

Adopted: October 28, 1997

ACADEMIC SENATE  
**Of**  
CALIFORNIA POLYTECHNIC STATE UNIVERSITY  
San Luis Obispo, CA

AS-484-97/CTF  
RESOLUTION ON  
CAL POLY'S RESPONSE TO  
"THE CORNERSTONES REPORT"

RESOLVED: That the Academic Senate of Cal Poly receive the following report entitled *Cal Poly's Response to "The Cornerstones Report."*

Proposed by: Cornerstones Task Forces  
Date: October 16, 1997

## CAL POLY'S RESPONSE TO "THE CORNERSTONES REPORT"

14-Oct-97

### *Background:*

The reports from the Cornerstones Task Forces and the Review of the Baccalaureate were publicly revealed for discussion at the CSU Academic Conference in Monterey held February 1997. A delegation of faculty and administrators from Cal Poly attended that meeting. A steering committee was formed to organize the campus-wide discussion of Cornerstones. In March 1997, a revised draft of Cornerstones was sent to all campuses and made available on the web (<http://www.co.calstate.edu/aa/cornerstones>). Committees were then organized to coordinate responses to each of the Cornerstones Task Force reports and the Review of the Baccalaureate, and a local web site (<http://www.fmdc.calpoly.edu/cornerstones>) was established to help with this effort. A preliminary report on the Cornerstones March draft was compiled from the issues/concerns identified by the committees and submitted to the Cornerstones group on 16 May 1997. In addition, every college held an open forum on Cornerstones in advance of a campus visit (29 May 1997) from members of the Executive Committee of Statewide Academic Senate to discuss Cornerstones. In August 1997, a final "draft" of "The Cornerstones Report" was released and campus responses to the document were solicited. This was written by members of the Cal Poly Cornerstones Steering Committee and the Cornerstones Task Force committees.

### *General Assessment:*

The August 1997 version of "The Cornerstones Report" is much improved from the draft released last spring. It does a better job of distinguishing between broad principles for the whole system and the forms of their implementation on individual campuses. As now written, the document may actually allow for appropriate cohesion at the system level and appropriate heterogeneity across the different campuses. The new version of the document is better organized and better written with some of the contradictions embedded in the earlier draft either resolved or deleted. "The Cornerstones Report" asks some very good questions like: "How do we educate our students for this new world?" Yet, this paired-down version is overly simplistic and does not face the hard realism head-on.

There is still a fascination with the language of industry which for some translates into the University as factory. In particular, there is a recurring theme of the "delivery" of education as a product, rather than as a process: isn't the student the product (rather than client or customer), and doesn't the student bear responsibility for learning?

The vision for California's education as implied by this report is very shallow: to strengthen traditions and deal with the economic realities of our economy and the diversity of our population. The educational vision must be based upon excellence AND it must provide the types of skills and at the level required by our future and not merely continue to do what we have previously done well. We CANNOT afford to equip our graduates at the level of 1970's skill for the year 2000 and beyond.

While the new draft is also less adversarial in tone, over and over the document refers to the faculty, leaving out mention of staff. Staff should be included in most or all of those references, particularly since support systems in today's universities require sophisticated, professional staff to develop and maintain. For example, they should be included in the discussions of shared responsibility for excellence, of renewal and reinvestment (currently limited to faculty), and of

competitive salaries. But over all, the tone of the language in the document is good because the faculty, staff and administration will have to work together to best serve students and other constituents.

The report identifies four policy goals and ten guiding principles with several derivative recommendations following each principle. These goals and principles are cited in our response to ensure the proper context of our comments.

In addition to fiscal and access issues, a fundamental theme of the Cornerstones Project is the need to define empirical indicators of significant educational outcomes, primarily for the purpose of accounting for their attainment level. This theme provides a broad rubric within which the more specific issues of outcome specification/definition, assessment procedures, and accountability processes can be appropriately subsumed. At this broadly conceptual level, policy goals A and D could be combined, since Goal A (focusing ostensibly on learning outcomes), and Goal D (focusing ostensibly on accountability), both deal with this broad theme of specifying educational goals and their attainment. Reorganized thus, the combined set of principles and recommendations can be reevaluated for conceptual congruence with this general issue.

Of top importance is that the report implies that both quality and quantity of graduates must be attained. There is no evidence that both can be attained. If both can not be achieved, then we must maintain quality in our graduates. It is felt that fundamental principles of teaching/learning should always be maintained.

#### Policy Goal A: The CSU Seeks to Ensure Educational Results

The document states the CSU commitment "to innovation in the use of its facilities." If courses are to be offered throughout the hours of every day throughout the entire year according to student demand, more services that just plant operations will need additional investment. For example, academic department offices will need additional support to handle the heavier workload of more students, and more student service units may need to be open more hours to accommodate the needs of students on campus on weekends and at night.

Another question is how does one account for learning over time: the kind that reinforces and builds a body of values and skills and understandings that any one course cannot give? The Cornerstones document does not resolve the teaching-centered versus learning-centered model of education. It says teaching-centered and then says accountable for what the students have learned. There appears to be several significant assumptions missed about these definitions.

