

## Report Review

### **“Making it Happen: Increasing college access and participation in California Higher Education: The role of private postsecondary providers”\***

The authors of this report argue that the three public higher education systems in California cannot, by themselves, respond to increased demand for higher education. They propose that a broader framework is needed that incorporates the two private higher education systems (non-profit and for-profit) as well as the three public systems. In this framework they would function as five parts of one coherent system, collectively growing in capacity to keep pace with the state’s demand for an educated workforce.

They propose eight areas on which the state should focus:

- 1) Develop a common course numbering system and synthetic transfer system across all postsecondary institutions.** If the goal is to increase access to four-year institutions and to help the consumer/student, then all accredited institutions should be able to create a common course numbering system with identifiable outcomes such that a student can take a course such as English 101 at a community college and have those credits transfer to the public four-year institutions, a private non-profit college or university, or a for-profit institution.
- 2) Incentivize private-public partnerships that discount tuition.** The idea here is to develop voluntary public-private partnerships that are cost-neutral to the state and provide consumers with course offerings and majors in particular geographic regions that would otherwise be unavailable.
- 3) Outsource remedial courses to specialized private postsecondary institutions and other entities.** In some cases, remedial services could be outsourced to private non-profit and for-profit institutions that have a successful history of serving students in need of remedial work.
- 4) Incentivize non-profit private colleges and universities to enroll state-resident students over and above the average number of students they have had for the past three years.** To meet current and pending capacity challenges in certain fields, the authors propose, for example, to average the number of undergraduate students in attendance at an institution over the last three years and then provide a premium per student up to an additional 10 percent of the student population.

This could lead to potential benefits to the state in terms of enabling more students to participate in postsecondary education. The incentive for the private institution is a modest infusion of income, and the state would benefit from the ability to admit more students at a relatively small marginal cost at a time when alternative options may be foreclosed.

\* Tierney, W.G. and Hentschke, *Making it Happen: Increasing college access and participation in California Higher Education: The role of private postsecondary providers*; [http://cheпа.usc.edu/pdf/Making\\_It\\_Happen.pdf](http://cheпа.usc.edu/pdf/Making_It_Happen.pdf)

- 5) **Outsource online learning and focus on competency-based, not credit-based learning.** The authors argue that national online institutions have the capability of offering significant numbers of courses that are frequently competency-based rather than credit-based. Students take courses at their convenience, scalability is generally not an issue, and campuses, obviously, are irrelevant. Insofar as the price structure is for time rather than credits, the potential exists for students to speed up their learning rather than have to wait four, five, or six years to get a degree. They point out that Indiana has adopted just such an approach.
- 6) **Lessen barriers to entry from out-of-state providers.** At a time when many public postsecondary systems are at or near capacity, states need to rethink licensure requirements when appropriate to remove unnecessary barriers for out-of-state providers (e.g., for-profit institutions) of higher education courses.
- 7) **Enhanced oversight to promote quality and growth.** One vital role of any state is to provide protection to its citizens, and the regulation of the for-profit industry is one of those roles. The point here is not to create so much oversight that potential providers are scared away from participating, but without an expansion of the bureau in the department of Consumer affairs, the state is exposing the citizenry to unnecessary risk.
- 8) **Create a statewide planning board that includes all sectors and enables greater coordination and programmatic coherence.** An entity for all of higher education helps coordinate planning and policy functions and arbitrates disputes among sectors and regions, while maintaining focus on the state's needs as a whole.

\* Tierney, W.G. and Hentschke, *Making it Happen: Increasing college access and participation in California Higher Education: The role of private postsecondary providers*; [http://cheпа.usc.edu/pdf/Making\\_It\\_Happen.pdf](http://cheпа.usc.edu/pdf/Making_It_Happen.pdf)