

CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY, NORTHRIDGE

THE DEVELOPMENT OF POLICY AFFECTING COMMUNITY COLLEGES:
A CASE STUDY OF THE CALIFORNIA COMMUNITY COLLEGE STUDENT
SUCCESS TASK FORCE

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Doctor of
Education in Educational Leadership

by

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ABSTRACT

THE DEVELOPMENT OF POLICY AFFECTING COMMUNITY COLLEGES:

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SUCCESS TASK FORCE

By

Iain Michael Ritterbrown

Doctor of Education in Educational Leadership

The issue of student success has become significant if not dominant in discussions at all levels of education since the early part of the 21st century. Discussions of public education have historically focused on issues of access, stemming from the belief that everyone should have the opportunity to benefit from education. In recent years, however, the focus of this discussion has shifted to the obligation of educational institutions to ensure students not only have access to education, but that they are successful.

In response to the growing concerns about student success, the California State Senate, in 2010, passed SB 1143, which authorized the California Community College Board of Governors to form the California Community College Student Success Task Force, a body led by California Community College Chancellor Jack Scott. The task force was charged with producing actionable recommendations that would improve the success of California's community college students.

The Student Success Task Force produced 22 recommendations, published in the Student Success Task Force Final Report (2012). Most of these recommendations were implemented by the time this study was completed. Implementation has had a

considerable impact on the California community college system and its students. While the recommendations and their implementation have received considerable attention, relatively little is known about the process by which they were formed.

This case study of the Student Success Task Force was designed to examine the ways in which educational policy is formed. Specifically, the study sought to examine policy formation from a systems theory perspective. The study explored ways in which student success was defined by the task force and by individual members, the ways in which these definitions were influenced by educational research and theory, and the degree to which the task force employed formal research methodology in the formation of its recommendations.

The study found that the Student Success Task Force represented an effective model for policy development, and that its structure, developed by the architects of the task force, provided a sound foundation for discussions. The deliberate inclusion of all stakeholder groups provided representation from a broad range of perspectives, though faculty, community college administrators, and outside interests, which collectively had the largest numbers of representatives, appear to have had the greatest influence on discussions. Stakeholder obligation also played a significant role in the development of the task force recommendations. Perhaps the most important influence on the task force and the development of its recommendations was the strength of leadership provided by Chancellor Jack Scott and by the California community college CEOs.

Chapter 1 – Introduction

The issue of student success has been prominent in discussions of policy at all levels of education. This focus began with the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 20 U.S.C. § 6301 introduced by Lyndon Johnson as a part of his war on poverty and amended a number of times by subsequent presidents, including George Bush, who introduced the No Child Left Behind Act 20 U.S.C. § 6319 (2002), and Barack Obama (US Department of Education, 2015). While these measures have focused for the most part on primary and secondary education, initiatives relating to higher education, including community colleges, have begun to receive significant attention. In California alone 4 major legislative initiatives have emerged in the last 5 years: SB 1143 (2010), which authorized the creation of the Student Success Task Force; SB 1456 (2012), which authorized the implementation of several of the Student Success Task Force Recommendations; SB 1440 (2010) mandating the collaboration of California Community Colleges and California State Universities in creating degrees guaranteeing student transfers; and SB 440 requiring that associate degrees for transfer be developed in all primary areas of curricular emphasis offered by California Community Colleges. These California initiatives have grown out of discussion that has focused largely on the degree to which community colleges are failing to meet expectations with regard to success as defined by graduation and transfer rates. According to the American Association of Community College's (2012):

What we find today are student success rates that are unacceptably low, employment preparation that is inadequately connected to job market needs, and disconnects in transitions between high schools, community colleges, and

baccalaureate institutions” (Reclaiming the American Dream, p. viii).

While the authors of *Reclaiming the American Dream* offer no specific support for the claims they make, the statement does offer a general framework for the argument criticizing community colleges, one based in employment preparation and transfer rates.

It is certainly true that many community college students do not receive a degree or certificate. According to the California Community College Chancellor’s office, about 47% of students seeking a degree are successful, and only about 32% of students assessing below college level in math ultimately receive a degree, certificate, or transfer to a four-year institution. (Student Success Scorecard, 2016).

In response to concerns about student success, the California Community College Chancellor’s office, in January 2011, under the leadership of California Community College Chancellor Jack Scott, and authorized by Senate Bill 1143, appointed a 20 person task force to examine the question of student success in California’s community colleges and to make recommendations for increasing that success. The task force met for the better part of a year (see figure 1) consulting a variety of documents and seeking the advice of educational theorists and researchers such as Dr. Kay McClenney, Dr. David Conley, and Dr. Vincent Tinto (SSTF, 2012, p.7). Following these meetings the task force worked for three months to form 22 recommendations. These recommendations, according to the final report of the task force, were “chosen based on their ability to be actionable by state policymakers and college leaders and to make a significant impact on student success, as defined by the outcome and progression metrics adopted by the group.” (Student Success Task Force, 2012, p.10).

In December of 2011, the recommendations of the task force were endorsed by the

California Community College Board of Governors. In September of 2012, implementation of the task force recommendations began with the passing of Senate Bill 1456, known as the Student Success Act, which reallocated funding for what was previously Matriculation to the Student Success and Support Program (SSSP) (Student Success and Support Program, 2014). While the SSSP is referred to as only the first phase of implementation of the task force recommendations, it has had a significant effect on enrollment policy, counseling and advising, elicited vigorous debate among educational practitioners, researchers, and theorists.

Figure 1 describes the recommendations made by the Student Success Task Force as well as the mechanisms that have implemented those recommendations. It is worth noting that while some elements of implementation have well defined connections to the task force recommendations, such as those mandated by the Student Success and Support Program, others are more interpretive, such as those supported by the Basic Skills Partnership Pilot Program.

Figure 1: Recommendations and Implementation

Recommendation #	Recommendation	Implementation
RECOMMENDATION 1 - INCREASE STUDENT READINESS FOR COLLEGE		
1.1	Community Colleges will collaborate with K-12 education to jointly develop new common standards for college and career readiness that are aligned with high school exit standards.	Education Code section 99301: Early Assessment Program
RECOMMENDATION 2 - STRENGTHEN SUPPORT FOR ENTERING STUDENTS		

2.1	Community colleges will develop and implement a common centralized assessment for English reading and writing, mathematics, and ESL that can provide diagnostic information to inform curriculum development and student placement and that, over time, will be aligned with the K-12 Common Core State Standards (CCSS) and assessments.	Common Assessment Initiative AB 743 SSSP (SB 1456)
2.2	Require all incoming community college students to: (1) participate in diagnostic assessment and orientation and (2) develop an education plan.	Common Assessment Initiative AB 743
2.3	Community colleges will develop and use centralized and integrated technology, which can be accessed through campus or district web portals, to better guide students in their educational process.	Education Planning Initiative
2.4	Require students whose diagnostic assessments show a lack of readiness for college to participate in a support resource, such as a student success course, learning community, or other sustained intervention, provided by the college for new students.	
2.5	Encourage students to declare a program of study upon admission, intervene if a declaration is not made by the end of their second term, and require declaration by the end their third term in order to maintain enrollment priority.	SSSP (SB 1456)

RECOMMENDATION 3 - INCENTIVIZE SUCCESSFUL STUDENT BEHAVIORS

3.1	<p>The Community Colleges will adopt system-wide enrollment priorities that: (1) reflect the core mission of transfer, career technical education and basic skills development; (2) encourage students to identify their educational objective and follow a prescribed path most likely to lead to success; (3) ensure access and the opportunity for success for new students; and (4) incentivize students to make progress toward their educational goal.</p>	SSSP (SB 1456)
3.2	<p>Require students receiving Board of Governors (BOG) Fee Waivers to meet various conditions and requirements, as specified below:</p> <p>(A) Students receiving a BOG Fee Waiver to identify a degree, certificate, transfer, or career advancement goal.</p> <p>(B) Require students to meet institutional satisfactory progress standards to be eligible for the fee waiver renewal.</p> <p>(C) Limit the number of units covered under a BOG Fee Waiver to 110 units.</p>	SSSP (SB 1456)
3.3	<p>Community Colleges will provide students the opportunity to consider the benefits of full-time enrollment.</p>	Full Time Student Success Grant (SB 93 2015)
3.4	<p>Community colleges will require students to begin addressing basic skills needs in their first year and will provide resources and options for them to attain the competencies needed to</p>	

	succeed in college-level work as part of their education plan.	
RECOMMENDATION 4 - ALIGN COURSE OFFERINGS TO MEET STUDENT NEEDS		
4.1	Highest priority for course offerings shall be given to credit and noncredit courses that advance students' academic progress in the areas of basic skills, ESL, CTE, degree and certificate attainment, and transfer, in the context of labor market and economic development needs of the community.	
RECOMMENDATION 5 - IMPROVE THE EDUCATION OF BASIC SKILLS STUDENTS		
5.1	Community Colleges will support the development of alternatives to traditional basic skills curriculum and incentivize colleges to take to scale successful model programs for delivering basic skills instruction.	Basic Skills Partnership Pilot Program 2015-16 Grants
5.2	The state should develop a comprehensive strategy for addressing basic skills education in California that results in a system that provides all adults with the access to basic skills courses in mathematics and English. In addition, the state should develop a comparable strategy for addressing the needs of adults for courses in English as a second language (ESL.)	Basic Skills Partnership Pilot Program 2015-16 Grants
RECOMMENDATION 6 - REVITALIZE AND RE-ENVISION PROFESSIONAL		

DEVELOPMENT		
6.1	Community colleges will create a continuum of strategic professional development opportunities, for all faculty, staff, and administrators to be better prepared to respond to the evolving student needs and measures of student success.	Success Center for California Community Colleges
6.2	Community Colleges will direct professional development resources for both faculty and staff toward improving basic skills instruction and support services.	Success Center for California Community Colleges
RECOMMENDATION 7 - ENABLE EFFICIENT STATEWIDE LEADERSHIP AND INCREASE COORDINATION AMONG COLLEGES		
7.1	The state should develop and support a strong community college system office with commensurate authority, appropriate staffing, and adequate resources to provide leadership, oversight, technical assistance and dissemination of best practices. Further, the state should grant the Community College Chancellor's Office the authority to implement policy, consistent with state law.	
7.2	In collaboration with the Chancellor's Office, districts and colleges will identify specific goals for student success and report their progress towards meeting these goals in a public and transparent manner (consistent with Recommendation 7.3).	Scorecard
7.3	Implement a student success scorecard.	Scorecard

7.4	The state of California should develop and support a longitudinal student record system to monitor student progress from elementary through postsecondary education and into the workplace.	SSSP (SB 1456) e-transcript; also study by K-20W Inter-segmental Data Collaborative
RECOMMENDATION 8 - ALIGN RESOURCES WITH STUDENT SUCCESS RECOMMENDATIONS		
8.1	Encourage categorical program streamlining and cooperation.	EDUCATION CODE SECTION 71020.5-71051 (5)
8.2	Invest in a student support initiative.	SSSP (SB 1456)
8.3	Encourage innovation and flexibility in the delivery of basic skills instruction.	Basic Skills Partnership Pilot Program 2015-16 Grants
RECOMMENDATION 9 - NO FORMAL RECOMMENDATION		
	The Task Force recommended that the Chancellor’s Office continue to monitor implementation of out- comes-based funding in other states and model how various formulas might work in California.	

Problem

While the recommendations of the task force have had a significant impact on the operations of California Community Colleges, relatively little is known about that which influenced the creation of the task force or the process by which the task force shaped its recommendations. Even as the California Legislature engages in the process of implementing the recommendations of the task force, little has been documented about its process or the foundations of the recommendations.

The members of the task force are described as “community college leaders, faculty students, researchers, staff, and external stakeholders.” (Student Success Task Force, 2012, p. 7), however, this provides scant information about stakeholder obligations, individual definitions of success, or the actual dynamics and interactions that led to the development of the task force recommendations. With so much at stake in terms of operational and budgetary implications for community colleges, it seems important to investigate the foundational perceptions and definitions of individual task force members with regard to student success. Furthermore it seems important to examine the relationship of these individual understandings to the larger definitions and perceptions represented by the task force’s 22 final recommendations, and to understand in the largest sense the mechanism that developed these policy recommendations as well as the leadership that guided the formation of the taskforce, its discussions, and the implementation of its recommendations.

Significant attention on the part of the Student Success Task Force recommendations focused on the idea that completion of a degree or certificate is an important indicator of student success (Student Success Task Force, 2012). There is little

argument regarding statistics indicating that a college education is directly tied to such measures of success as increased lifetime earnings, greater job satisfaction, increased social mobility, better health, and increased civic involvement (Baum, Ma, & Payea, 2013). However, this assumption rests on the premise that a degree is the result of meaningful and comprehensive learning. Researchers at the University of Texas at Austin, Community College Leadership Program concluded that “The push for more degrees will produce the desired results for individuals and the society only if college completion reflects the learning required for family-supporting jobs, effective citizenship, and further studies.” (The Heart of Student Success, 2010, p. 4). To establish completion in the form of a degree as a primary goal and put into place mechanisms which process a student as efficiently as possible through the system, thereby prioritizing progress (Student Success Task Force, 2012, pp. 32-33) may then, according to the logic of the University of Texas researchers (The Heart of Student Success, 2010), overlook the important aspects of learning that actually produce the outcomes described by Buum, Ma, and Payea (2013). Moreover, completion agendas would seem to indicate a shift from a holistic perspective of student success to the desire to establish more immediate measures of student progress and success. While no evidence has been found to indicate that proponents of completion dispute the larger value of education, these proponents argue that institutions should produce immediate and measurable indicators of success (Pennington, 2010; Reclaiming the American Dream, 2012; Pusser & Levin, 2009).

Efforts to implement programs that tie accountability to immediate measures of success include the No Child Left Behind initiative, comprehensively documented by the Center on Education Policy (2009). NCLB was based on the premise that standardized

testing of students could be used to measure the performance of educational institutions. The difficulty of such immediate measurement and ultimately questions about its value are apparent in the conclusions of a broad array of research studies (Center on Education Policy, 2009) and in the perceptions of parents and students upon whom the initiative had an effect (Stanik, 2007).

Given the impact that the work of the task force has had and will continue to have on colleges and students, it is important to question the development of the assumptions that led to its recommendations by examining the perceptions of the task force members both from an individual perspective and in their roles as representatives of stakeholder groups. That members were chosen based on stakeholder representation is clear not only from the membership as defined by the Student Success Task Force Final Report (2012, p.73) but, as is clear in the research, from the statements of those who were members of the task force.

It also seems reasonable to examine the degree to which the collaboration of members produced sound and original solutions, or at least significantly shifted the discussion concerning California's community colleges from one of access to one of success. In any case, there can be little argument that the recommendations of the task force have led to a significant, if not unprecedented, level of implementation. A case study of the work of the Student Success Task Force has the potential to generate a more comprehensive and nuanced understanding of the ways in which community college educational policy is developed.

Purpose

The objective of this study is to examine the formation community college educational policy in the context of perceptions and definitions of student success that directly affect educational practice, using the work of the Student Success Task Force as a case study. Particular attention is devoted to the degree to which stakeholder obligation and interest groups influenced the conclusions and recommendations of the task force as well as the degree to which established theory and research methods were employed in the process that led to the task force recommendations.

Through interviews with task force members and an examination of the documents produced by the task force as well as documents it lists as resources used by the task force, the study investigates the relationship of task force members' perceptions and definitions of success, both as individuals and members of stakeholder groups, in relation to the recommendations of the task force as a whole. Additionally, data gathered from the task force is placed, through the review of literature, in the larger context of educational research and theory.

The intent is that, through this process, a more substantial understanding will emerge with regard to the larger relationship between perceptions that shape policy and the policy itself as well as the influence of various stakeholder groups in effecting systemic change that genuinely benefits students. It is the goal of this study to help clarify the discussion of the way in which educational policy is shaped as well as the differences in the way student success is perceived. Specifically, the project aims to provide a window into how educational policy is made in California, and how individuals and

stakeholder groups come together to shape legislation affecting educational practice.

Research Questions

Following are the research questions that guided the study:

- What factors most significantly influence the formation of community college educational policy related to student success?
- How was student success defined by the Student Success Task Force, and how did this perception of success shape the formation of policy that resulted in the Student Success and Support Program?
 - In what way were definitions and perceptions of the task force informed by educational research and theory?
 - To what degree did the task force employ formal research methodology in the formation of their recommendations?

Theory

The primary lens through which this study of the Student Success Task Force is viewed is one of systems thinking. This is based in a broad view of educational policy as a system that includes policy makers, educational theorists, researchers, practitioners, legislators and legislative staff, and the perceptions and participation of the general public as both consumers and underwriters of education. While these may seem to be diverse and discrete entities, it can be argued that it is actually the system that, to one degree or another influences, shapes, implements, and is affected by educational policy. Until we understand the ways in which elements of that system affect and influence how policy is developed our understanding of educational policy and our ability to shape it more effectively will be limited. The general tendency to view education through the lens of a

single aspect of the system, to break the system apart in order to understand it, may actually limit our understanding in the most substantial sense. In discussing the tendency toward this view of issues, Senge (2006) observes that

From a very early age, we are taught to break apart problems, to fragment the world. This apparently makes complex tasks and subjects more manageable, but we pay a hidden, enormous price. We can no longer see the consequences of our actions; we lose our intrinsic sense of connection to a larger whole (p. 3).

In order to understand the system that creates policy, we must as Senge urges, strive to understand the system as a whole, not individual parts of the pattern (2006, p. 6). Systems thinking provides the lens for that larger perspective as Senge explains, “Systems thinking is a conceptual framework, a body of knowledge and tools that has been developed over the past fifty years, to make the full patterns clearer, and to help us see how to change them effectively.” (2006, pp. 6-7).

The consciously constructed diversity of membership within the task force brought together all elements of the system. And so, by extension, an examination of the work of the Student Success Task Force provides a unique opportunity to observe an interaction of all elements of our educational in an environment in which there has been a direct effect on policy.

Overview of Methodology

My examination of the formation of educational policy is a case study of the California Community College Student Success Task Force and examines the perceptions and definitions of success of individual task force members as well as the task force’s collective view of success as represented by the 22 recommendations in the task force

final report.

The context for the research was conceptual rather than physical, and is defined as the environment in which policy is shaped. This is primarily a political and regulatory environment as the task force was created by the California Community College Board of Governors under the authority of Senate Bill 1143 (Task Force Final Report, 2012, p. 7), as well as the network of stakeholder groups that make up the policy system. As a whole, it can be argued that this environment encompasses the educational system defined earlier and that the system itself is the setting for the study.

The study draws on data from a review of documents produced by the task force as well as from interviews with task force members and others associated with the formation of the task force or with the implementation of its recommendations. Documents that were reviewed included agendas of task force meetings and public forums as well as other documents produced by the task force or identified by the task force as those which shaped their discussions. A review of these documents provided a timeline of task force activities and outlined the nature and content of their discussions. Also useful was video footage of public forums, convened by the task force, that included questions and commentary from the public, including educators and students.

Interview subjects were drawn from the task force itself as well as those who were instrumental in shaping the task force and in implementing its recommendations. As noted, this sample describes in its composition the larger system that shapes educational policy in the California Community College system and its composition provides a view of perceptions and dynamics as well as interest group obligations and other factors instrumental in forming the recommendations that become policy.

The instruments used to gather data were an email invitation to task force members and others identified as relevant, explaining the nature of the study and requesting the opportunity for an interview. Subjects who agreed to participate were provided with an informed consent document required by and formatted in accordance with California State University Northridge policy, as well as an interview protocol, describing the nature of the study, the interview process, and listing specific questions.

Data were gathered using field notes and a research journal into which were recorded observations made during interviews as well as those that pertain to the research process and any initial conclusions regarding themes and patterns that emerge during data collection.

Data collected during interviews were transcribed from audio sources and entered into analytics software (Atlas Ti) for further analysis. Once transcription was complete, the original audio files were destroyed. All personally identifying material was eliminated from transcriptions, and any keys to the identity of subjects were secured in a location separate from the data. Data analysis began by identifying codes and themes consistent with the research purpose and questions. Following this preliminary analysis, data was subjected to a thematic analysis that clarified themes and patterns. Finally, an interpretive analysis identified and described larger patterns that emerged and drew conclusions based on these larger patterns.

As an educational practitioner, my work is directly influenced by educational policy and by those who shape it. It was essential for me, in the data collection process, to be aware of my own biases with regard to educational policy and to be conscious of my purpose as a researcher in terms of reviewing documents and eliciting responses from

subjects that produced high quality data that genuinely described the process of policy formation.

Limitations and Delimitations

While a case study of the Student Success Task Force represents a unique opportunity in terms of the degree to which the task force mirrors the system and dynamics that shape educational policy, there are inherent limitations in the study. The success of the study relied on the degree to which potential subjects were willing to participate. Because the task force was made up of only 20 members, it was necessary to interview about 50% of the membership in order to gather sufficient data.

Other possible limitations were associated with subjects' willingness to openly discuss the process by which the recommendations of the task force were shaped. In some cases, subjects were reluctant to reveal the existence of or nature of alliances that were formed within the task force membership, disagreements about issues, theory, or policy, or issues that arose in relation to interest group obligation or personal belief.