*Principle 1 - We will award the baccalaureate primarily on the basis of demonstrated learning. We will state explicitly what a graduate of the CSU is expected to know. We will assure that our graduates possess a certain breadth and depth of knowledge together with a certain level of skills and are exposed to experiences that encourage the development of sound personal values.*

Remarks on Recommendations Supporting Principle 1:

"Demonstrated learning" is a troubling proposal. Is there some sort of acceptable "demonstration" or knowledge in lieu of class time, or learning equivalent to a college degree? Would engineers accept demonstrated learning in math if a student completed one advanced problem? And of course, the major value of a university education is to learn how to learn -- the true meaning of producing lifelong learners.

There is also consternation that the "forms of knowledge and ability expected from any graduate is ("Is" is grammatically incorrect.)" unrealistic. For example, a freshman without significant knowledge of a second language will not be able to attain "the ability to speak, read, and write in a language other than English."

Our students need all the skills listed in Principle 1, PLUS

1. a capacity for innovation and at a level of creative problem solving unheard of in the present population,
2. the ability not only to work in groups and appreciate other cultures, but the ability to LEAD successful multi-disciplinary and multi-cultural teams and/or successfully take on different team roles,
3. the ability to observe and reflect upon one's own performance and to put in the corrections without waiting for approval from the "outside" as well as being able to act in a socially responsible manner, and
4. the ability to value excellence and be able to recognize it and to produce it.

As it stands, the section under this principle simply declares that educational outcomes will be identified, and that systems to assess the attainment of these (as yet unspecified) outcomes will be developed by allocating resources appropriately. If the preceding coarse-grained analysis holds, the existing policy substance proposed in support of the theme of accountability is thin.

The following are a few significant issues that are integral aspects of the accountability theme, and which might be addressed in this section to provide supporting guidelines in campus developments of assessment and accountability systems:

1. some rudiments of philosophic/theoretical bases for valuing particular types of educational outcomes (e.g., pragmatism, creativity, social utility, personal development, basic research, etc.)
2. definition of stakeholders/participants in outcome definition and accountability
3. a position regarding the level of commitment to developing more authentic, and usually more costly, outcome assessment instrumentation, especially in such areas as those mentioned on page 3, and described as "those things most difficult to test"
4. a balanced reliance on the various forms of validity, as well as on outcome attainment in articulating student success
5. purposes and processes for standard-setting and determination of outcome attainment level cut-off points.
6. the level of commitment to require that this endeavor be implemented according to an adequate plan (especially given this fundamental shift from content coverage and seat time to demonstrated knowledge), and be monitored, diagnosed, and evaluated with appropriate frequency.

Principle 2 - *Students and their teaching and learning experience are the center of the academic enterprise. We will shape the provision of our academic programs and support services to meet the diverse needs of our students and our society.*

Remarks on Recommendations Supporting Principle 2:

The redesign of current standards and processes of facilities utilization, so that the campuses can offer courses when appropriate throughout the year and throughout the hours of every day of every week, according to student demand. This, in turn, will require developing support for plant operation and other support services beyond the current schedules.

Principle 3 - *CSU students will be expected to be active partners in the learning process, and the university will provide opportunities for active learning throughout the curriculum.*

Principle 4 - *The CSU will reinvest in its faculty to maintain its primary mission as a teaching-centered comprehensive university.*

We believe that alternate plans must be in place in case those proposals fail. It is known on this campus that "faculty renewal and reinvestment" is not working, because many junior faculty are commanding a salary near that of senior faculty because of competition with industry. There is

no question that this is an important issue for the faculty and the pursuit of this objective is supported by all. However, this same issue is important to staff and administration. It should also be understood that the staff that is needed to support the campus is of a professional caliber. The support systems that are now common place at the universities require sophisticated, professional staff to maintain and/or develop. Support systems are no longer simple. Just as we should support redevelopment and learning in faculty, we should support training and retraining of administrators and staff.

#### Policy Goal B: The CSU Seeks to Ensure Access to Higher Education

We strongly endorse the statements concerning expansion of continuing and extended learning programs. This integration can also benefit the traditional student and provide alternatives to the standard curriculum. We wish to emphasize that this expansion can only be accomplished with better integration of continuing and extended education programs into the overall academic planning process. It also requires a commitment to provide additional financial resources for implementation and a commitment to provide financial aid and support services for students. Presently there is NO financial aid currently available for continuing/extended students at Cal Poly and student support services do not exist for students who only take evening classes.

*Principle 5 - We will meet the need for undergraduate education in California through increasing outreach efforts and transfer, retention, and graduation rates, and providing students a variety of pathways that may reduce the time needed to complete degrees.*

*Principle 6 - Graduate education and continuing education are essential components of the mission of the CSU*

#### Remarks on Recommendations Supporting Principle 6:

6a The last sentence needs to be clarified. We agree that new programs cannot continue to be added, without phasing out or scaling down others and this should be done continuously as refreshment and renewal. Changes in programs must always be done cautiously and carefully. However, it does not necessarily follow that new GRADIPOST-BACC programs must replace other GRADIPOST-BACC programs. Weak/obsolete programs should be reduced regardless of level, to make way for new ones and that may actually cause a shift toward a higher percentage of graduate programs than we currently have, if that is indeed where the quality and demand lie.

