institutions and organizations are demanding more attention from the State. They want access to scholarship and direct grant programs that will funnel State and federal money into their institutions. It becomes increasingly essential that these institutions become an integral part of the State's concern for preserving broad access to postsecondary education and training that is respected by all participants.

The once rapidly accelerating enrollments and the important role played by the proprietary vocational and technical schools in accommodating that enrollment demand force the State to recognize and involve in its strategic planning their potential contributions. The State will want to have confidence, however, that these institutions provide education and training opportunities equivalent to those provided by public and independent accredited colleges and universities. The State may invite their cooperation in return for allowing the use of State scholarship and grant funds for students attending such institutions.

Other functions among many, which could be considered for appropriateness in advancing State education goals and priorities, include the following:

- Serve as the state administrative commission “representative of all segments of postsecondary education” for control and disbursement of funds (State 1202 Commission)
- Provide limited regulatory oversight of the state’s scholarship and loan commission, building authority, and others agencies that deal primarily with postsecondary education institutions
- Provide a coordination structure that can effectively convene representatives of public and nonpublic colleges and universities, local public service agencies, business and industrial concerns, and citizen groups to create cooperative and flexible arrangements for meeting enrollment demand and providing entirely new kinds of educational experiences.

Beyond encompassing these existing and potential agencies, coordination and effective planning must deal with the impact of new technologies on education.

A coordinating board provides a vehicle through which both the public interests of the state and those of the educational community can be objectively and dispassionately considered and acted upon. The bottom line is that a coordinating board – appropriately composed, staffed, and operated – can meet all of the principal needs identified above and many others that may come along in the future.

For several decades California colleges and universities have experienced unprecedented growth. This accelerated expansion stems from an increase in population and from the needs of citizens whose aspirations and goals have been rapidly advancing. The resultant problems for California and its postsecondary education system, once considered the best in the world, are well known – financial stress, reduction in the quality of services, wasted resources, and student dissatisfaction. Less well known are the new approaches undertaken by colleges and universities to meet these problems.

Two facts are clear: (1) inevitable changes in society frequently create disproportionately complex problems on the campus, and (2) the only effective way to cope with these problems is to anticipate the changes that engender them and take appropriate action. A coordinating body, in this case, an efficient and effective state postsecondary education executive body, provides a beacon of due diligence and light on complex issues. It is apparent that planning, not only for the present but also the future, is an essential aspect of taking the necessary action for the future well being of the state and its citizens – in the public interest. That such a body must continue planning, based to large measure on insightful data and metrics, to meet problems of a magnitude nearly equal to that for the past is easily shown.

If postsecondary education is to respond effectively to this growth and critically attune itself to the diversity and adaptability society now requires, there can be no laxity in planning efforts. Education is not a commodity that can be designed and financed on short notice. It is a long - term investment requiring extended preparation, analysis, planning and responsive leadership. The capacity of postsecondary education to grow and to achieve vital goals during the years ahead will be greatly affected by the kind and quality of decisions policy makers make today. Thus planning, and coordination of the investments already made in postsecondary education in the State of California, cannot be considered as other than an immediate task of strategic importance.

As stated at the outset, this paper is intended to provide guidance and an action agenda on advancing state policy development and facilitating discussions on policies that promote the improvement and restoration of the postsecondary educational system in California. All of the recommendations are intended to increase the state’s commitment to public postsecondary education now and into the future.