The study was delimited by the work of the task force, which is described as "a 12-month strategic planning process to improve student success." (Task Force Final Report, 2012, p. 7). The work of the task force took place between January of 2011 and January of 2012, and resulted in a final report containing 22 recommendations for student success. The study observed this strategic planning process from the perspective of the members of the task force and was informed by the documents they produced as well as relevant educational research and theory that explores student success, systems thinking, and stakeholder obligation.

Preliminary Organization/ Map of the Dissertation

Following this introduction, is a review of relevant literature, which establishes a foundation of research and theory upon which the study is based. Relevant literature will include material pertaining to the recommendations of the task force, including the measurement and views of success, as well as an examination of relevant policy initiatives. Following the review of literature is a discussion of methodology that identifies and discusses elements of the study including research design, context, data sources and sampling, instruments and procedures, as well as data analysis, and researcher roles. Chapter 4 discusses the results and findings of the research as they relate to the research purpose and design. These results are presented in a narrative form with sufficient explanatory text. Finally, the dissertation concludes with a chapter presenting discussions and conclusions. Consistent with the requirements of the Doctoral Program in Educational Leadership, this chapter presents a summary of the study, including an overview of the problem, purpose, and research questions. The discussion provides an interpretation, analysis, and synthesis of the research findings, relating the results to the larger body of literature and the theoretical framework of the study. It also discusses contributions made by the study to the field (Handbook, 2013, pp. 19-20). The chapter also discusses “implications for policy and practice” (Handbook, 2013, p. 20) and recommendations for further research.

Chapter 2 - Review of Literature

The study focuses primarily on questions regarding the aspects which most significantly influence the formation of policy with regard to community colleges and, in particular, California Community Colleges. The Student Success Task Force, which was chosen as a case study for policy development, provides an excellent focus as it was both a very transparent and a very intentional process for policy formation. Its purpose was to examine the question of student success in California's community colleges and to make actionable recommendations for increasing that success. Moreover, it was "composed of a diverse group of community college leaders, faculty, students, researchers, staff, and external stakeholders" (Final Report, 2012, p. 7).

It was necessary to examine established definitions of success, including those presented by experts who informed the work of the task force as well as current scholarship and research. This required the examination of concepts such as completion that are used to define success but also the metrics that are used to establish and delimit definitions of success.

Further, in order to form a context for the study based in literature it was necessary to examine aspects of policy development such as stakeholder and interest group influence as well as the influence of informal coalitions on policy development. There is also the question of the degree to which established research and theory regarding student success influences the development of policy in terms of its influence on policy makers as well as the degree to which it is employed in deliberations and discussions.

Finally, it was necessary to examine the effects and qualities of leadership on policy formation as well as the organization of groups and the direction of their discussions.

Defining Student Success

The Student Success Task Force recognized that “students come to California Community Colleges with a wide variety of goals, measuring their success requires multiple measures.” (Final Report, 2012, p. 6). However, the report then goes on to say that “Despite this diversity of objectives, most students come to community colleges with the intention of earning a degree or certificate and then getting a job.” (Final Report, 2012, p. 6). The task force offers no data to support this assertion but goes on to offer more specific criteria for defining success including completion of educational goals, transfer or transfer readiness, and completion of a degree or certificate (Final Report, 2012, p. 6). Moreover, the task force advocates for a definition of success that includes key “momentum points” including successful course completion, completion of basic skills competencies, completion of collegiate level mathematics courses, and completion of 15 and 30 units of course work (Final Report, 2012, p. 6).

This definition of student success is consistent with the definition provided by *Completion by Design Concept Paper*, which offers a view of success that includes “four key moments — connection, entry, progress, and completion” (Pennington, 2010, p. 5).

Completion also essential in the view of the Center for Community College Student Engagement (CCSSE), whose report *The Heart of Student Success* (2010), produced by the Community College Leadership Program at the University of Texas,

Austin whose former director, Dr. Kay McClenney presented to the Student Success Task Force. However, the CCCSE report emphasizes an important difference:

Improving college completion is essential but increased degree and certificate completion, in and of itself, is not a sufficient measure of improvement. Genuine progress depends on making sure that degree completion is a proxy for real learning — for developing thinking and reasoning abilities, content knowledge, and the high-level skills needed for 21st century jobs and citizenship. (2010, p. 3).

The report goes on to emphasize that “improved college completion will have real meaning only with serious and sustained attention to the quality of what goes on between teachers and students.” (The Heart of Student Success, 2010, p. 4) Unlike the Student Success Task Force and Completion by Design, benchmarks established by the CCSSE relate directly to classroom practice. Specifically, the report states, “The CCSSE Benchmarks of Effective Educational Practice are active and collaborative learning, student effort, academic challenge, student-faculty interaction, and support for learners.” (The Heart of Student Success, 2010, p. 9). This link between classroom practice and success is an essential element, notably absent in much policy literature.

In a broader discussion regarding definitions of success Tavares (1997) notes that: Quality is a key paradigm for any educational activity but its definition is always controversial and complex. This concept can be formulated along three different criteria: quality of the goals assigned to each educational program, quality of its contents and quality of the processes adopted to implement such program. (p. 414)

The breadth of this discussion is also noted by Mullin (2012) in relation to measuring success and gives rise to questions regarding the nature and consistency of discussions of student success. Rarely are discussions qualified by concrete parameters regarding the ways in which success is being defined or, more specifically, the mechanisms used to measure that success. Policy discussions and criticism of educational policy and practice frequently conflate Tavares categories eliminating distinctions that would make discussion more substantial and meaningful.

SSTF Experts

The degree to which educational research and research methodology is included in policy formation is an essential question. The Student Success Task Force met with a number of educational researchers and theorists during the period of its discussions. While these experts are not referenced extensively in the text of the final report, their influence is clear in certain areas.

The work of Dr. Kay McClenney, discussed earlier, is to some extent consistent with the assumptions of the Completion by Design initiative (Pennington, 2006), which describes a model for community college education that establishes pathways for students. McClenney and Dare (2013) describe the design of these pathways as follows:

The pathways model aims to support increased certificate and degree completion by moving beyond exposing students to isolated (even if promising) practices, seeking instead the full-scale implementation of high-impact, evidence-based practices woven into, clear, coherent, and structured student pathways. (p. 21).

These pathways emphasize many of the same elements found in the task force final report such as mandatory student orientation, student centered course sequencing, and

professional development for faculty. Absent from the task force report, however, are elements focusing on classroom practice such as learning in context and acceleration of student progress.

The task force also consulted with David Conley whose work focuses on college readiness. Conley's text *College Knowledge: What It Really Takes for Students to Succeed and What We Can Do to Get Them Ready* (2005) focuses on strategies to increase college readiness as well as success in the early stages of a student's college experience. Of particular relevance are ten standards developed by faculty and researchers, which are designed to answer the question "What must students know and be able to do in order to succeed in entry-level university courses?" (Conley, 2005, loc. 2233). The standards, collectively referred to as Knowledge and Skills for University Success, cover six disciplines: English, math, natural sciences, social sciences, second languages, and the arts (Conley, 2005, loc. 2233). The standards also emphasize the importance of "habits of mind" (Conley, 2005, loc. 2233), which address non-cognitive skills such as critical thinking, analytic thinking, and problem solving (Conley, 2005, loc. 2241). While recommendation 1 of the Task Force Final Report does address student readiness for college, the analysis and recommendation focus on community college alignment with the Common Core State Standards (Student Success Task Force Final Report, 2012, pp. 15 - 16) as well as support for entering students (Student Success Task Force Final Report, 2012, pp. 19 - 28).

The task force also consulted a variety of literature relating to its discussions. A large body of this literature related to basic skills and student learning (Student Success Initiative). Dr. Vincent Tinto's paper "Taking Student Success Seriously in the College

Classroom” (2011) outlines four areas which he believes are central to student success: expectations, support, assessment and feedback, and involvement (Tinto, 2011, p.3). Tinto (2011) believes that high expectations are essential in helping student to succeed, but that these expectations must be matched with resources “to provide the support students need to achieve them” (p.3). Moreover Tinto (2011) stresses the essential nature of performance assessment and frequent feedback in the classroom (p.3). Lastly, and, in his view most important is student engagement both academic and social (Tinto, 2011, p.3). Tinto also stresses the need for an organized institutional approach to faculty development (Tinto, 2011, p.5). This last is the focus of recommendation 6 in the Student Success Task Force Final Report (2012, p.49).

Also included in the literature that the task force reviewed was “Student Progression Through Developmental Sequences in Community Colleges” (Bailey, Jeong, & Cho, 2010), which examines the progress of students through remedial courses of study in math and reading. The study reinforces other research that indicates that remedial sequences do little to increase success, and moreover that these sequences are more of a barrier to success than a facilitator. The study indicates that those students who ignored institutional advice to enroll in a developmental sequence succeeded at far higher rates than those who enrolled in remedial classes. Specifically, the data show “of those who went directly to the college-level course passed that course, while only about 27 percent of those who complied with their referral completed the college-level course” (Bailey, Jeong, & Cho, 2010. p.4)

Measuring Success

As essential as defining student success is understanding the ways in which it is measured. Baldwin, Bensimon, Dowd, and Kleiman (2011) conclude that “measuring success at the community colleges is problematic.” (p. 75). More specifically in relation to Tidewater Community College in Norfolk, Virginia the study recognizes that:

Most commonly used measures of student success have limitations primarily because graduation and retention rates have been defined historically in terms of traditional four-year student enrollment patterns. Federal graduation and retention rates exclude 65 percent or more of TCC’s student body and fail to recognize students enrolled part time, those needing remedial work, or those who transfer or take a job prior to completing a degree. (Baldwin et al., 2011, p. 83).

Traditionally, Mullin (2012) argues, student success has been measured on the basis of two units of analysis, the institution and the individual student (p. 127). Mullin goes on to articulate, through one example, the kind of difficulties that institutions and policy makers may encounter in attempting to measure student success in these ways:

Student success may be framed in many ways. One approach is through the use of metrics that include but are not limited to graduation rates, level of attainment, percent of the population with some level of attainment, or the number of degrees awarded every year. Each data point answers one aspect of the student success puzzle but at the same time may be inappropriate for another. With approximately 13 national initiatives underway focused on college completion (Russell, 2011) it may be confusing to understand just which metric to use and when (Mullin, 2012, p. 127).

Moreover, Mullin argues, there must be a determination of the type of data to be used, counts or derived values (Mullin, 2012, p. 128). Counts refer to the actual numbers of students meeting some success threshold, while derived values represent counts placed within some context that filters the data, such as first time, full-time undergraduates (Mullin, 2012, p. 128). This framework, he explains, “aligns the unit of analysis with the type of data employed to allow for a more appropriated and nuanced discussion and use of student success data” (Mullin, 2012, p.128).

Mullin’s arguments regarding measurement emphasize the importance of considering success from a variety of standpoints, including lateral transfers (Mullin, 2012, p. 130), portability of credits for students concurrently enrolled in more than one institution (Mullin, 2012, p. 130), and milestones that are measures of student success and achievement (Mullin, 2012, p. 131).

Views of Success

Carstens and Howell (2012) view student success from an institutional perspective, emphasizing the importance of inquiry guided faculty development in creating more effective classroom practice. The article reveals the complex nature of influencing classroom practice and the necessity of active participation on the part of faculty in conceiving and implementing faculty development programs. They conclude that “the faculty’s own inquiry-guided exploration of [Inquiry Guided Learning] helped galvanize support for the adoption of a plan for comprehensive curricular reform centered on active learning.” (Carsten & Howell, 2012, p. 57).

Boylan et al. (1997) identify successful program components in relation to developmental education of the kind identified in recommendation 5 of the Student Success Task force Report (2012, p. 43) Boylan et al. conclude:

Given our current knowledge ... we can say that there appear to be definite relationships between the presence of certain program components and various measures of academic success among developmental students. These components include centralized or well-coordinated administrative structures, mandatory assessment and placement, tutoring with tutor training, commitment to faculty and staff development, advising and counseling and ongoing systematic evaluation. (1997, p. 8).

Lastly, Calcagno, Bailey, Jenkins, Kienzl, and Leinbach (2008) conducted a study examining institutional characteristics associated with student success. The researchers concluded that greater student success was associated with smaller institutions, institutions with a high percentage of full time faculty, as opposed to adjuncts, and institutions with low levels of minority students (p. 632). It is important to note that the Student Success Task Force report does not take into consideration any of these conditions in its recommendations. Calcagno et al's (2008) finding with regard to minority students may be of particular importance as high minority populations often correlate with lower socioeconomic populations and addressing success in institutions where these conditions exist may be more difficult as demonstrated by Hammond (2010).

More recent research by Bailey, Jaggars, and Jenkins (2015) reinforces the conclusions of Boylan et al. (1997) in terms of the importance of strong institutional structures. Bailey et al (2015) conclude that a lack of structure, which they refer to as the

“cafeteria college” (p. 12) where students select from a broad and often baffling selection of classes, is to a large extent responsible for a lack of student progress. They suggest instead that “high performing organizations implement their ‘core functions’ in a coordinated, complementary fashion that is aligned with organizational goals” (Bailey, Jaggars, & Jenkins, 2015, p.15). The authors go on to explain:

In guided pathways colleges, faculty clearly map out academic programs to create educationally coherent pathways, each with clearly defined learning outcomes that build across the curriculum and are aligned with requirements for further education and career advancement in the given field. (Bailey, Jaggars, & Jenkins, 2015, p.16).

Bailey et al suggest that:

In the guided pathways model, developmental education is redesigned as a critical part of the ‘on-ramp’ to a college-level program of study with the goal of helping students successfully complete the critical introductory college-level courses in their initial field of interest. (Bailey, Jaggars, & Jenkins, 2015, p.17).

This organization of pathways around areas of interest form the basis for the structure the authors suggest. This foundation takes the form of “metamajors.” As the authors explain “New students who are undecided about a major must choose from one of a limited number of exploratory or ‘meta-majors’ that expose them to to educational and career options within broad fields” (Bailey, Jaggars, & Jenkins, 2015, p.22).

Policy Initiatives

It is also essential to place the work of the Student Success Task Force in relation to other large-scale policy initiatives such as the Completion by Design Initiative,

intended to improve institutional and student success as well as public perceptions of community colleges (Pennington, 2010, p. 3) and Achieving the Dream, aimed at increasing student success, particularly among low income and minority students (Baldwin et al. 2011, p. 75). These large-scale initiatives are important in that they provide broad data sets that may be used as points of reference in examining student success from a national perspective and because the principles that grew out of the initiatives influenced the discussions of the task force. This is most directly apparent in the case of Completion by Design, the concept paper, which is included in the resources used by the task force (Student Success Initiative).

Completion by Design was a grant opportunity, funded by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, that focused on what are described as loss and momentum points that include “four key moments – connection, entry, progress, and completion” (Pennington & Millron, 2010, p. 5). These momentum points are translated into student pathways. The project monitored cohorts of students on an individual basis in terms of experience, persistence, and progression” (Pennington & Millron, 2010, p. 7). While research has demonstrated the value of this kind of data, Completion by design and other similar initiatives have been criticized for their focuses on student progress and completion as opposed to learning. As Humphreys (2012) noted, “thus far these models still focus only on ‘time to degree’ rather than on completion with assurance of demonstrated achievement” (p. 1). Further, Humphreys (2012) asserts that “all these initiatives depend on other efforts to increase the number of high school graduates who are prepared to succeed in college. Yet, many of them rest on the simplistic assumption that the causes of low graduation rates are primarily a matter of neglect, lack of awareness, misplaced

priorities, or incompetent leadership” (p. 2). It is worth noting that research with regard to momentum points is consistent with the larger theory of guided pathways offered by Bailey et al (2015).

Achieving the Dream focuses on the sharing and presentation of student success data, using examples from initiatives in North Carolina, Florida, and Texas, which have included “publishing updated institutional comparisons on key measures of student success.” (Baldwin et al. 2011, p. 78). The Student Success Task Force recommended that the state implement a “student success scorecard” (Student Success Task Force, 2012, p.59) that would be published on each college’s web page and would include data regarding success and persistence at the college as well as the ability to compare that data to other colleges and the state average. Presentations by educators from Washington and Ohio led task force members to conclude that “while linking funding to outcomes helped ... bring attention to measures of success it was the public reporting of outcome data that had the greatest effect on the planning and decisions of college leaders” (Task Force Final Report, 2012, p.70). However, while considerable literature is available regarding the performance-based funding initiatives in Washington and Ohio, no substantial research was found to support the assertion that public reporting of data affected planning and decision making. Nevertheless, this recommendation was authorized by AB 1417 soon after the publication of the task force final report.

Systems Thinking

It is also important to recognize that the recommendations of the Student Success Task Force, like many policy initiatives, are efforts that work toward systemic rather than local reform. An understanding of systems and systems thinking is critical in shaping a

valid case study of such reform efforts. Student success or lack of success is not an isolated aspect of the educational system, but the result an entire educational system comprised of policy makers, educators, and students from pre-kindergarten through post-graduate levels. It is a mechanism constructed in both the public and private sectors, influenced by direct and indirect factors. It is a single system built of many systems, and understanding its potential, its failures, and attempts to influence its direction requires a systems perspective. Peter Senge (2006) asserts “Systems thinking is a conceptual framework, a body of knowledge and tools that has been developed over the past fifty years, to make the full patterns clearer, and to help us see how to change them effectively” (p.7).

With this in mind, an important consideration in understanding reform is the examination of the underlying structure of the effort in relation to educational institutions and systems of organization such as districts and statewide systems in terms of the degree to which they are what Senge (2012) terms “learning organizations”. Senge (2012) describes the process organizational structure as follows:

Institutions of learning can be designed and run as learning organizations. In other words, schools can be made sustainably vital and creative, not by fiat or command or by regulation or forced rankings, but by adopting a learning orientation. This means involving everyone in the system in expressing their aspirations, building their awareness, and developing their capabilities together. In a school that learns, people who traditionally may have been suspicious of one another—parents and teachers, educators and local businesspeople, administrators and union members,

people inside and outside the school walls, students and adults—recognize their common stake in each other’s future and the future of their community (loc 183). Senge’s vision of a learning organization has application to the Student Success Task Force on a number of levels, most importantly the degree to which the architects of the task force included representatives from every aspect of the system as it has been described for this study as well as it is described by Senge. It is also important; however to determine the degree to which the creation of the task force, as authorized by SB 1143, was an attempt to generate change by regulation.

Leadership. It is also important to recognize the importance of leadership in effecting systemic change. Senge (2012) asserts

...we all know that bringing about the sorts of changes needed in the creation of learning organizations is enormously challenging work and requires real leadership ... People have no real comprehension of the type of commitment that’s required to build such an organization (loc. 5338).

Senge (2006) goes on to explain that “In a learning organization, leaders are designers, teachers, and stewards.” He goes on to employ the simile of a ship, and of all those who have influence over its progress through the ocean: the captain, the navigator, the helmsman. But, Senge (2012) asserts, it is the designer of the ship that has the largest influence, and who is the least recognized (loc. 5480). Given the intentional nature of the design of the Student Success Task Force, this concept is important in framing a case study and in understanding the work of the task force as well as the influence of that work in terms of implementation.

Part of this design included aspects of what Senge (2012) refers to as the “Café Model” of discussion and decision making. The author describes the model in this way: It starts by having people sit at small café tables, focused on a common question or topic that has important meaning for them. As people rotate to different tables, these small intimate conversations begin to get connected to one another. Over a few hours, people participate in multiple small conversations and simultaneously gain a sense of how the larger group as a whole is thinking ... The café process [helps] improve understanding by exposing multiple points of view (Senge, 2012, loc. 5436).

While there is no evidence that the café model was consciously employed by the architects of the task force, the structure of the meetings, which always began with a dinner the evening before, certainly includes important aspects of this model.

Ultimately, systems theory demands that, in order to effect change, “our first need is to expand our personal boundaries of awareness beyond just managing our own position” (Senge, 2012, loc. 5824). The task force in many ways was designed to embrace this theory in the largest sense. While there is no indication that Senge in particular was the impetus, there is ample reason to believe that this theory has significant bearing on the work of the task force.

Change Models

Related to this systems theory approach is an examination of the work of the task force from the perspective of established models of change. The systemic nature of the approach to reform as well as the scope of the task force recommendations would seem to indicate that changes would ultimately be what Kezar (2001) refers to as “second order

change” (p.16). This kind of change is transformational, aimed at the values, culture and organizational structure of the system (Kezar, 2001, p. 16). However, it is important to confirm this systemic intent as well as to look at the recommendations themselves in relation to first order change, which involves minor adjustments or improvements to one or more aspects of the system (Kezar, 2001, p. 16).

Additionally it is useful to look closely at the model corresponding to the change initiative itself. Given the conscious effort made to include a diverse range of stakeholders and interest groups in the composition of the task force, it would appear that the task force was designed with a social constructivist model for change in mind. Kezar (2001) defines this model as a social cognition model:

... in which it is acknowledged that there are multiple views of organizational reality. These theorists suggest that change can be accomplished by leaders who view the organization through different lenses, examining issues through the logic of perspective (p. 47)

However, if we look at the origins of the task force itself, the overarching model by which change was envisioned may be viewed as teleological. In this model,

It is assumed that organizations are purposeful and adaptive. Change occurs because leaders, change agents, and others see the necessity of change. The process for change is rational and linear ... but managers are much more instrumental to the process (Kezar, 2001, p. 32)

While, to some degree, the model of change that the task force embodies is a matter of interpretation, it is important that the study examine both possibilities as well as

acknowledging that both models may, in fact, be used as the lens through which the study may be examined.

