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Did you have specific goals when I first enrolled in classes? Have those goals changed?

I first took community colleges classes in the fall of 2002 as a junior at New Technology High School. New Technology High School was a charter school that required 12 units of community college credit to graduate. I took classes that I found interesting, but did take a history class that counted towards a GE. After I graduated high school, I moved directly to San Francisco and enrolled at City College of San Francisco. I knew that I wanted to transfer to get my BA, but I didn't know what I wanted to major in or where I wanted to transfer to. Over time my goals have become much clearer.

Did you need to take remedial or prerequisites before taking classes in your area of emphasis?

I was placed in remedial English, but it never prevented me from taking any other classes.

Did you receive help determining which courses you needed to achieve your goals?

No. Well, not until I had already failed three semesters in a row and actively looked for help when I reenrolled at Napa Valley College.

Have you been able to enroll in the classes when you needed them?

Not always, especially as I reached the end of my academic goal. Since, I only needed a few classes, my options become extremely limited. The specific time that a class was offered, was an extremely important factor in what classes I could take.

Are you satisfied with your experience at the community college thus far?

Overall, I am pretty satisfied with my experience and definitely would have chosen to transfer from a Community College rather than go directly to a 4 year institution. However, knowing what I know now, and what I know about other states, I definitely recognize California Community Colleges can and must do better.

Do you consider yourself on track to achieving your goals?

Yes.

What changes could your college institute to make it easier for you to achieve your goals?

- Common course numbering
- Streamline transfer requirements
- Online academic planning
- Quarterly terms over semester terms
- Improving “student life” on campus
- More student support services or expanded hours of student services that help all students, such writing and math centers or peer mentoring
- More classes that can accommodate working students, such as online classes, afternoon classes, night classes, weekend classes, accelerated classes, or compressed classes
- Having a clear list of programs that the college offers to make it easier to choose a goal
- Create clear pathways to achieve goals

Do you participate in student government or attend meetings of your trustees? Has this participation helped you understand some of the administrative challenges facing your college?

Attending both Board of Trustees and Board of Governors meetings has helped me better shape my understanding of administrative challenges facing my college.

Based on your experience as a student leader do you think that a change in the governance of California’s Community College system could result in administrative efficiencies or outcomes for students?

Absolutely. The current system strongly reminds me of the Articles of Confederation in early American history. Under the Articles of Confederation, states (local districts) were autonomous, sovereign and largely independent. The National Government (The Board of Governors and CCCCCO) did not have the ability to directly control or coordinate between the states (local districts). I think that we can all agree that we are better off under the Constitution than the Articles of Confederation.

Having 72 districts seems to be somewhat of an arbitrary number of districts and I can’t think of why we have 72 districts, except that it was piecemealed together over the history of CCC’s. 72 districts means that there are 72 payroll systems, 72 webmasters and technical departments, 72 public relations directors, among many other redundancies. CCC’s also do not always fully utilize their ability to buy in mass. Cost savings from administrative efficiencies can be used for additional classes or student services.

Under the current structure, power is so widely distributed that no one faction or group has the ability to make systematic change. And any change that does occur can take a long time to get approval and final implementation, and even then, it will likely only be a shadow of the original intent of the policy change. The faculty structure allows for a large amount of local control within campus, particularly when it comes to curriculum. This has presented difficulties in creating a common course numbering system, and a common curriculum.

In your opinion what is the appropriate balance between the Board of Governors and the Chancellors office and the local community college districts?

In general, I believe that power should be in the hands of the local community college districts except for when needed coordination is what is best for the system as a whole. In which case the Board of Governors should have authority. One of the greatest strengths of the community college system is local control and that colleges can offer what is best needed for that particular community. However, this is also one of greatest weakness, as it makes it difficult to coordinate the use of resources statewide. At some level there must be a level of local control to reflect the needs of the community, but this local autonomy should not be at the expense of students.

The more districts that we have in the system, the greater the need to have a more centralized control with the Board of Governors. However, if somehow we had fewer districts, say 10-15, districts would be large enough to effectively coordinate regionally and small enough, to still address local needs. Simply put it is easier for a single district to coordinate with 10-15 other districts then it is coordinate 72 districts. Thus, the fewer the districts that we have, the more local control we can have and vice versa, the more districts that we have, the greater need for the Board of Governors to coordinate between them.

On a more technical level it is difficult to go into specifics, but I believe that if a taskforce, commission or workgroup went through the various services, programs or functions provided on each campus they could fully determine what services, programs or functions are best administered by local districts and what services, programs or functions can best be administered by the CCCCO and the Board of Governors. The real point is that these conversations are not happening from district to district and if they are, they are only happening in an extremely limited manner.

I believe that the real question that needs to be asked is, “Do you think that a change in the governance of K-12, CCC, CSU and UC’s would result in administrative efficiencies or outcomes for students?”

The truth is that K-12, CSU and UC’s have a direct impact on the role of CCC’s and are simply not in the realm of control for BOG or local districts. Education within California is without centralized leadership and is unable to adequately coordinate between each other. K-12, CCC, CSU and UC operate almost entirely separately from each other, with separate overall goals and interests.