6b We again endorse the idea of integration of programs.

6c This statement is ambiguous regarding "differences in professional fees."

6f We have reservations about the idea of a CSU Alumni passport. How would this be financed? We already have fee waivers for a number of different categories of students.

What is really meant by a "new system of financing" and especially when applied to professional schools, second baccalaureate degrees, and distance education technology (see SIP) where fees are warranted by PROGRAM costs. What does that imply? Higher fees evaluating lab-based courses are more expensive to students because they are more expensive to teach? Making sure each degree has a different cost to it?

#### Policy Goal C: The CSU Seeks to Ensure Financial Stability

*Principle 7 - The State of California must develop a new policy framework for higher education finance to assure that the goals of the Master Plan are met. The framework should be the basis for the subsequent development of periodic "compacts" between the State and the institutions of higher learning.*

#### Remarks on Recommendations Supporting Principle 7:

7e The term "professional fee" is vague. Some Master's programs could be called "professional" programs and others not.

7f This is an important principle. Presently student fees are a barrier for many students in graduate, teacher preparation, or continuing education programs.

While there may be more efficiencies still to be found (no doubt there are), we are very concerned that the search for still more efficiency at Cal Poly, which has already achieved high ratings for current levels of efficiency (in western, comprehensive universities, it's ranked second or third for academic reputation and 57th for resources) and the search for still more efficiency throughout the other campuses, which are also probably already efficient, may produce wretched consequences rather than increased efficiencies. There are a lot of speeches about working smarter when, in fact, most faculty and staff are working harder. The rhetoric doesn't change the reality and frustrates, even insults, those who know the difference. For example, faculty and staff know that so little of the CSU budget is invested in faculty and staff development that many are driven to focus more on survival than on innovation. In the same way that raising money requires spending money, increasing quality and access and other desired changes require investing in people.

It is not clear that the CSU's commitment to Compact II will equal a commitment from the legislature. Although it may be assumed that this document is a plea for such, there is/will be no guarantee. There seems to be no strategic plan for pursuing other revenues than "the relentless search for more state funding," nor a mechanism for producing one other than to let each institution go out with a corps of development officers. The CSU needs a comprehensive plan that supports creativity, rewards innovation, produces results, and cultivates public support.

Principle 8 - *The responsibility for maintaining educational excellence, access, diversity, and financial stability shall be shared by the State, the CSU system, the campuses, our faculty, and students.*

The document calls for an increase in funding to go along with the anticipated increase in enrollment. We should have a plan for the case of no funding increase for the increased enrollments. Quality should be maintained.

#### **Policy Goal D: The CSU Seeks to Ensure University Accountability**

Our group is somewhat divided over the new draft's policy substance on accountability, in general, and demonstrated learning, in particular. Some find it thin; others are relieved that so much definition seems delegated to the individual campuses. At least one who wants further system-level elaboration of guidelines notes the following unaddressed but integral issues in accountability:

Philosophical and theoretical bases for valuing particular types of results (e.g., pragmatism, creativity, social utility, personal development, basic/applied research, community service)

Identification of constituents/interested parties/participants in definition of desired results and accountability processes

A balanced reliance on various forms of validity and results in articulating student success

Purposes and processes for setting standards

Recognition that accountability itself consumes resources and that developing more authentic assessment especially of those "things most difficult to 'test'" -- reasoned judgment, rich imagination, personal integrity, and civic engagement -- are particularly costly.

Principle 9 - *The CSU will account for its performance in facilitating the development of its students, in serving the communities in which they reside, and in the continued contribution to the*

*California economy and its society, through regular assessment of the learning outcomes of its students and through periodic reports to the public regarding our broader performance.*

*Principle 10 - The CSU campuses shall have significant autonomy in developing their own missions, identities, and programs, with institutional flexibility in meeting clearly defined system policy goals.*

Remarks on Recommendations Supporting Principle 10:

Decentralization of campus identities seems to be a good thing too, but there is not a way to forward the thinking about mutual accountability AND greater flexibility and different program design standards. WHO is going to develop a comprehensive performance assessment? Long Beach?

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SEP 25 2000

**CAL POLY**

SAN LUIS OBISPO  
CA 93407

State of California  
**Memorandum**

ACADEMIC SENATE

To: Anny Morrobel-Sosa, Chair  
Academic Senate

Date: January 13, 1998

From: Warren J. Baker  
President

Copies: Paul J. Zingg

Subject: **Response to Academic Senate Resolution AS-484-971CTF**  
**Resolution on Cal Poly's Response to "The Cornerstones Report"**

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This will acknowledge receipt of the Senate Resolution AS-484-97/CTF which is intended to receive and forward Cal Poly's response to The Cornerstones Report. The Cal Poly Cornerstones Steering Committee and the task forces which examined various aspects of the Cornerstones Report are to be commended for their thorough efforts in responding to the Cornerstones issues and goals.

1/14/98 *WJ*