Interest Groups

Policy development is also shaped significantly by interest groups and the degree to which policy makers feel obligated to represent particular groups with which they are associated. McDonnell (2013) in discussing interest groups involvement in the policy development surrounding the Common Core Standards indicated that these groups were notable for their diversity and that they included policy entrepreneurs, government agencies, labor unions, foundations, and private providers of educational services (p. 490). In describing the ways in which policy was discussed among these groups McDonnell indicated “the problems for which national standards are the solution had to be specified more precisely and tailored to different constituencies, and the rationale had to be compelling without engendering controversy” (McDonnell, 2013, p. 495). This statement illustrates the difficulty of achieving broad agreement among interest groups with divergent agendas, and the degree to which framing issues becomes important. It also gives rise to questions regarding the degree of substance these carefully framed discussions contain. If the focus of policy makers was on making ideas palatable across a broad range of divergent views, it would seem reasonable to question the degree of candor and substance present in such discussions.

Quoting Gray and Lowery (1999) Tandberg also noted that “having more interest groups makes it more difficult to enact legislation and results in having fewer bills introduced.” (Tandberg, 2010, pp. 736 - 737). However, Tandberg does note that “Having a greater proportion of not-for-profit interests was associated with more enactments and

higher passage rates of legislation.” (2010, p. 737). The Student Success Task Force was “composed of a diverse group of community college leaders, faculty, students, researchers, staff, and external stakeholders.” (Task Force Final Report, 2012, p. 7). Clearly, this group faced the challenges associated with a diverse array of interest groups and policy advisors; however, the group was also influenced, as noted, by the work of prominent non-profit organizations. In conducting the study, it was important to recognize the degree to which interest group obligation provided the diversity of opinion that Senge (2012) describes as important, if not essential, as well as the difficulties identified by Gray and Lowery (1999) influenced the discussions and recommendations of the task force.

Mehta (2013), on the other hand, argues that the current landscape of educational policy is dominated less by interest group affiliation than by ideas that become paradigms. This theory argues, again, for the importance of how ideas are framed, asserting that potential solutions arise from how we define the problem (pp. 291-292). Specifically, Mehta argues that “One impact of a new problem definition is that it changes the nature of the debate. A dominant problem definition serves to bound the potential possibilities of what can be advocated, giving it a powerful agenda-setting function.” (Mehta, 2013, p. 292).

According to this theory, controlling the narrative of the problem dictates the possible solutions. With regard to education, if we shape the narrative by defining the problem as the failure of schools and teachers to help students to succeed, then the realm of possible solutions focuses on those that apply pressure to schools and teachers to remedy this underperformance. On the other hand, if we define lack of student success as

one of unequal opportunity resulting from poverty (Hammond, 2010, p.38), then potential solutions to the problem become very different.

It should be noted as well, however, that interest groups are inclined to shape a narrative that is aligned with their agenda. For instance, Mehta states that “the National Education Association [a prominent teachers union] has consistently opposed efforts to introduce educational accountability.” (2013, p. 289). This should not be surprising since it is clearly in the interest of the union to define the problems with education in a way that does not point to the failure of teachers, which would indicate a need for accountability.

Largely, though, Mehta’s theories with regard to paradigms represent an extension rather than a refutation of other interest group theories in that his theory would indicate, logically, that it is the ideas that interest groups align themselves with, rather than the groups themselves, to which individuals and policy makers feel obligated.

Regardless of the nature or value of interest group contributions to policy making, the force of their influence is clear. Tandberg (2010) concluded that “Interest groups play an important role in state policy making.” (p. 736), and a successful case study of the SSTF must investigate the role and influence of the interest groups represented in the task force.

Policy Development

As important as who influences policy development is a consideration of the structure of that development and the factors that influence that structure. In discussing education policy development for the Canadian Forces, Bates (2007) argues:

An integrated model of policy development is proposed as one method of policy development in the service of educational equity. A project management/

systems approach with which most instructional designers and project managers are familiar could form the basis for fair policies that promote justice in the education and training system (p. 2).

The idea of a systems approach to policy development forms the theoretical basis of this case study of the Student Success Task Force; however, it is clear from the literature that we must understand the nuances of the existing system that shapes policy rather than assuming that it is possible to generate an intentional structure that presents what appears to be an ideal mechanism for shaping policy.

The SSTF would seem to represent an attempt to create an ideal approach to policy development through the representation of diverse groups and the establishment of a basis of research and theory upon which to base the group's discussion. However, a study of the work of the task force must focus on the ways in which the larger system of educational policy development, that which has evolved from the confluence of stakeholders, interest groups, and policy makers, influenced the creation, deliberations, and recommendations of the task force as well as the implementation of the task force recommendations. In understanding the relationship between this larger system and the microcosm of the SSTF, it is useful to understand the distinctions made by Bates (2007) in terms of the differences between practices, regulations, procedures, policies, and philosophies. She notes:

Delaney (2002) differentiates between: Practices (something everyone does, but they are not recorded anywhere), regulations (something specific and recorded to guide practice), procedures (how things are to be done, not what is to be done), mega-policies (a policy that sets guidelines for other lesser policies), meta-

policies (how a policy will be developed), and philosophy (an approach towards a mandate of goal) (p.2).

In studying the system that creates policy in relation to the work of the Student Success Task Force, the study focuses on meta-policy in terms of the effects of the development and composition of the student success task force on its recommendations, which may be regarded as mega-policies, and how those mega-policies have been translated into regulations, which effect educational practice.

Tavares (1995) takes a systems approach to the examination of educational policy development consistent with Senge (2012), arguing that “The inclusion in the same system of a large number of decision-makers with different values and objectives may be considered as one of the most specific features of this level of analysis.” (1995, p. 409). The consciously constructed diversity of the Student Success Task Force makes this consideration particularly important. Tavares also notes that “Few applications of OR [operational research] tools to support decision-making at more aggregated levels of analysis and decision can be quoted despite the usual praise given to the supportive role of OR for macro policy making ...” (1995, p. 409). While the Student Success Task Force took an organized and comprehensive approach to the formation of its recommendations, it will be important to note the degree to which the foundation of formal research and theory constructed by the architects of the program influenced outcomes in terms of the task force recommendations.

Brown (2013) also examines the structure of policy development from the perspective of evidence informed policy making in the United Kingdom. Essentially Brown “explores Flyvbjerg’s notion of phronetic expertise and hypothesizes that the

learning that accrues from engaging with multiple cases could also lead to policy-makers developing competency in relation to evidence use.” (2013, p. 19). Similar to explorations of the use of operational research, the idea of evidence-informed policy making is important to an examination of the ways in which policy was enacted through the task force in that it helps develop an understanding with regard to the foundations established by the task force for their recommendations. It is clear that the architects of the task force made efforts to gather information and research concerning student success; however, it is important to compare those efforts with standards established for evidence informed policy. In relation to current policy efforts Brown (2013) asserts that:

[There is] a need for current thought in this area to move away from rational and linear perspectives, to ones where policy makers are continuously incorporating the most up to date evidence into their thinking, enabling it to be intuitively conjoined with other pertinent and salient factors in order to provide a holistic and well-rounded decision in relation to given issues (p. 19).

This speaks directly to the linear methodology employed by the task force as well as to the importance of a systems approach as defined by Senge (2012).

Barth (2005) investigated the role of public engagement in policy formation. The Student Success Task Force meetings were open to the public, the task force convened public forums to discuss its recommendations prior to releasing its final report. Feedback gathered during the public forums was discussed by the task force, and input gathered had an influence on the final recommendations. Barth categorizes the purposes for public engagement by policy makers in as “traditional, obligational, political expedience, and public investment” (2005, p. vi). These categories are interesting in relation to the task

force as it is clear that the public forums were a mechanism for gaining public investment as well as generating discussion that ultimately had a real influence on the final recommendations. What is not clear is the degree of political expediency involved in these efforts.

Also important to a discussion of policy is the role of influential policy makers themselves in policy development. Cardenas (2006) examined this concept in relation to the development of the 1999 North Carolina Student Accountability Standards (SAS). The author also sought to “[retrace] the SAS policy making process to determine if and how educational research on the practice of student retention impacted the policy’s development.” (Cardenas, 2006, p.ii). Both issues are central to discussions of the work of the Student Success Task Force. Influential policy makers, in particular Chancellor Jack Scott, who served on the task force, were part of the process of forming both the task force and implementing legislation based on task force recommendations. The question of Chancellor Scott’s influence on the formation of recommendations and the degree to which the positions of members of the task force were influenced by educational research are valid and important to understanding the work of the task force. In relation to the influence of policy makers on SAS, Cardenas asserts, “Once again a cycle of implementing educational policy that lacks the backing of prevailing educational research is being repeated because an educational policy has been developed in conflict with the preponderance of educational research findings.” (2006, p. 9). This is particularly important with regard to this study’s central research questions regarding the degree and nature of support the task force had for its findings.

Conclusion

What remains unclear and is best addressed by Mullin (2012) are central questions regarding the ways in which student success is defined and measured. This applies to the task force, but also generally in terms of grounding the discussion of success and applying a consistent lens to that discussion.

Additionally, the overwhelming majority of discussion in the literature associated with and including The Student Success Task Force Final Report (2012), with the exception of “The Heart of Student Success” (2010), is devoted to issues peripheral to learning, issues that surround and support learning but are not directly associated with classroom practice and methodology. While these issues are important, it would seem that more focus would be devoted to the ways in which learning experiences themselves are shaped, developed, and put into practice. It is important to address the relative absence of this focus in the Student Success Task Force Final Report as well as student success initiatives that are designed to implement the recommendations of that report.

Chapter 3 - Methodology

The purpose of this study is to examine the development of educational policy through an investigation of the perceptions and interactions of those responsible for generating recommendations for a major policy initiative involving broad systemic change. I will examine the issue from the perspective of specific policy makers as well as educational researchers and theorists. In order to ground the study, I will use, as a case study, the work of the Student Success Task Force, a group created by the California Community College Board of Governors under the authority of California State Senate Bill 1143 in order to engage in a strategic planning process to increase student success in California's community colleges (Task Force Final Report, 2012, p. 7). The case study will also include implementation measures such as the the Student Success and Support Program (SSSP), which has been described as the first phase in the implementation of the task force's recommendations (SB 1456 Student Success Act of 2012).

By examining the documents produced by the taskforce and by speaking with its members as well as those associated with the project, the study will attempt to understand the factors that influence the development of policy as well as describe and examine the system that shapes educational policy. The study is not intended to be a critique of the recommendations of the task force but an examination of how those recommendations were formed, and of the process by which the perceptions of individuals and interest groups are shaped into policy recommendations. The recommendations of the task force serve as landmarks by which that process and the system that represents educational policy may be examined. A clearer understanding of the ways in which perception becomes policy and the ways in which perception is shaped and changed by the process

of policy development may inform the way that we approach policy development and the mechanisms and methodology we use to inform that process. It is also important to examine the degree to which educational research informs this policy development.

Through the following research questions, I will examine the development of educational policy using a case study of the Student Success Task Force as a foundation. These questions concern policy from a broad perspective as well as from the standpoint of the task force in particular.

- What factors most significantly influence the formation of community college educational policy?
- How was student success defined by the Student Success Task Force, and how did this perception of success shape the formation of policy that resulted in the Student Success and Support Program?
 - In what way were definitions and perceptions of the task force informed by educational research and theory?
 - To what degree the task force employ formal research methodology in the formation of their recommendations?

Chapter Organization

In addition to the preceding description of purpose and the identification of specific research questions, Chapter 3 will include a description of the research design, context, research sample and data sources, the instruments used in data collection, and the methods used to analyze the data. I will identify the study as an interpretivist case study of student success. The research context will be identified as conceptual rather than concrete as the actual locations for data collection will be diverse. These locations will

correspond to the roles and professions of task force members and policy makers. Consistent with the theoretical framework of the research, I have described this context as the system in which policy development will take place. Further, I will identify data sources, which will include interviews with task force members and policy makers as well as the examination of primary and secondary documents generated by these groups. I will justify these data sources in that interviews and observations will be the most effective means of identifying and exploring definitions and perceptions of student success. These methods will be supported by documents, including meeting minutes and legislative documents. I will describe the process of data analysis, which will include the coding and organization of definitions and perceptions of success and the ways in which those definitions and perceptions intersect and diverge. Finally, I will summarize the preceding elements, providing an overall context for the material in relation to the study as a whole.

Research Design

My examination of the work of the Student Success Task Force is designed as an instrumental case study, which will be, in the words of Bloomberg and Volpe (2012), “an intensive description and analysis of a bounded social phenomenon.” (loc. 1295). The phenomenon in this instance is an initiative that seeks to bring about systemic reform in the ways by which California Community Colleges address student success. Consistent with the definition of instrumental case studies offered by Merriam (2009), the examination of the work of the task force is designed to provide insight into the ways in which student success is viewed and acted upon by policy makers. Additionally, the

study focuses on the larger question of student success comparing the views of the task force with those presented by educational research (p.48).

The examination is bounded by the work of the Student Success Task Force in 2011 and 2012 and the subsequent action taken by the legislature based on the recommendations of the task force in 2012. While the concept of student success extends beyond this limited framework, focusing on the work of the taskforce allows for an in-depth study of a specific initiative aimed at systemic change.

The study is pluralistic in that it examines student success in the context of the work of the task force as a specific program and process (Merriam, 2009, p.43). The study will describe student success as a phenomenon and examine the perceptions and definitions of that phenomenon, upon which the task force based its recommendations. Further the study will place these perceptions and definitions in the context of a larger discussion of student success that includes educational research and theory.

The case study is heuristic in that the goal is to establish a clearer systemic understanding of the development of educational policy in the hope that this understanding will lead to more effective policy development in the future.

Research Setting and Context

The context of the study was conceptual rather than physical and for the purposes of the study is described as the system in which California community college educational policy is created. The task force was composed of 22 members from a variety of professional backgrounds. Members include community college faculty, staff, and administrators, legislators, educational lobbyists and policy development specialists (Student Success Task Force Final Report, 2012, p. 73). Members are located throughout

the state, though predominately in the greater Sacramento area and in Southern California. Data collection, in the form of interviews, took place in locations selected by the task force members. Subjects themselves were public and private sector professionals, male and female of a variety of ages and ethnicities. All have an interest in and experience with higher education.

Access. Access to task force members and policy makers was challenging. While they are all public figures to the extent that they participated in the task force, and all are identified in the Student Success Force Task Force Final Report (2012) by name, title, and organizational affiliation, they are not part of my immediate professional network. Connecting with them required me to reach out through email, telephone, and professional contacts to inform potential subjects of the value, importance, and integrity of the study and to request their participation.

Data Sources

In conducting a case study of the work and recommendations of the Student Success Task force within the larger context of educational policy development, I used a variety of data sources to better understand the definitions and perceptions of student success employed by the task force as well as those that place these definitions and perceptions in the larger context of educational research. Data sources included members of the task force as well as those associated with the development of the task force and with the implementation of its recommendations. I also used documents, and agendas that described the work of the task force as well presentation documents, agendas, and video footage that includes the response of practitioners and the public to the recommendations of the task force and the larger question of student success.

Data Types

Data types included interviews, documents, and my own field notes. I interviewed 10 of the task force members in order to understand how their individual perceptions and definitions of student success contributed to the collective definition represented by the 22 recommendations of the task force. I made every effort to interview members of each of the constituency groups that made up the task force. These included community college faculty, staff, administrators, and students, legislators, lobbyists and policy development specialists, and workforce development specialists. Additionally, I interviewed others associated with the development of the task force and the implementation of its recommendations. Throughout this process, I recorded my own experiences and perceptions in field notes.

Sampling

Participants were sampled using a criterion method (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p. 28). In the case of the 22 task force members, that membership established the criteria. In addition, sampling included those who influenced the creation of the task force as well as the implementation of its recommendations, including policy makers and legislators, representatives of the California Community College Chancellor's Office, and staff members.

Stratification of the sampling was based on the distinction between the two broad groups I have identified. Primary consideration was given to the task force members themselves. A second level of data was gathered from those associated with the task force, who participated in the development of the task force, its recommendations, or in the implementation of task force recommendations. While this level of data was

peripheral rather than primary, in terms of the work of the task force, it was valuable in that it describes the process by which task force members were selected as well as the perceptions of the task force recommendations on the part of policy makers and others who took action in relation to them. This sampling process provided access to the full spectrum of the research context in terms of the system that generates policy and provided a comprehensive view of the perceptions and definitions of student success and policy formation required to address the research questions.

Further, this sampling design provided access to appropriate subjects by establishing definite criteria bounded by the work of the task force and the conditions under which the task force was established as well as those by which its recommendations are being implemented.

Those sampled represented a broad cross section of the task force and included all of the major stakeholder groups as well as those who were closely associated with the task force. The group was divided almost equally between male and female, and the majority had significant experience with the community college system as both practitioners and researchers. A number had significant experience with policy development as well as leadership.

Ethical Issues

The most significant ethical issue associated with the study was the effort, within the context of my study, to protect the identities of task force members. Members were chosen to serve on the task force based on their roles as educators, business leaders, and policy makers, as well as their experience with educational issues. Because the list of task

force members was published in the final report, there is the chance that readers may be able to identify research subjects through this affiliation.

Strategies I used to mitigate this issue were a meticulous stripping of identifying characteristics from collected data as well as member checking. In addition, I took appropriate steps to maintain the security of all data, including audio records and transcriptions.

Data Collection Instruments

My case study of the Student Success Task Force examined, through semi-structured interviews, the perceptions of individual taskforce members regarding their own views on student success as well as the process by which the task force generated its overall recommendations. I also reviewed documents created by the task force including presentations and agendas of meetings. This was important in terms of the process by which these policy recommendations were developed as well as the initial phases of implementation.

Research invitation. Members of the taskforce and those associated with its formation and with the implementation of its recommendations were invited to participate in the study via email (Appendix 1). In the email, I introduced myself and provided a brief description of the nature of the study and its participants. I also assured participants that their involvement in the study was voluntary, and confidential. I emphasized the importance of their participation to the success of the study, which may help to provide educators and others a more informed view of the work of the task force in relation to student success as well as of the process by which educational policy is formed. I also provided contact information and follow-up instructions. I closed by

thanking potential participants for their time and consideration. This email was, in some cases, preceded or followed by a personal email or phone call from those in my network of contacts who are acquainted with task force members or others who provided assurance to potential subjects of the value and validity of the study and encouraged their participation. An email invitation was the most effective mechanism for recruitment as the criteria for inclusion in the study was very narrow and subjects could be identified by the list of task force members. This small group was easily targeted through email, and this form of communication allowed sufficient distance as not to put undue pressure on potential subjects regarding their participation.

Informed consent form. Subjects who agreed to participate in the study were provided with and asked to sign an informed consent agreement (Appendix 2). This form was prepared using the template provided by CSUN's Office of Research and Sponsored Projects. It included, information about the researcher and the faculty advisor. The form also provided an overview of the focus of the research study, its purpose, and the inclusion criteria for subjects. It also contained details about the time commitment required of subjects and the interview procedure. It notified subjects of the possibility of mild emotional discomfort associated with discussing their participation in and contributions to the work of the task force, and it informed them that they would receive no direct benefits or compensation for their participation. It advised subjects that there may be benefits to others and to society in the form of a clearer understanding of the work of the task force and the process by which educational policy is shaped. The form provided details regarding the disassociation of any personally identifying information from data and that data would be stored on a portable hard drive that would be placed in a

secure location accessed only by the researcher and the faculty advisor. Further the document assured subjects that data would be destroyed once the dissertation was presented. The use of this form is required by the university in order to conduct research involving human subjects, and its contents provide clear guidelines regarding the researcher's obligations and responsibilities as well as information about any potential consequences of participation.

Interview protocol. Prior to the interview, participants were also provided with an interview protocol document (Appendix 3). This document welcomed subjects and thanked them for agreeing to participate in the study. It provided a brief overview of the purpose of the interview, and informed participants that the interview would take about an hour to complete. The document also listed the main interview questions as well as any follow up or probing questions. Questions were primarily those that shape an overall understanding of perceptions and definitions of student success as well as questions that pressed for reflection with regard to the process of the task force. Subjects were also asked about their participation in the discussions of the group. In particular questions focused on interest group affiliations and obligations, coalitions within the task force, the influence of particular members, and the degree to which outside experts and research helped to form the task force recommendations. Subjects were asked about their perceptions of the work of the taskforce. Specifically, they were asked what they felt was the most important for educators to know about the task force and its recommendations as well as how they believed the work of the task force is perceived by educators and the general public. Finally, participants were given the opportunity to make any comments they felt were relevant to the study or to ask any questions they may have had.

Data Collection Procedures

Interviews. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with task force members as well as those identified as directly associated with the formation of the task force or with the implementation of task force recommendations. These semi-structured interviews were essential to the case study as they allowed the study to gather primary data regarding the perceptions of members of the task force with regard to student success as well as their own role in shaping policy. Interviews were arranged at the convenience of participants, and I traveled meet with subjects as required. Locations for the interviews were identified by participants and were those that are convenient and comfortable for them. In order to maintain some consistency, interviews were, to the degree possible, scheduled in working rather than residential environments.

I began interviews by thanking subjects for their willingness to participate in the study and by discussing their opportunities to review transcripts of the interview and to provide follow-up comments. Questions began with a request for a broad description of subjects' experiences working on or with the task force. Next were questions regarding interest group affiliation and perceived obligation on the part of task force members where these interest groups are concerned. I continued with questions regarding the dynamics of the group as well as whether alliances were formed within the group. This was followed by a series of probing questions regarding the foundational knowledge within the task force regarding student success as well as the degree to which task force members were influenced in their perceptions by experts who addressed the task force or documents that the task force reviewed.

Subjects were questioned about specific recommendations made by the task force.

Further, they were asked about their own definitions of student success as well as whether these definitions changed as a result of their work on the Student Success Task Force. Participants were asked to discuss their perceptions regarding the importance of the work of the task force as well as what they believe public perception of that work is. Finally, subjects were asked what they would want to convey to community college educators with regard to the work of the task force.

Following these questions, I thanked subjects for their participation and ask them if they had any additional comments or questions. Lastly, I requested that they contact me should they think of anything further, and I let them know that I would be in contact when transcripts were ready for their review.

Documents. The second data collection procedure I used is the examination of documents associated with the work of the Student Success Task Force. This work was designed to be transparent, and, as a result, many documents and artifacts are available online. Documents include meeting agendas as well as relevant studies, and policy documents that the task force included in their discussions. I reviewed these documents in relation to the data collected during interviews as well as to identify themes and points of focus for analysis. Agendas for the task force meetings as well as public forums held to discuss preliminary task force recommendations are also available and were downloaded and used as part of the data analysis process. These were used to develop a timeline for the development of policy as well as to discover themes in the discussions of the task force. Additionally, I examined documents utilized by the task force, including policy documents created by foundations that discuss issues such as completion, success, college readiness, equity, and budget priorities. I also reviewed, and included discussion

of, video documents from the task force website, including recordings of "town hall" meetings held to discuss the recommendations of the task force.

I believe an examination of these documents was essential to understanding the perceptions that shaped the definitions and measures of student success that were developed by the task force as well as the direction and structure of the task force discussions. Primary documents, such as agendas provided access to the ways in which discussion was planned, and represent a roadmap to the creation of definitions of student success as well as the elements that shaped those definitions. Video records of town hall meetings provided access to responses on the part of students, educators, and the general public with regard to the recommendations of the task force as well as the reaction of the task force members to these responses.

Because these documents are available to the public and contain references that identify task force members, care was taken to eliminate any association between these documents and data gathered for the study from members of the task force.

Data Analysis

Preliminary data analysis. The first stage of my preliminary data analysis took place before data collection began. Drawing on the literature review, I established preliminary themes and codes in relation to my research questions and theoretical framework. An examination of the literature to date had already revealed a number of themes including definitions, measures, and views of success, educational policy reform, and systems thinking.

I began my data analysis with a review of the documents identified above, which were produced by the task force or specifically listed as resources used in their

deliberations. These points of reference helped to develop themes and codes that informed primary data collection and analysis.

During interviews, which were the primary data collection mechanism, I continued to develop and modify themes and codes, keeping track of new developments and observations in my field notes. Once I had collected interview data, I secured the data as required, and had it transcribed.

I was aware during the review of transcribed data that this process was reflective of the theoretical framework upon which the study is built and represents choices made on my part in relation to the participants and the subject matter (Davidson, 2009, pp. 36-37). Being conscious of my own role in this way reminded me of my responsibilities as a researcher but also of the fact that the study is a co-created narrative. The data was entered into Atlas Ti to facilitate the process of coding and to aid in the identification of relationships to the theoretical framework and my own research decisions.

Establishing preliminary themes and codes based on the review of literature provided a sound framework upon which to build my analysis. It ensured that the themes and codes were those identified as important by previous research. I believe as well that an examination of the documents and resources produced by and used as reference by the task force were also a sound mechanism for preliminary data collection and analysis. These documents revealed the themes and categories that were used as a framework by the task force itself in constructing its recommendations. It was also essential to continue to expand and modify codes and themes throughout the data collection and preliminary analysis periods as new ideas and directions present themselves.

Thematic data analysis. As my analysis continued and my familiarity with the information, codes, and themes increased, I was able to clarify primary themes and patterns as I continued to group and modify coded segments of data. Moreover, at this stage, I began to establish links between coded segments that revealed larger patterns. Coding and patterns were noted in Atlas Ti, and I also used analytic memos to describe patterns and explain codes. The process was iterative, involving multiple layers of examination with regard to each interview.

A multi-layered, iterative approach to coding and thematic analysis and the grouping of these initial segments into larger patterns is consistent with the description of the process provided by Davidson (2009, p. 36) and provided a thorough and comprehensive foundation for interpretation. To paraphrase Peshkin (2000) this process helped me to navigate the many crossroads in my interpretive journey and make decisions about the data and the patterns they form (p. 5).

Interpretation. In the last stage of data analysis, I identified and described patterns that emerged in the data using my research questions and theoretical framework as a foundation. I formulated conclusions by identifying coded segments and grouping them as relationships emerge. I am interested in the aspect of this process that Peshkin (2000) describes as “the way a researcher’s self, or identity in a situation, intertwines with his or her understanding of the object of the investigation.” (p. 5). This concept makes clear the importance of the researcher role as well as emphasizing the co-constructed nature of meaning discussed by Talburt (2004).

Researcher Effects on the Case

Researcher bias. As a community college administrator, policy development has a great deal of impact on my professional life. In particular, with relation to the work of Student Success Task Force, I believe it is both a moral and professional imperative that students are successful in their learning and that the learning prepares them adequately for the challenges they will face after leaving the educational institution. In practice, however, I believe student success is interpreted by policy makers and others in ways that are not always directly associated with quality of learning and that this is reflective of large-scale policy initiatives in a general sense. I believe that student success is frequently interpreted in ways that are easily measured, rather than in ways that produce an accurate view of the effectiveness of learning experiences and support strategies. My strategy in combating this bias was to use a combination of peer review, member checking, and triangulation. Peer review provides additional perspective from those who are informed by a shared body of theoretical knowledge. This strategy was enormously helpful in defining and articulating the study as a whole. Member checking ensured that the views of participants in the study were represented accurately and that participants had the opportunity to offer commentary with regard to the data they contributed. Finally, triangulation was essential in determining the veracity of data gathered through interviews by comparing participants' accounts of particular incidents or discussions.

Participant reactivity. I interviewed as many of the members of the Student Success Task Force as possible as well as the policy makers who helped to create the task force and who introduced legislation as a result of the task force recommendations. Given the substantial and sometimes contentious public discussion surrounding the task force

and its recommendations, members of the task force and policy makers were, in some cases, wary of my motives, as an educational practitioner in studying the work of the task force and its background.

I was careful in constructing my interview questions to be sure that they conveyed an interest in discussion and discovery rather than conveying the impression of judgment. To accomplish this, I was conscious of my bias where policy makers were concerned. I tended, before the study, to view their role in education as less than fully informed and, in some instances, self-serving. These views had real potential to limit my ability to effectively conduct research and analyze data. I used member checking and peer review to mitigate this possibility. I needed, as well, to distance myself in discussions with subjects in order to limit my response to the issues and perceptions that arose during discussions.

It was essential, during this process, to be aware of my role and responsibilities as a researcher. As such, gathering high-quality data was my first priority. In order for that to happen, it was necessary to make subjects feel comfortable in expressing their views and in describing the ways in which those views were constructed. I emphasized to subjects my interest in the process of policy formation and in their role in that process. I also emphasized that the purpose of the study was not to pass judgment on the recommendations of the task force but to study the process by which those recommendations were created as well as the influence of factors such as interest group obligation and individual perceptions influenced the process. I offered to let subjects review transcripts of the interviews and I assured them of that they may choose to end their participation in the study at any time. It is my hope that these measures reassured

subjects with regard to my intent, and serve as well to remind me of my responsibilities as a researcher.

Chapter 4 – Findings

Data were analyzed using the research problem and questions as a basis. Interviews of task force members and others as well as primary documents produced by the task force as well as secondary documents including press releases were the coding scheme. The interview questions also reflected this primary structure. The goal of the study was to reveal the origins and foundations of policy by examining the process by which it was formed and the elements which were perceived to have the most influence on that process. The Student Success Task Force presented a unique opportunity in that its process and design were intentional, transparent, and highly structured, affording an ideal opportunity for analysis.

The Student Success Task Force Final Report (2012) details the recommendations of the task force, and provides a clear view of the findings, to which all task force members agreed in their final meetings. What the report does not address, however, are the foundations and origins of these recommendations, which include the origins of the task force itself. Data collection was designed to provide insight into these elements by structuring the interview questions to address relevant issues as well as gathering documents that shed light on the issues in question.

Data analysis created connections between the issues identified by the research problem and questions to the data itself by means of coding. In this way the relationship between the perceptions of individuals who participated in or who were influential in the process were related to the larger structure by which the task force recommendations were formed as well as the dynamics of the group and the influences of various factors.

Data were analyzed using Atlas Ti in order to create a clearly defined structure of analysis that corresponded with the purpose, problem, and questions that created the foundation for the study. What follows is a description of the findings based on that structure.

Formation of the Task Force and the Role of Chancellor Scott

Initially, the chapter will examine the creation of the task force and the influences that led to its creation. Stakeholder representation as well as obligations will be a part of this discussion. Subsequently, the process of the task force will be examined including the structure of its meetings as well as the participation of its members and staff. The study will also examine the foundations of the task force recommendations including individual definitions of success as well as the influence of completion on discussions and the importance of accountability. Also important are the dynamics of the taskforce in terms of their interactions, conflicts, and coalitions. The chapter will will also include a discussion of the public perception of the work of the task force. Lastly the chapter will examine the degree to which the task force created sound and original recommendations regarding student success and the degree to which those recommendations were implemented.

Task Force was formed in response to Senate Bill 1143 initiated by Senator Carol Liu. which proposed that California's community colleges receive funding based on the successful performance of its students. Specifically, the bill proposed that the funding formula be shifted from one that was based on the number of students registered in classes on the third week of the semester, referred to as the census date, to a formula

that funded only those who completed classes successfully (SB1143). An author of the bill indicated that

... we thought there might be a very simple way you could incentivize and encourage and support community college towards success. And one simple way would be to calculate what they get based on a student being in a class at the end of a semester and passing. So, version one [of the bill] said that we would change funding to community colleges to make it based on course completions ... we learned from work similar all over the United States ... that if you fund exclusively on third-week census, as we do in California ... you incentivize getting what we call “butt in a seat.” And you don't really incentivize students succeeding.

Concern regarding this formula was widespread among community college leaders and faculty. One community college leader indicated that, “Most of us felt that it was overreaching. It would simply, without any qualifications –give money to the community college, not based on attendance but based on completion”. Another member of the task force indicated: “It was a bad idea to begin with. It’s still a bad idea.” Another described the concept in this way:

When you start with a community college where you literally, by state law, have to take everybody who’s 18 and some others under special circumstances and then you’re supposed to evaluate people on the outcome. That is ridiculous. In my view, that would be like just having the general population go in and start performing surgery. Then evaluate the hospital on the outcome of that surgery.

Concerns also focused on the possibility that performance based funding might have a negative impact on academic quality and rigor. One task force member indicated that:

One of the dangers with the performance-based funding is, in a system that has, overall, about half of its classes taught by part-time faculty with no job security, and I am in no way saying that all administrators would push people to lower standards, but some would and we know that they would and that pressure would be there on part-time faculty to do that. So I think it could compromise standards..

Other concerns focused on equity and the fear that basing funding on completion and success would have a disproportionate impact on colleges in areas with low-income, high minority populations, which are already affected by what is referred to as the success gap, a condition in which certain populations historically have lower rates of success and completion.

The legislation proposed by Senator Liu failed to get the required votes to move out of the Senate, and so the architects of the bill initiated discussions with the California Community College Chancellor's office. Chancellor Jack Scott was opposed to the bill and the concept of performance-based funding, but was willing to work with the legislature to design a new approach. An agreement was made to amend the bill to establish the Student Success Task Force.

There was, however, some concern on the part of legislators as well as external sponsors of the bill that a task force would not be effective in generating real change. This concern was expressed by one of the authors of the original bill,

The risk when you do these kind of things is if you take a bill that would have been an actionable bill and move it to a study bill, as we often call these, you run the risk of a bill that goes nowhere, and issue that goes nowhere.

However, it was clear that the expectations of task force members were not to produce a study but to produce, as more than one member indicated, “recommendations that could be implemented.” Moreover, as one interviewee put it, “My expectation was that we would come up with meaningful avenues to improve student success in California Community Colleges.” Finally, there was a commitment to implementation: “From the start there was a commitment that we were going to see this to the end, and we were going to see that something happened.” And moreover:

that we were going to come up with a hard-hitting set of recommendations to make to the Board of Governors, to the chancellor, and to the larger ecosystem of California community colleges, that we were going to help the system improve student success outcomes.

These expectations originated with California Community College Chancellor Jack Scott, who, by universal agreement of those interviewed, both initiated and organized the Student Success Task Force. Every one of the members and staff interviewed were personally recruited or vetted by Chancellor Scott, and the appointments were clearly designed to provide representation for the primary stakeholders in decisions regarding California’s community colleges: the faculty – including union and Academic Senate representation, administration – both CEOs and Chief Instructional Officers (CIOs), student services, classified staff, students, and representatives of the larger community.

While Dr. Peter MacDougall was chair of the Student Success Task Force, Chancellor Scott was the driving force behind the task force as well as a very influential member. Dr. Scott was a former California State Senator and Assemblyman. He had also been the president of Cypress College and Pasadena City College, and had served as Dean of Instruction at Orange Coast College. During his time in the California Senate, Scott served as chair of the Senate Committee on Education. This direct experience with both the legislature and virtually every level of community college education in California provided a uniquely comprehensive view of the system that represents educational policy as it has been defined for this study. One task force member observed:

Jack as an old community college person and an old pro from the legislature couldn't have been better situated. I mean, here we were with Jack Scott as the head of the system and a task force that was legislatively blessed. Jack had all that skill and all that credibility inside the legislature. It was an important time, kind of a moment in time that you could see had some potential to it.

Others were more direct regarding Chancellor Scott's influence:

First of all, it is clearly his baby. It would never have happened if he hadn't had the skill to get Carol Liu to accept the Student Success Task Force as opposed to outcome funding. Because of the skill he had in chairing it and the political smartness he had in getting private funding so that the Task Force could take the time to do a good job and bring in all these people and his political contacts, so he actually got a lot of it implemented before he resigned. That's a tremendous amount for one person to have done.

It was clear as well that the expectations established for the task force were also the expectations of Chancellor Scott. One task force member observed:

Jack Scott, he really was true to his word. It was a very serious taskforce set up with a good composition. Jack's an extremely experienced legislator and community college leader. So he had a really keen sense that if you're really going to make a big difference, you had to have a certain core group of stakeholders around the table.

Some even described Scott's vision and the work of the task force in exalted terms:

In its day the task force and the invention of the task force by the leadership of the State Chancellor's office and certainly by Jack was a valiant effort to address the ongoing severe problems of funding and student success of the community colleges. I say a valiant effort because it sought to be comprehensive even though I think the history of it will be primarily focused on only a few areas of the delivery of education, not all areas. At the end of that story it will not have addressed all of the problems that the community colleges were facing. But it was a valiant effort.

While it is clear that Scott was revered by many of those who served on the task force, there were some who felt that the Chancellor was not as connected to current issues as he might have been:

There were also times [Chancellor Scott] was working off some old information and he was the chancellor so his voice meant a lot at these discussions and I think there were a few times I can remember when that kind of did become an issue,

that I'm not sure that Chancellor Scott really was as connected as he could have been.

The same member went on to argue that: “Jack Scott had been a college president but it was separated by a dozen years in a legislature, something like that. I think that made a difference.”

Once the task force was assembled there were a number of issues to be overcome with regard to the group. There had been vigorous opposition to the original performance based funding bill and to those who had supported it, some of whom, including Senator Liu, were represented on the task force. It fell to Chancellor Scott to unify the group around the expectations of the task force:

So once we amended the bill, what Jack was doing was trying to get everybody to de-weaponize. Lay your weapons and let's sit around the table and let's start over again. Let's work together on this. Which again, he was just masterful. It's a strength and he did it so well.

Another task force member indicated:

Jack Scott has a very nice manner of keeping warring factions at bay, so to speak. What would happen would be there would be often very heated discussions. Then Chancellor Scott would say in this quiet manner ... the way I see it is x, y, and z, summarizing it and synthesizing it. Usually everyone would agree with it, not always, but usually.

The Role of Stakeholder Obligations

As discussed in the review of literature, stakeholder obligation is an important consideration in any policy development initiative. It can both inform and complicate the

process of policy development. In theory, a diverse perspective has the potential to make policy stronger in that multiple dimensions of an issue receive consideration; however, diverse viewpoints will also necessarily complicate a process in that agreement will be more difficult to reach and discussion will be less focused. As one subject put it, “The down side of [a diverse stakeholder group] is that that tends to neutralize certain dimensions, certain aspects of issues that will not get addressed as well as they should be. It's in the nature of Noah's Ark.” The reference here refers to the convention, especially in academia, of including representatives from all stakeholder groups in the “Ark” of any decision-making body.

There is no question that the Student Success Task Force was designed with the intention of including all stakeholder groups that represent the system affected by policy making. The groups included, faculty members, students, administrators, researchers, legislators, trustees, and representatives of the general public. But within these groups, there were also subgroups. Faculty members were chosen also because they were representatives of the statewide Academic Senate and the faculty union as well as representing both instruction and student services. Administrators were represented by both CEOs and CIOs. Representatives from outside the system came from the business community, represented by the Senior Vice President of Education and Workforce Development for the Los Angeles Chamber of Commerce and municipal officials in the form of the Mayor of West Sacramento. As one member indicated, “It was a very eclectic group. The diversity of the group contributed to the ultimate outcome and also made the process a complex one.” And another argued, “The membership was designed to be robust but not to be slanted in any way.

Figure 3 displays a list of the task force members and their interest group affiliations. It must be recognized that the designations are those defined by the study and that, because some task force members may be considered members of more than one interest group, these results may be viewed from more than one perspective. For instance, faculty members may have been student services representatives, but were counted only once under a particular designation.

Figure 2

Stakeholder Group	Representatives
Faculty	4
Outside Interests	3
Chief Executive Officers	3
Classified Staff	1
Student Services Representatives	2
Students	3
Educational Researchers	2
Legislators	1
Staff Members	1
Chief Instructional Officers	1
Ex Officio Member	1

Role of the community college CEOs and faculty representatives. One task force member described the stakeholders in this way: “The key stakeholders there were essentially on one hand the CEOs, on the other hand the academic senate and then on the

third hand there were a few other players, the CIOs perhaps, that aligned very carefully on some of these questions.” Another indicated:

You had academic senate. You had student services officers. You had chief instructional officers. You had CEOs. You had sort of public – I’m putting public in air quotes ... folks that were in some cases part of the non-profit advocacy community, researchers.

Faculty members, by general agreement of the task force members, formed a very unified front, some meeting regularly to discuss their position:

[Faculty representatives] tried to think out where [they] would like to see things moving and what [they] needed to -- what [they] could live with, what [they] could not in some of the discussions and some of the recommendations. [They] did a lot of prep work going into these meetings to be prepared for them and to know where [they] wanted to go.

While the faculty members were generally in line with the majority of task force members in opposing performance based funding, there was considerable discussion regarding other matters such as basic skills. Not all members of the task force viewed the participation of the faculty coalition in a positive way. One member indicated:

The Academic Senate and the faculty bargaining groups were very, very, very strong on two or three issues where I still think they were absolutely wrong. You could not use the word accelerated, accelerated learning. Other things where it was in the best interest of students, they did not support. The document which came out, as any document, is a compromise. It could have been a much stronger

report and much better for the students except the faculty, of course, had positions that they were going to cling to and die for.

This is supported by other task force members who indicated:

There were all kinds of solutions to the basic skills initiative that are thrown in there as suggestions but the A word [acceleration] is not used. But that generated from arguments that took place about what does reform look like and what does substantial change look like. So the [faculty] at that point in time, in my opinion, was playing a role that historically it had played to kind of defend its turf.

They spent a lot of time trying to teach everyone to stay away from their sandbox. There was a lot of that kind of undertone within some of the discussions, particularly on issues that would get into their turf. Sometimes that was not exactly as pleasant as it should be.

There were a number of people from the academic side of the house that were – that had a dividing interest in either protecting or advocating for certain kinds of changes or to maintain certain kinds of boundaries and control.

Ultimately, however it was the opinion of all those interviewed that, despite differences and vigorous discussions, the task force members worked well together in the long run.

One task force member had this to say:

I think the faculty groups initially might have come in with an agenda but certainly it [was charged with protecting] the faculty and the Academic Senate. ... Ultimately, ... that all melted away. At one point, we really did become a pretty cohesive group.

The role of external members of the task force. Those described by the Student Success Task Force Final Report as “external stakeholders” (Final Report, 2012, p. 7) also played a crucial role in both the formation of the task force and in shaping the recommendation. The external members represented a variety of constituencies and included David Rattray and Alma Salazar from the Los Angeles Chamber of Commerce, Nancy Shulock from California State University Sacramento, and Christopher Cabaldon, Mayor of West Sacramento. While these members were not from within the community college system, all had extensive experience with that system. One task force member observed, “I think David Rattray and Christopher Cabaldon who were not from the community colleges were on the task force, were singularly very instrumental in pushing for things.”

David Rattray is Senior Vice President of Education and Workforce Development with the Los Angeles Chamber of Commerce and has not only worked extensively with business and non-profits to study and reform education in California and was instrumental in writing the legislation that authorized the Student Success Task Force and in negotiating the passage of that legislation. One task force member asserted:

Dave Rattray is a key. He's probably, among all chambers of commerce, I think he's a leading voice in tying business and education together. So it was great to have that perspective.

Nancy Shulock has authored a number of studies of California’s community college system and has been an advocate for performance based funding. Her research has been controversial within the community college system and has drawn considerable criticism from those who view her as an outsider who has criticized the system.

Christopher Cabaldon served as chief consultant and staff director for the California State Assembly's Higher Education Committee and served for six years as a Vice Chancellor for California's Community College system.

Technically, Robert Gabriner, Director of the RP group and the Educational Leadership Program at San Francisco State University, was also an external member; however, it is clear that those interviewed did not see him as an outsider. His service in community college administration combined with his enormous experience with research, planning, and legislation, including his leading role in shaping AB 1725, cast him instead as the ultimate insider. From a systems perspective, he has perhaps the broadest direct experience with the California Community College system as it has been defined for the purpose of this study, and he has influenced the system from more perspectives than any other member of the task force, with the exception of Jack Scott.

At least some of the outside members did view themselves as stakeholders for the public and took this responsibility seriously. In describing their role, one member indicated:

Yes. Four of the five us who were the external members considered ourselves a stakeholder of – I don't know how this is going to sound -- but really a stakeholder of the public good because the system is very internally focused... We definitely felt that we were the ... group that was 1) trying to convey or represent the public interested, but 2) that public interest being on the side of change rather than protecting the status quo.

It was the view of some task force members that the differences between the views of task force members who were practitioners from within the community colleges in opposition to those from outside formed the greatest potential sources of conflict:

The biggest division and I've always found this very interesting; in general, the greatest division was not faculty and administration. Easily, the most visible division was people within the system versus the outside members of the system.

While staff members are generally praised for their ability to organize and facilitate the work of the task force, there are also questions about the degree to which this group shaped the outcomes. In addition to structuring the course of the meetings and shaping agendas, the staff was responsible for producing the final report. While none of the members queried questioned the integrity of the final report, there were those who felt that staff had a significant influence on the way recommendations were put forth. As one member indicated, "I think some of us, if we could've written the report probably would've phrased things differently but we really were not included in that kind of aspect of it." And in the words of another, "There were a few things that we objected to and got changed but there were some things that, I think, might have been done differently if, again, those of us who were actually task force members had been the ones actually putting the words to paper."

Group Dynamics

While the constituencies represented in the formation of the task force are clearly important, the interaction of the members both personally and in their roles as stakeholders figured significantly in shaping the recommendations. One member noted:

The group dynamic of this was a fascinating study. It ebbed and flowed. It almost went off the rails on more than one occasion and then all of a sudden it would get back. From a group process point of view, it was a fascinating study. The end result, I think, I'm biased obviously, was a fabulous one but it could just as easily, especially near the end, have all fallen apart. So, it's really a credit to the people involved that they stayed with it, even in spite of pretty dramatic differences of opinion, which could have taken it off into a ditch at a number of points.

Generally, subjects were in agreement that, while there were tense interactions, generally members felt that the dynamics of the group were positive: "Primarily people were very collaborative and collegial with each other. They were respectful with each other. In some cases, they were very affectionate with each other." This personal contact may be the result of the way in which meetings were structured in terms of bringing task force members together for dinner and discussion the night before meetings. This ensured that all members were present for meetings that typically began at 8:30am, but also allowed for interaction and bonding outside the meetings.

Integrity of intent. For many subjects the positive nature of interactions overall was attributed to the integrity of the intent of participants. Participants generally agreed with the overall sentiment expressed by one member:

It was positive. That doesn't mean [we] didn't disagree sometimes, but I didn't think [any member of the task force] was dragging their feet or trying to stop anything. They were all sincere. They were all working towards the aim. They all took their task seriously.

Another member alluded to the difficulties the group encountered and the ways in which their common purpose helped overcome differences:

In spite of some of the frustrations that [the group] may have had with some of the faculty representatives ... I never questioned people's intentions. And I think everybody there had the very best of intentions about improving the outcomes for students.

Complexity. As described by (Tandberg, 2010, pp. 736 - 737) anytime a broad array of interest groups come together, there is an inherent difficulty in working toward common recommendations. This was certainly true of the Student Success Task Force, and, as one member argued:

Anytime you bring stakeholders together from a variety of places, especially when some of them are outside of the academy, it brings together such a variety of perspectives that, at least in the beginning, it's sometimes even hard to have conversations because we have such different views on the subjects to begin with. So, it was complex.

At least in part, it may be that this complexity resulted from a lack of common perspective, on the part of members, regarding the purpose of the task force:

I think it made it difficult ... you end up having a bunch of conversations about potential solutions. And the space that we structured this task force in were policy level recommendations. So we ... weren't about recommendations that were designed to directly change practice, although that's ultimately the effect you're going for. We were in what I would describe as 15,000 to 30,000 foot policy space. What can the state of California do in law? What can the board of

governors do in regulation? And what can community colleges themselves, districts and colleges, do with campus and district based policy to alter the dynamics and to ultimately change the outcomes for students?

Jane Patton, a member of the Student Success Task Force and President of the California Community College Academic Senate described the challenge in this way in an article for the Senate Rostrum:

The faculty on the task force agreed that there were things that the task force should have done differently. For one thing, we wished there had been clear agreement in the group about its guiding principles and an understanding about what would constitute a final recommendation; sometimes the group voted, other times not. Sometimes sufficient time was allotted to reach consensus; other times, not. There were periods when hidden agendas were evident and when it appeared that there were predetermined outcomes. Sometimes the view of one individual controlled the will of the group, and had we taken more time for consensus building, that minority perspective might not have won. (Patton, 2011)

This last is an interesting retrospective perspective and one that is inconsistent with the claims of other task force members as far as the general consensus of the group regarding the final recommendations. Most agree that the task force as a whole agreed to support the recommendations.

The effect of initial meetings on group dynamics. The group dynamics were also affected by the structure of the meetings. The task force met 11 times in 2011, according to their public agendas. Meetings were held monthly in Sacramento at the Le Rivage Hotel and once at the Citizen Hotel. Town hall meetings were held in Los

Angeles and Oakland in October and November. No regular meeting was held in October. Meetings generally consisted of an informal dinner meeting to which speakers might be invited, but for which there was no public agenda. These were followed by a full day meeting with a formal agenda. In July, the task force met for two full days of discussion on the 13th and 14th. Figure 3 describes the timeline of the task force activities from formation through approval by the board of governors.

Figure 3: Timeline

Context	Overview	Intent	Content
September 2010 – Authorization			
Senate Bill 1143 Authorizes the formation of the task force			
January 2011 - Meeting – Sacramento			
Introduction	Task Force Purpose, Goals, and Methodology	Overview and Context	Brief history of the state budget and relationship to community colleges
			Current state budget environment – Overview of Governor Brown’s 2011-12

			Budget Proposal
			Forces necessitating change on the CCC system
			“Snapshot” of where we are as a system (Patrick Perry)
		Purpose of the Task Force	
		Expectations Regarding Outcomes of the Task Force	
		Determination of How the Work of the Task Force Will Proceed	Meeting schedule for 2011, including model for successful future meetings
			Determination of topics and areas of interest to be explored by Task Force
			Methods to ensure that

			campus-based practitioners are appropriately engaged.
		Identification and Use of Student Success Metrics (Patrick Perry)	
February 2011 - Meeting – Sacramento			
Experts	Dr. Andrea Veneia	Overview: Key issues impacting college readiness	
	Dr. David Conley	Redefining College Readiness	
	Dr. Sara Lundquist	Successful Student Services Practices	
March 2011 - Meeting – Sacramento			
Online Feedback	Demonstration of Website and Online Web Dialogue	Expected Outcome	Understanding of how to access information online

			Understanding of how threaded dialogue system works
			Knowledge of where and how to direct public feedback to the site
	Follow Up From Prior Meetings	Lessons learned from February meeting on College Readiness and the college intake process	
		Distribution and explanation of WestEd "practices" matrix	
		Definition of student success	Working definition of "Student Success" which was derived from the brainstorming session of last month will be posted. Task

			Force members are encouraged to write comments and suggestions to further refine the definition directly onto the posted version.
		Revising Metrics of Student Success	Determine key metrics that align with the working definition of Student Success
Basic Skills	Overview of Basic Skills Instruction: Basic Skills and ESL (Mark Wade Lieu, Sonia Ortiz-Mercado)	Expected Outcome	Understanding of (1) where we are as a system and (2) what reforms have been attempted and/or implemented
	Small Group Activity (Dr. Jan Connal)	Expected Outcome	Identify key barriers to successful basic skills practices
	Report from small	Expected Outcome	Identify common themes among

	groups		outcomes of small group activity
Concluding Comments		Expected Outcome	Identify any areas of interest to be addressed by either a subcommittee of the task force or pre-existing constituency organizations
		Expected Outcome	
April 2011 - Meeting Sacramento			
Lessons learned from the Commission on the Future	Commission on the Future (Scott Lay)	Expected Outcomes	Understanding of how the Commission on the Future (COTF) made decisions to include recommendations contained in the report.
			Discussion of any gaps in the COTF recommendations that may serve as “jumping

			off' points for the Task Force.
			Understanding of next steps in implementing the COTF report.
Principles to guide the task force	Amy Supinger	Expected Outcome	Agreement on a set of "principles" to guide Task Force decision making
		Expected Outcome	Understanding of report framework and audience
			Results of WestEd "straw poll"
			Small Group discussions of those preliminary recommendations warranting further consideration
Common Core	California		

Standards	Common Core Standards and implications for the Task Force recommendation related to assessing Community College Readiness (Dr. Michael Kirst)		
May 2011 - Meeting – Sacramento			
Student Services	Important Considerations for Student Services Discussion (Yasmin Delahoussaye and Linda Michalowski)		
	Small Group Discussions	Key Student Services Issues and Policy	Identify initiatives for student service policy and delivery methods to foster student

		Recommendations	success
	Report from small groups	Expected Outcome	Identify common themes among small group discussions
		Expected Outcome	
Technology	Contributions of technology toward increasing student success (Mark Mitsui President North Seattle Community College)		
	Small Group Discussions: Student Services Policy and Technology Considerations	Expected Outcome	Identify initiatives for student service policy and delivery methods to foster student success
June 2011 - Meeting – Sacramento			
Finance Policy	Considerations for	Strategies for	

Reform	Finance Policy Reform (Nancy Shulock and Eric Skinner)	Funding Student Success	
		Current Funding Model	
		Overview of Performance Funding Models	
Outcomes Based Funding	Panel on Funding Student Success (Mark Mitsui, President North Seattle Community College; Charlie Earl, Executive Director, Washington State Board for Community and Technical Colleges, Eric Fingerhut, former		

	Ohio Senator and former Chair of the Ohio Board of Regents)		
	Small Group Discussions: Financing Student Success	Expected Outcomes	Discuss possible resource strategies to advance a student success agenda
			Identify key principles to guide the development of the resource strategies portion of the Task Force's student success plan.
			Discuss possible role of a performance funding model in the student success plan.
	Presentation of Outcomes-Based Funding Proposal		

	(Bill Scroggins)		
	Small Group Discussion: A Performance Model for California Community Colleges	Expected Outcomes	Would an outcomes-based funding model be a constructive component of an overall set of finance strategies for improving student success rates in California community colleges?
			What works or doesn't work about the outcomes-based funding proposals we have studied today?
			How would you draw from these models to fit California community colleges?
			If California were to implement an

			outcomes-based funding model for community colleges, what key principles should guide its development?
	Report findings from small group discussions	Expected Outcomes	Identify an overall resource strategy to guide development of the Task Force's student success plan.
			Discuss whether an outcomes-based funding model should be included in the Task Force's student success plan.
			Determine what key elements should be included in an outcomes-based funding model, in the

			event such a model is proposed.
July 2011 - Meeting – Sacramento			
Recommendations	Small group report preparation	Task force members will reconvene in their working groups. Each group will identify their top three recommendations and answer the following questions for each one	What needs to be in place for this to be accomplished in the policy arena?
			What needs to be in place for this to be accomplished through a systemwide effort?
			What needs to be in place for this to be accomplished in the college or district level?

			How would this concept be financed?
			If we do this, how will we know if we've succeeded?
	Presentation and discussion	Student Services and Support	<p>The working group will take 15 minutes to explain their main recommendations and answers to the questions. This will be followed by a deep task force discussion:</p> <p>Do you agree with these recommendations?</p> <p>What are your concerns? What ideas would you want to be sure were included as part of this recommendation?</p> <p>What is most</p>

			important about it?
	Presentation and discussion	Basic Skills	
	Presentation and discussion	Systemwide Organization	
	Presentation and discussion	Financing Policy	
		From recommendations to action	What funding leadership and support structures are needed to ensure these recommendations are acted upon?
			How could we encourage colleges to apply some of the ideas surfaced by this group as the assess priorities over the coming year?

		Relating recommendations to financing	The task force will discuss how these recommendations could be realistically financed given the existing level of funding.
			What guidance can we provide to the legislature about changes to funding formulas?
			What will the advice be on performance based funding?
		Outcome measures	The task force will return to the outcome measures identified at prior meetings and determine if these

			adequately capture improvements related to recommendations.
		Using the public comment period to strengthen recommendations	Are there concepts that need to be reviewed by specific constituencies?
			How can we use this process to make the ideas stronger rather than having them be eroded?
		Next Steps	Discuss next steps for Chancellor's Office staff to flesh out recommendations and the meeting agenda for the August 16-17 meeting.

August 2011 - Meeting – Sacramento

Recommendations		Review of Draft Recommendations	Do the individual recommendations capture the intent of the Task Force?
			Do they need to be stronger?
			What funding, leadership, and support structures are needed to ensure these recommendations are acted upon?
			Are there any specific implementation recommendations that should be included in the report?
		Concluding Comments on Recommendations	On the whole does this draft document reflect the appropriate set of recommendations?
			Are there any gaps in

			the draft report?
			Are there topics missing that the task force has already discussed and could easily add a recommendation on?
		Next Steps	Discuss work to be completed between now and September meeting
			Discussion of opportunities for public comment on draft recommendations (including distribution of draft Fall Community Colleges conference calendar.)
			Discuss use of online public comment tool.
September 2011 - Meeting – Sacramento			

Recommendations	Draft recommendation will be separated into two categories in order to focus the discussion of the group on the most complicated, contentious and/or cumbersome of the recommendations	Vetted Items	Staff identified recommendations for the Vetted Items list as those that have been thoroughly discussed at prior meetings and are unlikely to benefit from an additional Task Force discussion.
			Staff recommends that the Task Force vote on the items contained in this list. Members may move an item from the Vetted Items list to the Discussion Items list if they believe the proposal has not been sufficiently examined by the group. Members objecting to

			a recommendation will have the ability to vote "no" at the time a vote is taken.
		Discussion Items	Staff identified recommendations for the Discussion Item list as those that need clarification or modification and will benefit from further group discussion.
		Metrics	The Task Force will revisit earlier discussions to determine which outcome / dashboard metrics, as well as which progression metrics align with the recommendations of

			the report.
October 2011 - Town Hall - Los Angeles			
Public Discussion	Dr. Peter MacDougall, Dr. Manuel Baca, David Rattray	Background	Introductions and recap of the mission of the Student Success Task Force and review of its work to date.
		Introduction of Draft Recommendations	Summary of draft recommendations of the Student Success Task Force and discussion of changes needed for implementation.
November 2011 - Town Hall - Central California			
Public Discussion	Dr. Jack Scott, Dr. Ben Duran, Eric Skinner, Amy Supinger (Moderator)	Background	Introductions and recap of the mission of the Student Success Task Force and review

			of its work to date.
		Introduction of Draft Recommendations	Summary of draft recommendations of the Student Success Task Force and discussion of changes needed for implementation.
November 2011 - Town Hall - Central California			
Public Discussion	Dr. Jack Scott, Dr. Ben Duran, Eric Skinner, Amy Supinger (Moderator)	Background	Introductions and recap of the mission of the Student Success Task Force and review of its work to date.
		Introduction of Draft Recommendations	Summary of draft recommendations of the Student Success Task Force and discussion of changes needed for implementation.
Town Hall - Orange County			

Public Discussion	Melinda Nish, Yasmine Delahoussaye, Eric Skinner (Moderator)	Background	Introductions and recap of the mission of the Student Success Task Force and review of its work to date.
		Introduction of Draft Recommendations	Summary of draft recommendations of the Student Success Task Force and discussion of changes needed for implementation.
Town Hall - Oakland			
Public Discussion	Dr. Jack Scott, Richard Hansen, Ruben Lizardo, Suzanne Reed (Chief of Staff, Senator Carol Liu) Amy Supinger (Moderator)	Background	Introductions and recap of the mission of the Student Success Task Force and review of its work to date.
			Summary of draft recommendations of

			the Student Success Task Force and discussion of changes needed for implementation.
Taskforce Meeting November 2011 – Sacramento			
Recommendations	Presentation of Online Feedback	Discussion of online feedback from town halls and conferences	What were the general themes?
			How did the feedback differ amongst the various constituencies and regions?
			What specific recommendations is the field recommending the task force revisit?
		Discussion Items: High Profile Feedback	Recommendation 8.1 Categorical Program Consolidation

			<p>Recommendation 4.1</p> <p>Align course offerings to meet student need.</p>
		Discussion Items	<p>Would the Task Force like to amend the report to respond to criticism that it did not examine: (1) Career-technical education/workforce issues; (2) the 50% law; (3) classroom instruction and pedagogy; or (4) equity issues?</p>
			<p>Which, if any, of the remaining recommendations does the Task Force wish to revisit based on various feedback?</p>

Taskforce Meeting December 2011 - – Sacramento

Recommendations	Update on Board of Governor's December 1st Meeting		
	Presentation of online feedback	Discussion Items	<p>Recommendation 4.1</p> <p>Align course offerings to meet student need:</p> <p>Review changes related to noncredit course offerings and continue discussion as needed.</p>
			<p>Recommendations 6.1 and 6.2 Professional Development: Discuss concerns raised by faculty over provisions of these recommendations that "ensure that professional development is equally focused on part time</p>

			faculty."
			<p>Recommendation 7.3</p> <p>Implement a Student Success Scorecard:</p> <p>Examine recommendation calling for scorecards to be based on ARCC data and discuss potential limitations of using ARCC collections as a basis, including limiting the pool of data to only those students having completed 12 units.</p>
Final Publication January 2012			
<p>Publication of the Student Success Task Force Final Report</p>			

According to taskforce members, attendance was regular on the part of most members. Subjects indicated that the student representatives changed more than once, that Senator Liu attended infrequently, but that she was represented by a staff member at meetings that she did not attend, and that David Rattray of the Los Angeles Chamber of Commerce shared his responsibilities with Dr. Alma Salazar, also of the Chamber.

One of the most interesting aspects of the Student Success Task Force was the intentionality of the process. The initial three months of the task force meetings were devoted primarily to an investigation of the research and theory surrounding student success as well as to creating an operational definition of student success for the task force. Experts who addressed the committee included Andrea Venezia of WestEd, a non-profit organization that describes itself as committed to “improving education through research, development, and service” (WestEd, 2016), Dr. David Conley, author and professor at the University of Oregon and CEO of the Educational Policy Improvement Center, and Dr. Kay McClenney, Director of the Center for Community College Student Engagement at the University of Texas at Austin.

The intent of these initial meetings was clearly to provide a solid foundation of theoretical and research based knowledge on which the task force might build their recommendations. Task force members overall, however, responded poorly to this attempt to provide a framework for their discussions. The impression seems to have been that the presentations delayed rather than facilitated discussion. As one member perceived it:

The first two or three meetings were all presentations and we sat around and had people talking at us and they presented to us on funding and they presented to us on basic skills and they presented to us on student services and they had this person and that person coming in and there was finally a point where a couple of us just finally, at the end of the meeting said, 'when are we actually going to get to have some discussion?'

Another described the group's frustration in this way:

We've got a year, we're a quarter of the way through it and we haven't even said anything much yet. We've been just having information thrown at us and when a couple of us actually spoke up and said it, half of the rest of the room said yeah, we've been sitting here feeling the same way.' So past that point, they started restructuring the agendas to really get the task force members to be more active participants in the discussion rather than just having information thrown at us and I think that really made it a much better atmosphere.

The feeling, generally, seems to have been that the attempt to provide a theoretical and research based foundation prevented rather than facilitated the establishment of a direction for the task force. One member asserted:

The first three or four meetings really were centered around ... listening to researchers, listening to what was going on in other states. There was, initially, where are we going with this thing? Where, ultimately, are we taking this thing? Of course, we had been given the charge but we were still listening to all of this stuff. We're getting a lot of material. Where is it taking us?

While, from a theoretical standpoint, the choice on the part of the task force architects to provide this foundation seems not only reasonable but advisable, participants felt that it was a constraint rather than a benefit and one which did not facilitate the cohesion of the group:

It was I think the wrong choice of how to go about engaging all of the 20 of us so that we got to know each other, so that we got to engage with each other not just the speaker in front of the room. But that's not the way it was organized.

It was organized very traditionally to transfer knowledge. It had a limited effect because for some of us we were already aware of that and for others of us it may have been useful but we weren't engaging with each other about it so much as we were talking to the person in the front of the room. So that's why I think Jack and his team really underplayed the importance of that first period. It could have been much more productive for us and perhaps would have changed the outcome in that second period when the recommendations began to bubble up.

Ultimately, some felt that this decision to structure the meetings this way jeopardized the success of the task force. One member expressed concern that, had presentations gone on much longer, delaying direct dialogue the success of the task force may have been at risk. In the words of the task force member, "I think if we had waited much longer, we would have really been in trouble." In her article *Faculty Participation on the Student Success Task Force* Patton (2011) indicates

For several months, the task force spent most of its meeting time hearing presentations from scholars and leaders from other states about success strategies and performance based funding. The faculty representatives were frustrated with

the large expenditure of time spent passively listening rather than beginning discussion and debate about possible recommendations months sooner, and they are united in wishing much more time could have been allotted to wrestling with the difficult issues. As a result, the time pressures at the end of deliberations caused rushed or insufficiently discussed conclusions.

The impression that the initial meetings were damaging to the overall work of the task force does not seem to be shared by all of those interviewed for this study. While most seem to be in agreement that these meetings were less productive and that they achieved little in terms of altering the perceptions of the group, the prevailing opinion seems to be that they were simply a less productive use of time than were subsequent meetings. One member referred to this phase in this way:

So once we stumbled –you go through the phases– stormin’, normin’, you know that whole model? So for sure we stormed and normed for two or three meetings. We were very ineffective. But we got to know each other. And we kicked the can around and tried a few things.

And at least some members felt the presentations in the first few meetings were valuable and had the desired effect:

It was wise in that the first several meetings we had presentations brought to us by outsiders on a variety of topics related to student success. We began discussing them as well but that helped to ultimately form a somewhat more common frame of reference for the discussion.

The value of the information presented by external experts in the initial meetings. The delay of direct discussions regarding student success on the part of task

force members caused by the structure of initial meetings may have been frustrating for some; however, there was also some question regarding the value of the presentations by experts.

In interviews members of the task force generally seemed to feel that that the presentations might have been valuable for other members of the task force, but none indicated that their own perceptions regarding student success were informed or changed by the presentations. Some of those interviewed indicated that the presentations provided support for established positions on the part of task force members. The research seems to indicate that these established positions were based primarily in practical experience rather than research and theory. One subject summed this position up well:

I think that for some of the people in the task force listening to those folks was very important for them, helped them to crystalize their thinking. I don't think that bringing experts in to explain these issues necessarily changed people's minds. That goes back to my critique about the whole assumption behind that first five months, which was, "We will present, people will learn, and then we will do the task force recommendations." It's a nice linear thought process but that I don't think is what happened.

So I would say, yes, [the experts] probably contributed overall. People were able to reference back to these presentations. They were able to be integrated into the final report with the various kinds of studies that had been done. So to that degree it helped significantly and it helped to provide a narrative to some degree. But in terms of altering the thinking of the 20, I'm doubtful that it had a significant effect.

The dynamics shift from the initial period of exploration to one of discussion.

Once the initial period of structured exploration was complete, members generally felt that the group was able to transition to more productive, and in the view of some, intense discussion:

I think there was some amount of organizational floundering for a period of time but that said, the leadership was able to recover from that. Then things went into a much more intense phase, that second phase when the task force divided into working groups. That's when things began to focus in. It was a much more important time for me, that second time.

Others, in agreeing with the shift in the character of discussions, described it as a shift away from an adversarial standpoint:

So I'd say the first couple of meetings, that's where I was saying we're thrashing around. I mean, we're all trying to shift from combatants to collaborators. And also just the group to build its own rhythm and how it's going to agendize and do its work, which would always be there, even if they didn't trust each other.

Ultimately, it was a discussion of the issues that allowed the group to cohere:

Once we started getting into the actual discussions as they related to California and California community colleges, then it became much more interactive and, as a result, much more intense.

And it was this coherence that allowed the group, in the view of some, to transcend stakeholder obligations:

I think the faculty groups initially might have come in with an agenda but certainly it charged to protect the faculty and the Academic Senate. I think there

was that conversation from the initial things that we were hearing from them.

Ultimately, as we get down further into your questions you'll find that that all melted away. At one point, we really did become a pretty cohesive group.

Asked how the dynamics of the group might be described to the general public or those outside the task force, one member responded this way:

I would say to them that there was a group of strangers that came together who really didn't really know each other, didn't know each other's background, and may not have necessarily trusted each other initially, but coalesced at the end to put together these recommendations that everybody signed off on and believed in and that collective wisdom from people from the faculty, from the administration, from the outside community, that collective wisdom and came up with these recommendations that everybody should embrace.

The influence of experiential knowledge on the task force discussions and recommendations. Much of the discussion of the task force appears to have had its basis in previous knowledge and practical experience with California community rather than that which was revealed through the presentation oriented process designed by the task force architects to expose members to educational research and theory. This approach would seem inconsistent with traditional academic methodology in the lecture-based and research oriented approach was designed to establish a shared body of knowledge and perspective. Despite the very conscious design of this foundation, one member noted, "Some of the people on this Task Force, in fact, I'd say most of the people on the Task Force did not have what I would consider an academic approach."

This applied both to the problem of student success and to the ultimate recommendations crafted by the task force. As one member recalled:

I think some of the members walked in with a fairly good sense of the problem they were trying to solve, which is a lot of students show up at community colleges, the numbers dwindle substantially as to who gets out and who sort of accomplishes their educational goals and what those goals look like and how successful we are at transfer or AA degree completion or a sub-associate's completion.

Consistently, those interviewed referred to experience both their own and the experience of others:

So there were 3 or 4 of us, 5 of us perhaps out of 20 that had a lot of deep, long-term history going into the task force. That said, I would never want to claim that just because you've got that history and that depth of knowledge that you're going to make any difference at all. I mean you could come up completely short and not do squat.

In some cases, this experience took the form of previous policy formation, but a fair amount of discussion also focused on the experience gained by practitioners:

[Task force members] certainly brought in their own anecdotal experiences. So for faculty that had worked with students – for student services officer, she worked with students. For CBOs that had worked with a lot of people, they would say, ‘On my campus or in my district or in my classroom, this is what happened, or this is what I see.’ So you had a fair amount of anecdotes.

In the discussions of the task force it was generally perceived by those interviewed that the members who commanded the most respect were those with the most years in the system as it has been defined for this study. Chancellor Scott's years in the community college system as well as the legislature made him an ideal choice to lead the task force from this perspective. As has been noted, the community college CEOs were also very influential and were also those with the greatest experience outside of Chancellor Scott.

Those interviewed referenced the ability of this group to mediate and to intervene in situations where there was disagreement and conflict. For instance, regarding the issue of basic skills, the CEOs played an important role in helping the group to reach consensus. In this case, a proposal was put forward with which the faculty disagreed strenuously. Despite this disagreement the majority of the task force voted to include the proposal in the overall recommendations. It was intervention of the CEOs, and in particular, Brice Harris, that stopped the recommendation from moving forward.

The CEOs were also unified in their opposition to performance based funding, and it was the impression of some members that the unified position of that group ensured that there would be no recommendation in support of performance based funding:

We didn't have – it was a pretty sure thing that wasn't going to happen because Brice [Harris] and Constance [Carroll] and Ben [Duran] were clear. They were not going to allow this to happen. They could sit down with Jack any day of the week and say, "Jack, this is a loser. We're not doing this." It didn't matter what everyone else thought although obviously we talked it all out.

Generally, members had a favorable impression of the CEOs:

Well, there were three Chief Executive Officers as well and they were tough.

Once again, you got Brice there at the cusp and Carroll and then Duran was the third and they were great representatives.

The influence of faculty members of the task force. It is also the case that faculty were perceived by those interviewed as having substantial influence. As one task force member noted:

The key stakeholders there were essentially on one hand the CEOs, on the other hand the academic senate and then on the third hand there were a few other players, the CIOs perhaps, that aligned very carefully on some of these questions.

Another task force member indicated “I think the CEOs who were on the committee were top notch people and who absolutely understood what was going on and were very helpful in a lot of the discussions.” This indicates that the input of the CEOs was not perceived simply in terms of power but also in terms of their ability to contribute substantially to the discussions.

Task force staff. Another influential group was made up of those who worked with the task force but who were not members. These included staff from the California Community College Chancellor’s office, including Eric Skinner, Barry Russell, Linda Michalowski, and perhaps most important, Amy Supinger, who was recruited by Chancellor Scott to be the Executive Director of the task force. Members have cited the degree to which their efforts facilitated the work of the task force, but also the varying levels of influence and effectiveness of those efforts:

I have to say that the non-task force members were also very influential. They helped to shape the agendas for the discussion. They helped to shape the ideas. Some of these ideas really are coming from them, not from us.

But on that score that's the way these things work. It's not as if the staff people are there passively waiting to catch the ideas as they come out of our heads. It's not the way it works. I almost felt that in the case of student services that they had mapped out a whole bunch of things that they had wanted long before the task force began to meet and were able to move that agenda forward successfully.

By contrast, there seems to be some doubt in terms of the effectiveness of non-task force members in recommendations associated with classroom methodology and practice. It is clear that the task force recommendations lack substance in terms of recommendations that address classroom practice and methodology as noted in the November Public Agenda, and at least one member attributed this to a lack of effectiveness on the part of non-task force members:

In the case of Barry [Russell] and the Academic Affairs stuff, as you can see from the recommendations they're not as sharp, they're not as profound, they're not as important in terms of their results although, who knows. We're now seeing the first signs that the professional development funds are about to circulate down. There is this additional \$50 million for some reform of basic skills, which aligns well with the Student Success Task Force Recommendations.

While some lack of clarity persists where these issues are concerned, what the data reveal is the level of support and influence that came from outside the task force, and the degree

to which its work and recommendations were shaped by the staff, the authors of SB 1143, and members of the chancellor's office that supported its efforts.

The relative value of member contributions. Some members of the task force, who were practitioners, also questioned the value of contributions from external members based on their direct experience with the community college system as they perceived it (this being distinct from the system as it has been defined for this study). In the view of one task force member:

Chris Cabaldan, for example, the mayor of West Sacramento at one point worked in our chancellor's office, I understand. So Chris and I had our disagreements on things; he definitely had a different perspective but he was better informed, for example, than the guy from the L.A. Chamber of Commerce, who really understood absolutely nothing about the way that our campuses worked.

This perceived lack of knowledge extended even to ideas that had merit from a theoretical perspective:

Although, the meetings were always pretty congenial but if anything that was usually the division was the system versus the external partners who would come up with great ideas that they really didn't understand how they would actually play out once they got to the campus.

Finally, it must also be noted that among the stakeholder groups on the task force there seems to have been those that had limited influence on the discussions and the outcomes. As indicated by one task force member:

The task force itself certainly did have certain people that were strongly felt and there were others that were not as strongly felt, in my opinion, that did not have

that kind of level of influence and power. I mean to be quite direct with you ... I would include the classified staff in that and I would include the students in that. That would eliminate four of those folks already from the 20. Within some of the others like the trustees, they played a focused role in certain areas, not all.

Tensions within the group. While all of the subjects interviewed acknowledged the integrity of the members' intent and the ultimate coalescence of the group, all also acknowledged that tensions and conflict were a part of the process. At least some of this tension, in the view of taskforce members was the result of coalitions that developed within the group. As one task force member noted:

There were factions, and there was a lot of tension, a lot of my compatriots got very frustrated with the faculty union representative and with some of the other faculty who just seemed really to be protecting faculty roles and not being open to thinking about what this means for students. There was always the resistance that some of the faculty groups would have to any kind of discussion of accountability and metrics.

Tensions, though, seem to have been periodic rather than constant. They seem to have arisen in relation to issues that were particularly contentious, such as basic skills instruction or performance-based funding, or at crucial times in terms of the resolutions. Generally, members agreed that as the group became more familiar with one another and trust grew, there was an increasing sense of cohesion. As one member recalled:

So I think as time got on we rose to the occasion. We were increasingly respectful, increasingly positive with each other. We did a lot of group sessions. We had a few – more than a few, perhaps – very tense moments. And agreed to

disagree. A couple were pretty difficult. But we learned how to recover and then move on and develop a common agenda. So it was a pretty resilient group, I would say.

This cohesiveness was tested during the final months of the task force's work together, which were perhaps the most difficult and possibly the most productive period for the task force, during which the group made decisions regarding the final recommendations. It is clear that the task force was not of a single mind where the recommendations were concerned but that consensus was reached in the end:

... there was a point there near the end where there were some pretty dramatic differences of opinion on some of those subjects. In fact, there even started to be some voting. There were some of us who thought once you go down that road then you end up with recommendations which some people liked and other people didn't and some that succeeded simply because they got outvoted. There were several of us who believed that was not a formula for a successful outcome. We simply had to stay with it, working on the recommendations and modifying them until we could say we believe as a group these are the best recommendations we can come up with. If the faculty was doing this all by themselves maybe some of them would be different or if the chief executive officers were creating these maybe they'd be different. But we agreed that there is a consensus among those of us who participated that this is a set of recommendations we could support. As a result of that, I would argue you've seen a cultural shift up and down the state.

Generally, though, members felt that relations among the task force members were not hostile, even as discussions grew tense and disagreements arose:

There was no open hostility, and even when we got to the end where the task force actually voted on recommendations, and it became apparent to people that the recommendations were going to go forward, and they may not have wanted them to, even then that was certainly tense but not hostile.

There seems even to have been a sense of euphoria as the task force reached the conclusion of its work:

... cutting to the bottom line, it was amazing. I mean we just said when we were done, it was just like, "Oh my God." ... it came together with a pretty powerful set of 22 recommendations that nobody was totally happy with, but that's kind of how it works. It was really what I might call a come-from-behind victory. We were all kind of pretty proud of our collective selves when it was done.

Defining Student Success

While the dynamics of the group and the elements of their discussion were the significant elements that affected policy development, in terms of the recommendations of the task force there remain questions regarding the definition of success under which the taskforce operated and how this definition was established. As indicated earlier, the Student Success Task Force Final Report does establish a definition of student success, which is consistent with completion agendas (Final Report, 2012, p.6). However, this definition is not always consistent with the perceptions of individual task force members, and gives rise to questions described earlier regarding the degree of control the final authors of the report had over certain elements. Overall, there seem to be a number of inconsistencies with regard to definitions of student success and the discussions of the task force about this issue. The March 2011 agenda for the task force meeting indicates

that the group was to establish a working definition of student success that was derived from February brainstorming sessions (Student Success Initiative, 2016). These attempts to create a universal definition of student success during early meetings were, at least in the view of one task force member unsuccessful:

Well, I will start with saying one of the things that the task force did in the early first two or three meetings was try to come up with a definition of what we meant by student success. We finally gave up.

This difficulty was recognized by others who attributed it to a number of factors:

And so I think that I sort of walked in feeling like I knew the student success problem ... but don't feel we spent enough time really defining that problem because in the end we kind of ended up having to rehash some of those underlying assumptions as members would be like, "Well, I don't understand. We don't really have a problem graduating students. ... the students that we don't graduate or move on to four years or don't pick up a credential or an associate's degree because they don't want to."

Another indicated that discussions became mired in ever widening fields of abstraction:

We had one really frustrating discussion, now that I'm remembering it, on what is the definition of success? I think that was a pretty tense thing. Really, I mean, I think it was not a very productive meeting. We spent hours just talking about what is the definition of success? So you had the kind of more quote "hard-nosed" analytical types ... saying, "We think success is completing something such that you either go on to more education or get a credential of some kind of value."

The other factions were saying, "Success is just whatever." It would really seem to some of us like success is just whatever you want to define as success. If you walk into a classroom or the college and you walk away, but you were there for a day, at least it's more successful than you were the day before when you were afraid to set foot on a campus, and those kinds of things. Nothing that really helped us do anything with the task force report.

There was also the perception on the part of some that some members of the group, particularly the faculty, did not believe that there was any real problem where student success was concerned:

We did have some folks that were like, "I don't see a problem." I do feel like we walked in with an assumption that everyone in that room shared the same understanding of the problem. And I think that was not the case.

Discussion of this kind was perceived as having a negative effect on the ability of the group to reach meaningful conclusions:

And so people are kind of talking about all these solutions, but at the same time, if you have an entire faction of your group saying, "Okay, yeah. Those solutions all sound great. But we still don't think there's a problem." It's like you're constantly moving up and down this policy elevation spectrum. So, you're kind of having to bounce around a lot in the conversation, which made it feel scattered and very difficult to kind of grab onto ... conversations then became very theoretical. And they became very theoretical for the people who didn't quite believe there was a problem. So you realized that people were sometimes saying the same things or

the words would be the same, but really they were talking past each other because they were coming from different places.

It is clear that most of the discussion focused on student goals, as was expressed by one member:

So I think if we're talking about trying to get students to be able to perform more effectively, to serve our students so that they can reach their goals, whatever those goals may be ... which is, I guess how I, in a large part, would define student success.

However, another member defined success as much more the result and responsibility of institutional practice:

My definition of student success would be the development of practices, culture, and attitude that would accept the fact that all students have the right to succeed.

The human resources, the financial resources, and institutional resources that need to be brought to the table to make that happen should in fact happen. That, to me, is student success.

Another described a range of possible ways in which success might be realized:

I think there's a range of success indicators that range from the plain vanilla ones that we're all familiar with, course success, program success, AA transfer certificates, et cetera. I think that's one level of success. Clearly, there's a second frontier that's been opened up by Peter Barr and Kathy Booths with the skills builder group within the community colleges: [students] that come in for two or three courses and leave. The metric for that now seems to be salary increases.

That seems to now become something that actually can be recorded and reported on. So that's the second.

I think the third one is that area that is now increasingly active amongst faculty and staff in the community colleges not only here but elsewhere but certainly here and that's the non-cognitive variables. The non-cognitive variables, I think, are a very important sign of success. So is it conceivable that you could have a success student who has not "achieved" any of the plain vanilla [measures] nor raised his or her salary. Well maybe there is an argument there that there is a certain level of success that can be achieved in community colleges through these non-cognitive variables: the increase in hope, the increase in grit, the increase in resilience that ultimately stays with you and is an extraordinary part of your success trajectory as an adult. Does that happen without other metrics? Probably not but I would characterize it at this point as the third component of student success.

It is interesting to note that, while all of the metrics identified by this task force member have become essential elements of the discussion of student success, none were explicitly called out by the Task Force Final Report.

Further there were definitions that aligned with the work of Baum, Ma, and Payea (2013) in terms of success as that which is defined by broader outcomes:

[Student success] has a myriad of aspects. The top line is a completion of degrees and certificates, completion of transfer, course completion, success in basic skills, and CTE programming. Those are the top line measurements retention. But at a broader level ultimately increased employment and wage gains, improved

participation in the fabric of the community demonstrated by voting and volunteerism, and all those, parenting all those kinds of ... so, it has layers like an onion, ways that you demonstrate student success.

It was also clear that the group felt that student success was in no way a new topic of discussion but something that those in the community college system had always held as a primary concern. As one member indicated:

The irony of a student success initiative is it implies that that's not what we have all been about as long as we've been in the profession. All of us show up in these jobs every day trying to help more and more students get into these colleges and trying to help more and more of them get out successfully. So, I think everybody around that table had a frame of reference on a lot of these topics that was built on years of personal experience.

In the end, though, it is clear that all of these definitions as well as the definitions brought forth by the experts that addressed the committee, share the same basis. As one member of the task force expressed:

The task force recommendations were much more designed to impact the things that our accountability system measures like the traditional graduation rates, transfer rates, course completion rates, and so on. So, that's really where the rubber meets the road for the task force work. But those of us who show up every day in these institutions trying to help students really do have a broader view of what a successful student is than just how many degrees they have.

The Student Success Task Force Final Report does articulate a definition of student success, which is defined as completing a degree or certificate or transferring to a

university (Final Report, 2012, p. 6). While this is consistent overall with much of the data collected from subjects, it is also apparent that many of the task force members and others had a much more nuanced view of success, which may have contributed to the frustration that has been expressed regarding the task force discussions of student success.

Interestingly, members of the task force, who were interviewed, universally indicated that their own definition of student success did not change as a result of the research and theory that was introduced in the initial task force meetings or as a result of the discussions in which the task force engaged.

Definition of Success Relating to Implementation

The definition of student success established by the Task Force Final Report (2012) did inform the implementation of goals that followed the release of the report. By the account of one task force member, 21 of the 22 recommendations of the task force have been implemented, though this study has only been able to identify 17 instances of implementation. This implementation has occurred on a number of levels from legislation in the form of SB 1456, The Student Success Act of 2012, which implemented 6 of the task force recommendations dealing with outreach and counseling, Board of Governors Fee Waiver Conditions, and the Common Assessment Initiative which was authorized by AB 743. Other forms of implementation have occurred as policy changes or initiatives, such as the competitive grants now associated with the Basic Skills Initiative. These varied avenues for implementation, as with other elements of the broader construction of the task force were very intentional. As one subject associated with the task force indicated:

... after the Taskforce finished, I said to Jack, "How do we get this done?" And he said, "Well, we need a bill." Amy helped us figure that out. We scored all the recommendations and figured out which ones needed legislation, which ones just needed the BOG action, which ones didn't need anything formal but they just needed good strategies.

Much of this implementation is viewed positively by the members of the task force. As one member indicated:

When I think about that implementation, even a partial implementation of the recommendations and an embracing of the recommendations by a college district or campus is far better than anything that we've had to this point and certainly a shift to where that becomes the motivator for the president or the staff or the executive administration, the faculty and everybody.

However, there are those whose view is less positive:

Well I think the impression I have at this juncture is that they're absorbing a huge amount of time at the local level, that money is being spent willy-nilly and not necessarily well and that my expectation is that the payoff on this is going to be very limited.

There were also concerns that that the desire to implement recommendations might obscure the larger conversation regarding an ongoing need to focus on success:

I think I would say that it's important to recognize that ... we need to think of this as a cultural change for our colleges, our system, and our state and not a to-do list that we check off and we move on to the next thing. That this is a body of work that needs to continue, that changes in practice need to become institutionalized.

The success of our students needs to become a part of our culture in a way that resonates down to how people do their jobs and how we incentivize student behavior, how we as professionals carry out our work on a daily basis. And my fear is that at the state level you've got this set of 22 recommendations, and if you've seen the matrix that the chancellor's office has of these recommendations, they sort of have check marks in some columns. Like, 'Okay, done. Done. Done.'

Most important elements of implementation. A number of task force members were in agreement that the most important elements of implementation were the Common Assessment Initiative identified in recommendation 2.1 of the Task Force Final Report (2012, p. 23), the Student Success Scorecard, identified in recommendation 7.3 of the Task Force Final Report (2012, p. 59) and the package of recommendations that were included in the Student Success and Support Program (2014), which included recommendation 2.5 (Final Report, 2012, p. 28), recommendation 3.1 (Final Report, 2012, p. 33), and recommendation 3.2 (Final Report, 2012, p. 35).

With regard to the Common Assessment Initiative, one task force member indicated:

I think the common assessment could be a huge benefit to the system especially as a real diagnostic tool because we spent a lot of time talking about basic skills. The system has, for years, spent a lot of time talking about basic skills and curricular revision and such. If we actually have a diagnostic assessment that could tell us what students needed to work on, the implications of that for helping students and for curriculum revision are huge.

Another member identified the student services package included in the Student Success and Support Program (2014):

The whole group of recommendations of intrusive student services, any of those recommendations pulled together collectively should be able to literally provide intensive, intruded into students' daily lives, to monitor them, to see where they are, to make sure that they're on task, to make sure they're completing x number of units the first semester. We know that when we start losing students, if they start dropping classes, the chances of them coming back the second semester are low and certainly the third semester. So, that whole cluster of recommendations around intrusive student services, to me, is really the heart of the Task Force.

Ultimately many agreed that it was the totality of recommendations that were most important. As one member indicated:

I don't think you can pick one or the other. It was really interesting. Three-fourths of the way through it became evident to a lot of us that the recommendations couldn't be looked at individually. They really were a body of work.

In the end, as was noted in the discussion of group dynamics, it was the perception of a number of those interviewed that the task force stood behind the recommendations as a whole:

And we asked everybody in the group at the very end was asked to say whether they could be fully committed to this so we didn't walk out of the room and say, "Hey, this taskforce wasn't so good. There's a bunch of things they didn't do that they should have done," and right away just weaken the credibility of the whole.

And everybody to a person said we will stand by this set of recommendations without condition. And we did.

Public Response

While the task force was a very public process, members and others interviewed generally agreed that there was very little public awareness of the work of the taskforce or its recommendations. There was, however, an effort on the part of the architects of the task force to ensure that there was an opportunity for public contribution. This took the form of “town hall” meetings held in Northern, Central, and Southern California.

Members of the task force explained the mission of the task force, provided an overview of the recommendations, and took questions from the audience. It was clear from the questions that those who attended the town hall meetings primarily represented practitioners from community colleges and, to some extent, students (Oakland Town Hall, 2011; Fresno Town Hall, 2011; Orange County Town Hall, 2011; Los Angeles Town Hall, 2012). The exception was a large contingent of older adults advocating for community education who attended the town hall held in Orange County (Orange County Town Hall, 2011). Additionally, the taskforce set up an online forum for commentary, which was discussed at a number of meetings. This database of commentary is referenced in a number of the task force agendas, but appears to no longer be available to the public.

Public commentary from practitioners who attended the town halls addressed a number of recommendations from the draft published by the task force (Refocusing California Community Colleges, 2011), including concerns about the elimination of ESL opportunities for students and the consolidation of categorical programs into block grants

(Oakland Town Hall, 2011; Fresno Town Hall, 2011; Orange County Town Hall, 2011; Los Angeles Town Hall, 2012).

It is notable that the task force responded directly to concerns about the consolidation of block grants, revising recommendation 8.1 of the draft from a consolidation of select categorical programs (Refocusing California Community Colleges, 2011, p.63) to encouraging categorical program streamlining and cooperation (Final Report, 2012, p.65). This decision to change is noted by Amy Supinger, Executive Director of the Student Success Task Force, at the Oakland Town Hall (2011). Public comments as well as those from stakeholder groups and online commentary were also considered by the taskforce at their meetings.

Summary

The qualitative nature of the study is necessarily reliant on the perceptions of the subjects interviewed for the study as well as an interpretive review of the primary documents created by the task force and a review of the video records of town hall meetings. However, the overall direction and conclusions indicated by the data are consistent.

The origins of the task force in terms of the failure of the original SB 1143 and the negotiations with Chancellor Scott laid a significant foundation upon which Chancellor Scott was able to build the task force. Clearly his influence in selecting and vetting every member of the task force had the most significant influence over what was to come. His conscious selection of representatives from every interest group represented in the community college educational system as defined by this study afforded a diversity

of viewpoints; however it is also clear that Chancellor Scott was careful to select those with a certain depth of experience.

Stakeholder obligation was important in the discussions of the task force. Faculty, administrative, and outside representatives seem to have had the most influence in terms of the direction of discussions; however, the dynamics of the group were more complex than the simple sum of that triumvirate. An overarching consideration is the integrity of intent cited by all those interviewed for the study that seems to have mitigated, in the final analysis, the conclusions of individuals and the group.

Also significant is the degree to which the intentional structure of meetings in terms of establishing a foundation for discussion through expert presentations and recommended seems not to have significantly influenced the thinking of individuals or the overall recommendations. In fact, in many cases it seems to have been perceived as an impediment to the real purpose of the task force, which was perceived as the actual discussion of policy.

The shift to a discussion between task force members seems to have been largely equated with a shift toward substance and progress. It is also clear that practical knowledge of community college education carried the most weight within those discussions. Ultimately, though, despite disagreement and tension, members of the task force agreed, at least at the time of the meetings, to support the recommendations as a whole.

More difficult was the discussion of student success. While the Student Success Task Force Final Report (2012) establishes a definition of student success that is not inconsistent with any of the data gathered, it is also less nuanced. None of those

interviewed for the study ultimately defined success in exactly the same terms as the final report. All of the definitions were more complex and reflected different perspectives and experiential backgrounds.

Also important were perspectives regarding the most important recommendations and the implementation of those recommendations. Many of those interviewed for the study held to the conclusion that the recommendations should not be viewed separately, that their importance and influence should be viewed as a whole. There were, however, those who viewed the common assessment as being potentially important to students in that it may provide a common starting point for students and facilitate transfer between colleges. Others viewed the Student Success Scorecard as an important step in promoting transparency and self-assessment. Interestingly, those who viewed this as important stressed that the purpose of the instrument was not to compare one college to another, but to facilitate reflection and discussion within the college and from the community.

Discussion from the community is also an interesting aspect of the data. While the task force made every effort to gather feedback from the system as it has been defined for this study, it was primarily community college practitioners and students that participated in discussions, and the feedback was narrowly targeted toward specific initiatives. Discussions did not focus on definitions of student success, stakeholder obligations, or classroom theory and methodology. Neither did the public commentary focus on the lack of recommendations regarding classroom practice.

Overall, the data demonstrate that the task force was constructed and its discussions were structured in what might be considered an optimal environment for policy development. The process was given sufficient time, members of every

stakeholder group in the system participated directly in the task force, draft recommendations were made available for public scrutiny and commentary; changes were made to recommendations based on this commentary; and there was broad implementation of the recommendations. Yet questions persist about the degree to which the framework of research and theory provided by the architects of the task force actually influenced discussions as well as about the consequences, intended and unintended, of the implementation of recommendations.

It is clear, however, that all of those interviewed for this study believed strongly in the seriousness and sincerity of all members of the task force in terms of creating actionable recommendations that would genuinely benefit students and which would change the direction of dialogue about community college education from one of access to one of access and success.

Chapter 5 – Discussion and Conclusions

The Student Success Task Force in its formation, the structure of its discussions, and the degree to which its outcomes have been implemented, provides a rare opportunity in terms of an examination of policy formation. The intentional nature of the approach designed by the architects of the task force in terms of providing a theoretical and research-based foundation for discussions, as well as the deliberate inclusion of those who were both representatives of stakeholder groups as well as leaders within those groups, formed, from a systems perspective, a theoretically optimal environment for policy formation. As Senge (2012) indicates learning organizations are developed by everyone in the system “expressing their aspirations, building their awareness and developing their capabilities together ... people who traditionally may have been suspicious of one another ... recognize their common stake in each other’s future and the future of their community” (loc. 183).

The study revealed the degree to which this intentional structure was successful both in terms of its intent and also in spite of the intent of its architects. It has also revealed the ways in which, even with the best of intentions, recommendations and policy were structured based on traditional models of stakeholder obligation and experience-based leadership.

The study also examined the importance of opposition in terms of forming policy. It was only through the opposition of Chancellor Scott and others to performance based funding, that the task force was ever formed. This opposition, however did not take the form of obstruction but of redirection and, ultimately, collaboration, which is an important distinction. Chancellor Scott as well as members

of the Los Angeles Chamber of Commerce Education and Workforce Development division were able to move beyond an oppositional stance regarding performance based funding and restructure the bill into something that resulted in a highly collaborative and participatory environment for policy development.

Chancellor Scott's role was not simply restricted to the role of opposition. He was the primary architect of the task force and its structure. In Senge's (2012) words, he was a leader, designer, teacher, and steward. He was, by all accounts, the designer of the ship as well as its captain (Senge, 2012, loc. 5480).

The café model described by Senge (2012, loc. 5824) in which participants are given the opportunity to talk with one another in small groups in a more informal setting, was also an important aspect of the task force structure. While there is no evidence that Senge's model was consciously employed by the architects of the task force, it is apparent in the choice of having task force members arrive at the hotel where meetings were held the night before for dinner and discussion. Several task force members recalled this an opportunity for connection without the barriers of disagreement over issues. It created what Senge (2012) referred to as small intimate conversations that allowed members to connect to one another (loc. 5436).

Stakeholder obligation was very prominent in the discussions of the task force as well as in shaping their recommendations. The degree to which more contested a discussion resulted in less focused and actionable recommendations would seem to be consistent with the findings of Tandberg (2010) in that involving more interest groups results in less actionable legislation (pp. 736 – 737).

Additionally, there are insights with regard to how the conversation was

directed in terms of control as well as the ways in which the final authorship of the recommendations controlled the discussion.

Finally, it is significant to recognize the importance of the integrity of intent within the task force. There can be, to some extent, a cynical attitude on the part of some with regard to the intent and integrity of those who are involved in the policy development segments of what has been defined by this study as the system in which educational policy is developed, implemented, and consumed. There is nothing in the data collected for this study that indicates that any of the forces that influence the system had anything but the best of intentions.

Summary

Problem. The study has sought to address the questions about the ways in which educational policy is shaped and specifically the forces that influenced the creation of the task force and the process by which the task force shaped its recommendations. While the implementation of taskforce recommendations have had a significant impact on community colleges, little is known about the task force itself, its formation, interactions, definitions of student success as well as the foundations of that definition. Because the task force had a significant impact on actual policy, as opposed the general impression of study groups, which is that they produce little in the way of actual implementation, and because the work of the task force was both very intentional and very transparent, it provides a unique window into how educational policy may be more effectively developed.

By interviewing task force members and those who were closely associated with the work of the task force and the development and implementation of its

recommendations, it was possible to gain some insight into the relationship between this intentional structure and the perceptions of the individuals responsible for developing the whole represented by the task force's 22 recommendations contained in the Student Success Force Final Report (2012).

Another goal of the study was to examine the definitions of success employed by members of the task force and those identified by the Student Success Task Force Final Report. The report defines success primarily in terms of completion (Final Report, 2012, p. 6) These goals were often closely associated with measures of accountability. Comparison of these factors to the perceptions of individual task force members was important in examining the ways in which overall policy relates to the perceptions of individuals instrumental in developing that policy and the ways in which a systemic view of policy development relates to an individual view.

Interest groups that engender stakeholder obligation as defined by the literature is also an important element in policy development. Members of the task force were selected in part because they represented particular interest groups, including community college administration, community college faculty, classified staff, students, and community representatives. It is clear that, in at least some cases, the perception of individual task force members in terms of that obligation were significant in relation to the recommendations that were produced.

Finally, the study examined the degree to which formal research methodology and educational theory influenced the development of the task force recommendations. The Student Success Task Force presented a particularly interesting opportunity where this is concerned, given the intentional structure developed by its architects, which

constructed a framework that sought to provide a substantial common foundation of research and theory for task force members. A variety of experts were called on to make presentations to the task force. Among these experts were Dr. David Conley, who presented on student readiness, and Dr. Kay McClenney, who presented on strengthening student success. Additionally, resources consulted by the task force included, among others, *Completion by Design Concept Paper* (Pennington and Milliron, 2010). According to Tavares (1995), this study and access to scholarly research would have provided an ideal foundation for discussion in terms of operational research, which is seldom included in policy making (p. 409); however, the perceptions of task force members and those associated with the work of the task force are not universally supportive of this conclusion.

Purpose. The purpose of this study was to examine the formation community college educational policy in the context of perceptions and definitions of student success that directly affect educational practice, using the work of the Student Success Task Force as a case study. Particular attention was devoted to the degree to which stakeholder obligation and interest groups influenced the conclusions and recommendations of the task force as well as the degree to which established theory and research methods to which task force members were exposed influenced discussions that led to the task force recommendations.

Methods. Through interviews with task force members and an examination of the documents produced by the task force as well as documents listed as resources used by the task force, the study investigated the relationship of task force members' perceptions and definitions of success, both as individuals and members of stakeholder

groups, in relation to the recommendations of the task force as a whole. Additionally, data gathered from the task force was placed, through the review of literature, in the larger context of educational research and theory.

The goal was to create a systemic understanding of the larger relationship between perceptions that shape policy and the policy itself as well as the influence of various stakeholder groups in effecting change that effects students. Specifically, it was the goal of this study to help clarify the discussion of the way in which student success is perceived and its relationship to the ways in which individuals and stakeholder groups come together to shape educational policy in California's community colleges.

Research questions.

- What factors most significantly influence the formation of community college educational policy related to student success?
- How was student success defined by the Student Success Task Force, and how did this perception of success shape the formation of policy that resulted in the Student Success and Support Program?
 - In what way were definitions and perceptions of the task force informed by educational research and theory?
 - To what degree did the task force employ formal research methodology in the formation of their recommendations?

Findings

Dynamics of policy making. Despite the intentional structure of the Student Success Task Force, the dynamics of policy making seem not to have been significantly affected by the inclusion of presentations and readings that were designed

to form a foundation of research and theory regarding definitions of student success and effective practice in terms of increasing that success. Members interviewed universally indicated that their own definitions and perceptions of student success did not fundamentally change based on the research and theory presented or as a result of participation in the discussions of the task force. Members of the task force did, however indicate that the research and theory offered by presenters as well as that contained in the required readings was referenced into discussion by members to support arguments about the topics discussed; however, there is no indication that these references did more than support existing positions.

Leadership. It was, however, clear that leadership played an essential role in shaping the task force itself as well as the discussions and conclusions of the task force. The most significant influence was that of Chancellor Jack Scott, who was the architect of the task force. He recruited or vetted all of its members, thus having the largest influence in shaping the dynamics of the group. It is clear as well from the data that he was active in directing the discussions of the task force both as a member, of the task force and through staff members reporting to him, who created the agendas for task force meetings as well as the Student Success Task Force Final Report. Moreover, the leadership of the CEOs was significant in shaping discussions and recommendations. It is clear from the data that they were instrumental in resolving conflict and moving the group forward in terms of mutual agreement.

Stakeholder obligation. Stakeholder obligation clearly played a significant role on a number of levels. All of the members included in the data collection indicated that they had some obligation to the stakeholder groups they represented. In some ways

that obligation manifested in the leadership described earlier and in the fact that these leaders were largely unified in terms of the position of their groups. This was also true of the faculty representatives, especially those from the Senate, who met regularly to discuss their agenda and position, as well as, to a lesser extent, student services representatives and community leaders.

One of the most interesting aspects of this stakeholder obligation was what was perceived by some as a degree of control exercised by groups in terms of deflecting discussion away from certain topics, such as basic skills or classroom practice, as a way of preventing recommendations from affecting those topics.

Additionally, the control of authorship was cited by a number of subjects as being important in terms of synthesizing the the collective perceptions into the final recommendations and definitions of student success contained in the the Student Success Task Force Final Report (2012). While members did not question the definition of student success contained in the final report, their own definitions were frequently more nuanced.

The coalescence of the group was a significant factor in shaping the overall recommendations. While members expressed frustration regarding the initial meetings of the task force that were devoted to presentations, these meetings as well as the “Café Model” (Senge, 2012, loc. 5436) that allowed members to gather in a more informal setting, providing the opportunity for task force members to become acquainted on a personal level and to engage in discussions that provided opportunity for common ground. This initial period of adjustment and norming has been described by some task force members with experience in policy development as part of the normal process of

group development, and it is probable that, while the initial meetings were perceived by some members as unproductive, they provided an opportunity for the group to coalesce. In any case, it is clear from the data that, by November 2011, the group had developed a unified position regarding the 22 recommendations contained in the Student Success Task Force Final Report (2012).

Implementation. The task force was unique in terms of the degree to which its recommendations were implemented. Few policy initiatives have had the kind of reach that the task force recommendations have had. To begin with the task force, by virtue of its formation by Chancellor Scott, was instrumental in shifting the discussion from performance-based funding to one of student success. It has also been asserted by California Community College Chancellor Brice Harris that 21 of the 22 Student Success Task Force recommendations have been implemented.

Members interviewed generally expressed a positive reaction to the implementation efforts. The recommendations as a whole were cited as the most positive results of the task force. Specifically, members indicated that they felt the Common Assessment Initiative and the Student Success Scorecard were the most significant individual results of the implementation of task force recommendations.

Perhaps most interesting, though, in terms of the recommendations and their implementation is the perception that the weakest recommendations were those that were the most contentious.

Discussion

The intentional foundation of the task force discussions did not significantly influence the formation of recommendations. Despite the intentional

structure of the Student Success Task Force and its discussions, the policy recommendations seem not to have been significantly influenced by the inclusion of presentations and readings that were designed to form a foundation of research and theory regarding definitions of student success and effective practice in terms of increasing that success.

The initial meetings of the Student Success Task Force were devoted to an exploration of the issues associated with student success. The discussion, according to the Student Success Task Force Final Report (2012) was informed by experts including Dr Kay McClenney, Dr. David Conley, Dr. Vince Tinto, and Dr. Alicia Dowd (p.7). It should be noted that the task force agendas and lists of readings include only, from this list, Dr. McClenney and Dr. Conley. These discussions focused on student preparation, engagement, progress, and success, providing theory and data to inform and support task force members perceptions of every stage of a student's progress through the community college system. The views of those identified as experts are consistent with the definitions of success, progress, and preparation presented in the Student Success Task Force Final Report (2012); however, as noted in the literature review *The Heart of Student Success* (2010) differs from other resources in that its focus is on classroom practice and learning support (p. 9). The document also notes that, "Genuine progress depends on making sure that degree completion is a proxy for real learning — for developing thinking and reasoning abilities, content knowledge, and the high-level skills needed for 21st center jobs and citizenship. (2010, p. 3)

However, the data indicate that task force members believed that exposure to these resources did not significantly affect their perceptions regarding influences on

student success or that they significantly influenced subsequent discussions leading to the task force recommendations. Members of the task force who were interviewed, however, did indicate that they felt others may have been influenced by exposure to the research and theory, and that these resources were referenced as support for arguments that arose during discussions of issues. It is notable, though, that not one member interviewed would commit to anything more than having “gained a deeper understanding of the issues,” which still did not fundamentally change or influence the member’s definition of success indicates that, at least in this instance, this sort of formal framework had little effect on the outcome of the policy recommendations.

The resources established by the architects did have a significant influence on the definitions of success established by the Student Success Task Force Final Report (2012). It is, however, accurate to say that the policy initiatives referenced earlier, such as Completion by Design (Pennington & Millron, 2010) and Achieving the Dream (Baldwin et al. 2011) had a significant influence on the definition of success established by the Student Success Task Force Final Report (2012). The task force defines success largely in terms of completion (Final Report, 2012, p.6) which is consistent with much of the literature and research to which the group was exposed. As indicated earlier, some of the task force members interviewed indicated that the conclusions and recommendations of the group, especially with regard to definitions of student success, specifically in relation to completion, might have been different had task force members rather than staff been responsible for the actual writing of the final report.

The issue of student success provides an excellent example because the task

force members views were very nuanced and while consistent in terms of their conclusions that success could be equated with the achievement of a student's goals, what that achievement looked like and how it might be measured were interpreted differently by different members.

This indicates clearly that there is a great deal of power of authorship in terms of the published conclusions contained in the Student Success Task Force Final Report (2012). While no member of the task force has indicated that they felt the final report misrepresented the views of the task force, they did indicate that the report framed issues in a way that might have been different if they had actually written the final report.

The influences regarding task force formation and leadership may have been the most significant factor in determining the direction of the task force. The leadership of Chancellor Scott appears to have had more influence over the task force than any other single factor. While the individual members shaped the task force recommendations, he shaped the task force. And he guided it as well as both a member and an advocate for implementation of its recommendations.

As was indicated earlier, when the authors of the original SB 1143 proposing performance-based funding for California's community colleges were unable to get sufficient votes for the bill to pass out of the senate, they approached Chancellor Scott to see if a compromise could be reached. He proposed what amounted to a study bill authorizing the task force, and the others agreed with his assurance that the task force would produce actionable recommendations.

Chancellor Scott's combination of academic, administrative, legislative, and

regulatory experience made him uniquely qualified to lead this effort and to see that it produced the actionable recommendations he promised and to see that those recommendations had a fair chance of implementation.

Chancellor Scott's qualifications and experience also allowed him to lead a group who were also, for the most part, experienced leaders in their own right. These leaders included experienced and influential CEOs from the California Community Colleges, including Dr. Constance Carroll, Chancellor of the San Diego Community College District, Dr. Ben Duran, President of Merced College, and Dr. Brice Harris, then President of the Los Rios Community College District, who would go on to be Chancellor of the California community college system.

Faculty leaders included Dr. Jane Patton, Past President of the California Community College Academic Senate, and David Morse, who would go on to become President of the California Community College Academic Senate. Other representatives included student leaders from the Student Senate for California Community Colleges, leaders with student services backgrounds such as Dr. Yasmin Delahoussaye, trustees, and community leaders. With such a diverse group and with so many agendas, which were often at odds with one another, the quality of Dr. Scott's leadership cannot be underestimated. As one member of the taskforce indicated, "Jack Scott has a very nice manner of keeping warring factions at bay." The same member went on to describe Chancellor Scott's presence:

What would happen would be there would be often very heated discussions. Then Chancellor Scott would say in this quiet manner he has with his Texas drawl, the way I see it is x, y, and z, summarizing it and synthesizing it. Usually everyone

would agree with it, not always, but usually.

By all accounts it was this leadership that made the task force successful in terms of its discussions and ability to reach consensus as it was, and one of the important factors in moving the agenda of the task force forward in terms of legislative and policy decisions.

Positional leadership and experience were factors that carried significant weight. Within the task force, positional authority seems clearly to have held sway, in terms of influencing and guiding discussions. Other than Chancellor Scott, CEOs and the CIOs, by the accounts of those interviewed had the most influence. As has been noted, members clearly held the impression that it was the influence of Dr. Scott and the community college CEOs that prevented any movement on performance based funding, and it was also this group that led the group through some difficult and contentious discussions, including those related to basic skills and accelerated learning.

It also seems clear that there were groups that had significantly less influence, and that these groups mirror, to some extent, the balance of power within the community college system as it has been defined for this study. Generally, those identified in terms of positional authority are those logically and necessarily with the most influence. However, this also means that there are those from within the community of practice that have less influence. These groups include students, whose voices were seldom referenced in the data, and classified staff, who were represented by a single member on the task force. As one task force member noted:

The task force itself certainly did have certain people that were strongly felt and there were others that were not as strongly felt, in my opinion, that did not have

that kind of level of influence and power. I mean to be quite direct with you I mean I would include the classified staff in that and I would include the students in that. That would eliminate four of those folks already from the 20. Within some of the others like the trustees, they played a focused role in certain areas, not all. It can be argued, however, based on the data, that positional authority alone was not the measure of influence where the task force was concerned. It was also the degree of experience and successful leadership that was associated with that positional leadership. Chancellor Scott held the highest position in terms of the members of the task force; however, he also had the broadest experience both in terms of community college leadership and the legislature. The CEOs and CIOs also brought a great deal of experience and knowledge of the community college system. While the outside members brought a great deal of experience as did students, staff, and others, this experience did not have direct application in terms of college administration or the development of policy, and so seems to have lacked the weight of those with experience in these areas.

Stakeholder obligation was the source of conflict as well as issues relating to the control of discussions and recommendations.

Community college administrators vs. faculty. As discussed earlier, there were those who felt that the primary conflicts within the group essentially emanated from established positions relating to stakeholder groups. Some task force members cited one source of conflict as being that between the community college administrators who served on the task force and the members of the task force that came from the faculty, with the assertion being that faculty erected barriers in order to protect faculty interests,

including autonomy and academic freedom in relation to the design of their courses.

These conflicts seem to have been primarily over issues relating to basic skills, especially the issue of acceleration and repeatability of classes.

Conflicts involving practitioners and community members. More significant, though, were the conflicts that arose from differences between those within the community college administrative system and those who came from the system relating to policy development that has been defined for the purposes of this study. One task force member noted:

The biggest division and I've always found this very interesting; it was kind of a part of my learning experience there... the greatest division was not faculty and administration. Easily, the most visible division was people within the system versus the members outside of the system.

As has been noted, the initial legislation promoting performance based funding came from outside the community college leadership circle, and the formation of the task force was, substantially, a reaction against this initiative. So it is legitimate to say that this inside/outside division was real, and that, to some extent, it was the catalyst for the formation of the task force.

Some of those who came to the task force from the community were perceived as committed to a performance based funding agenda, and task force clearly devoted substantial time to the discussion of the topic. It was clear, however, that Chancellor Scott as well as the community college leaders he brought to the table were opposed to this concept, and that there was an awareness on the part of the task force members as a whole that this leadership element had the ability to block implementation of

performance based funding entirely, just as they had in its initial bid before the Senate.

Community members, however, were committed to compelling practitioners, whom they defined as those from within the community college system, to recognize and be accountable to the larger system of educators, students, staff, and community members, as it has been described for the purposes of this study. It was the influence of this group that appears to have led to such outcomes as the Student Success Scorecard, which California community colleges are required to display on their websites, and which makes public a set of metrics describing success and diversity. Participants indicated that the Scorecard Initiative was a result of discussions that followed presentations by community college leaders from Washington and Ohio on performance based funding initiatives that have been implemented in those states. Task force members indicated that they felt the performance-based measures described lacked substantial evidence of increasing success. One member asserted:

When we started listening to folks from [other states] that supposedly were doing outcomes based funding, what we found was that the jury was still out on it in terms of outcomes. We also found out that [performance-based funding initiatives] were relatively experimental in their states.

However, members of the task force felt that the that public awareness of student success that resulted from the implementation of performance-based measures was significant. Specifically, they felt that leaders from those states:

Emphasized that, while linking funding to outcomes helped their states bring attention to measures of success, it was the public reporting of outcome data that had the greatest effect on the planning and decisions of college leaders. (Final

Report, 2012, p. 70)

In the end, it is significant that task force members were able to find a way through their differences and to produce recommendations that, at least at the time, they all agreed on. Since the publication of the Student Success Task Force Final Report, members including Jane Patton (2011) and Richard Hansen (Towar, 2011) have distanced themselves from that agreement.

Control. The ways in which groups or individuals exerted control over the discussions of the task force and, ultimately, over its recommendations, is among the most interesting findings of the study. The agendas of particular stakeholders were at the root of this control, but it was exerted in ways that were both overt and passive. As one member indicated:

There were a number of people from the academic side of the house that had an interest in either protecting or advocating for certain kinds of changes or to maintain certain kinds of boundaries and control.

This control was overt in some instances, such as the resistance to accelerated learning noted in chapter 4. Discussions in these instances became very heated, and members were very forthright in their disagreement and in voicing their opinions regarding the direction the task force should go. All those interviewed agreed that there were more than a few tense discussions, that groups clashed, and that no one got exactly what they wanted or believed would be the best for the groups they represented. But that is to be expected in an environment of policy development.

More interesting are the ways in which control was exerted as a powerful undercurrent. This is apparent in Chancellor Scott's control over the membership of the

task force and in the clear direction the majority of these members took in relation to performance-based funding. But there were also enough supporters of that concept on the task force so that the issue was substantially addressed.

The most interesting theory with regard to this undercurrent of control is the notable absence in the taskforce recommendations that directly addresses student learning in the classroom. Part of this may be that other elements that affect student success are easier to describe and measure. The ways in which teachers shape learning experiences and the multitude of factors that influence the learning itself span entire fields of research and philosophy. So it is understandable that the task force with limited time and a mandate to produce actionable recommendations would not produce a set of comprehensive recommendations with regard to student success in terms of classroom learning. However, the degree to which this is absent is striking. One member of the task force offered this explanation:

I think it was also very intentional on the part of the faculty members in the group to steer the conversation toward student services and to be incredibly supportive of student services recommendations because they were very intentionally not about teaching and learning.

This view was corroborated by another member of the task force who indicated:

So when you look at the academic senate folks they were successfully able to maintain a certain amount of control getting into the curriculum. There's very little discussion about curriculum.

The member went on to add:

There is a larger discussion about professional development since there was a

larger consensus about that. But within that there's also a tendency to be very unclear about exactly how that's controlled. The issue of control is of paramount importance when you're in those kind of task force situations.

So, ultimately, if one accepts these assertions, leading discussion away from one area by supporting discussion in another area becomes a powerful tool of resistance and has as much influence over policy as advocacy.

More discussion led to weaker recommendations. In general, those interviewed for this study were of the opinion that the most complex subjects, where there was the greatest disagreement, were those that resulted in the weakest recommendations. The recommendation on performance based funding is one example. In that case, the task force opted not to produce any actionable recommendation, except to recommend that the Chancellor's Office "continue to monitor the implementation of outcomes based funding in other states and model how various formulas might work in California" (Final Report, 2012, p. 70).

Similarly, the task force recommendation on Basic Skills, recommendation 5, (Final Report, 2012, p.43) was generally considered by those interviewed to be a weak recommendation. However, the issue was one that was the focus of a great deal of discussion, and one that was mentioned by nearly all of those interviewed, regardless of their stance relative to the issue. One task force member observed:

There was one recommendation that had to do with funding for basic skills. In some form it ended up in there in the end, but it had to do with funding for basic skills and alternative basic skills funding and it was horrible. It was basically performance based funding for basic skills, get 'em through faster and we'll pay

you more and we tried and tried to explain what a bad idea that was, all of the ways that could be abused locally, all of the pressures that could be used to create on part-time faculty to pass students, various things. And we tried and we tried month after month and somebody liked the idea because it kept showing up every month, even after we had shot it down the previous month.

Another member asserted:

We were, literally, in back rooms duking it out and hashing it out, especially with respect to the basic skills ...

Generally, it was agreed that the issue was significant in terms of student progress, and as one member indicated.

There are a few of us in the room who are saying, 'Maybe we need to really revisit the whole notion of the pre-collegiate sequence.' Of course that went nowhere.

Clearly part of the disagreement had to do with the nature of the discussion and whether the focus was on funding or pedagogy. Of the final recommendation, one subject observed:

Yeah, that recommendation was a tricky one because ... when the group was talking about alternative delivery mechanisms for basic skills instruction we had a particular faculty member there whose only frame of reference was that of acceleration projects. So you would talk about alternative deliveries, and they were just like, "No. Acceleration is bad. We shouldn't be moving people through this fast. And it's just all about going fast." And it was like, "Well, there's more to it than that, number one. And number two, we're talking about more than just

acceleration.

Others, however believed that the discussion should focus on funding mechanisms:

Even when they were talking about basic skills and we really, really need to increase the funding of basic skills, the money is just allocated based on FTE or based on plans submitted or something. I just was not happy with the complete unwillingness to consider changing the way that resources are allocated, which are for the most part, just enrollment driven.

In the end, the recommendations regarding basic skills were very broad.

Recommendation 5.1 states that:

Community Colleges will support the development of alternatives to traditional basic skills curriculum and incentivize colleges to take to scale successful model programs for delivering basic skills instruction” (Final Report, 2012, p. 45).

And Recommendation 5.2 advises that the state should develop a comprehensive strategy for basic skills education and outlines in broad terms some of the areas in which such strategies might be addressed (Final Report, 2012, p. 46) but offers little in terms of specifics.

Even so, it should be noted that the recommendations for incentivized basic skills funding were implemented. In 2015, the Chancellor’s office provided \$60 million in funding through the Basic Skills Initiative for competitive grants related to basic skills instruction. The program was called Basic Skill and Student Outcomes Transformation Program (Corbin, 2016).

The task force ultimately was able to reach consensus on their recommendations. The task force did reach agreement on the 22 recommendations

through mutual compromise. All those interviewed agreed that no one group prevailed entirely in any area. While the concept of compromise is one which is inherent in policy development in most people's minds, what made the task force recommendations unique was the degree to which members generally support the collective decisions of the task force. In some cases, there was a degree of reluctance, but also an acknowledgement regarding the importance of participation. As one member of the task force indicated, "... it's a good example of the fact that even when you don't get what you want, it's a lot better to be at the table because it could be a lot worse if you're not there."

This consensus did not come, as has been discussed, without a degree of conflict and difficulty:

... there was a point there near the end where there were some pretty dramatic differences of opinion on some of those subjects. In fact, there even started to be some voting. There were some of us who thought once you go down that road then you end up with recommendations which some people liked and other people didn't and some that succeeded simply because they got outvoted. There were several of us who believed that was not a formula for a successful outcome. We simply had to stay with it, working on the recommendations and modifying them until we could say we believe as a group these are the best recommendations we can come up with. If the faculty was doing this all by themselves maybe some of them would be different or if the chief executive officers were creating these maybe they'd be different. But we agreed that there is a consensus among those of us who participated that this is a set of recommendations we could support. As a result of that, I would argue you've seen a cultural shift up and down the state.

In the end, many of those interviewed felt a strong sense of accomplishment. As one member noted:

... cutting to the bottom line, it was amazing. I mean we just said when we were done, it was just like, "Oh my God." I think it was in June or something where we finally had the first meeting or maybe it was meeting number five or six where we're just like, "We're getting somewhere." Then it came together with a pretty powerful set of 22 recommendations that nobody was totally happy with, but that's kind of how it works. It was really what I might call a come-from-behind victory. We were all kind of pretty proud of our collective selves when it was done. ... I think it was a pretty good demonstration that you can bring different perspectives together, and with a lot of perseverance and expert guidance, you can really reach some good resolutions. ... I mean we really did compromise and really worked hard, really tried to see each other's points of view.

In the end, as one task force member put it, "All of us signed on for a full loaf of bread."

It is also important to note that this consensus may also be attributed to the integrity of intent of the task force members as well as the skilled and experienced leadership of Chancellor Scott. Both of these factors were cited by every one of the subjects interviewed.

Most Important Aspects of the Task Force

As noted, almost all of the task force recommendations have been implemented in one form or another. Those interviewed for the study generally viewed this as a good thing. Specifically, they cited the Common Assessment Initiative, Recommendation 2.1, (Final Report, 2012, p. 23) and the Student Success Scorecard, recommendation 7.3

(Final Report , 2012, p. 59) as being among the most significant outcomes of the implementation process.

With regard to the Student Success Scorecard, members of the taskforce were adamant that the purpose of the instrument was to provide information to colleges to inform decision making and to provide transparency to the public with regard to success. While the publishing of this information about success does provide a degree of transparency, it must also be acknowledged that this transparency is a lens framed by the choice of information, the way the information is filtered, and the degree of context that is provided for the information. For instance, the California Community College Student Success Scorecard which uses a measure described as “The Percentage of first-time student with a minimum of 6 units who attempted any math or English in the first three years” (Scorecard, 2016) reports a graduation or transfer rate for “college prepared” students of 70% (Scorecard, 2016) while the Chronicle of Higher Education reports the graduation rate for public two-year college in California at 26.2% based on “tracking completions for groups of first-time, full-time degree-seeking students at the undergraduate level” (College Completion, 2010). While there is no reason to believe that either of these calculations is invalid, the disparity is an indication the degree to which transparency is subject to the assumptions upon which it is based.

A number of members perceived the task force recommendation on assessment, recommendation 2.1 (Final Report, 2012, p.23) as positive in terms of its service to students. As one member noted:

I think the common assessment could be a huge benefit to the system especially as a real diagnostic tool because we spent a lot of time talking about basic skills. The

system has, for years, spent a lot of time talking about basic skills and curricular revision and such. If we actually have a diagnostic assessment that could tell us what students needed to work on, the implications of that for helping students and for curriculum revision are huge.

Implementation of the common assessment is underway, and will be in place for all California Community Colleges by spring 2018. What impact this initiative will have is unclear. The goal of the initiative is to eliminate obstacles to students created by multiple assessment instruments employed by different districts and the limited portability of assessment results (Final Report, 2012, p.20). Clearly, this has the possibility of limiting local control in terms of placement, which is consistent with recommendation 7 of the Student Success Task Force Final Report (2012, p.55) which advocates for more centralization, but the question will be whether this trade-off represents a significant benefit to students.

The influence of outside experts on the taskforce was limited. The decision to devote the first three months of the task force meetings to a review of expert opinions and research would seem to be an enormously positive step on the part of the organizers. A minority of those interviewed viewed the decision as positive. One member indicated that:

It was wise in that the first several meetings we had presentations brought to us by outsiders on a variety of topics related to student success. We began discussing them as well but that helped to ultimately form a somewhat more common frame of reference for the discussion.

One member indicated clearly that the outside experts were influential, stating, “They certainly had an influence on the direction I took because, as I said, I wasn’t that familiar with the subject matter.”

The majority of those interviewed, however, had a mixed response to the presentations. This balance is reflected in the recollection of one task force member:

Initially, as I told you, when we listened to the researchers and when we read the research, we were wondering, where is this taking us? This is an academic exercise that we’re going through as opposed to rolling up our sleeves. We’ve got some smart people around the room. But, ultimately, when you heard the research, it resurfaced and was referenced as we started talking about the recommendations.

Others corroborated this view; however, for most the feeling was that the time would have been better spent if members of the task force had been given the opportunity for more significant interaction. In any case, it is not clear that the research influenced the direction of the discussions. There was the feeling from more than one task force member that the research was referenced during task force discussions, not in support of change, but rather in support of existing conclusions or agendas. This is supported by the fact that not one of the task force members interviewed felt that their definition of student success had changed as a result of their work with the task force. Some indicated that they felt they had a more nuanced understanding of the concepts that relate to student success, but none felt their views had changed. In the words of one task force member:

So I would say, yes, [the experts] probably contributed overall to it. People were able to reference back to these presentations. They were able to be integrated into

the final report with the various kinds of studies that had been done. So to that degree it helped significantly and it helped to provide a narrative to some degree. But in terms of altering the thinking of the 20, I'm doubtful that it had a significant effect.

Limitations and Generalizability

As noted in chapter 1, the study is limited to the work of the student success task force and the perceptions of its members in participating in the study. A study of the Student Success Task Force represents a unique opportunity in terms of its intentional structure and the breadth of its stakeholder representation. Many of the elements of its construction are ideal in terms of the theory of systemic policy development, and the degree to which its recommendations have been implemented are significant. It is, however, a single instance of policy development, and the dynamics of that development are unique in terms of the leadership, membership, and staff that contributed to the development of recommendations and their authorship in the form of the Student Success Task Force Final Report.

That said, there are consistencies with the literature in terms of the significance of leadership and the elements of policy formation in an atmosphere of diverse stakeholders. Chancellor Scott's role as both the primary architect of the task force and a leader in its discussion would seem to confirm Senge's (2012) conclusions regarding the necessities of systemic change.

There are also consistencies revealed by the data in terms of the research of Tavares (1995) in terms of the inclusion of operation research, as well as with Kezar (2001) regarding the importance of multiple viewpoints in terms of shaping change.

Moreover, the roles played by representatives of interest groups are largely consistent with the findings of McDonnell (2013).

Taken together, these factors would seem indicate a degree of generalizability in terms of how policy is formed and the dynamics of group interaction.

Further the study was limited to the perceptions of the task force members who were willing to participate or who could be reached for participation. While this number was significant in terms of the overall membership, the study does not represent a complete survey of members.

The study is delimited by its focus on a case study of the Student Success Task Force and its recommendations. Further the qualitative nature of the study focuses on the perceptions of task force members and those associated with the task force or with the implementation of its recommendations. No attempt has been made to view the recommendations or their foundations from a quantitative perspective or to gather data that would support broad generalizability from that perspective.

Policy development is necessarily an arena that requires qualitative analysis in that situations that form the environment for that development as well as the development itself are those that are unique to the participants and rely on their perceptions, knowledge, and experience in terms of development. Policy development, as it relates to this study, relies on unique rather than consistent elements in terms of its formation. The student success task force reflects this dynamic in that an individual, Chancellor Jack Scott, was responsible for its inception and architecture as well as, to some degree, the implementation of its recommendations, and that the development of recommendations was the result of individual perceptions and stakeholder obligations rather than the result

of and aggregation of research and data.

Implications for Policy and Practice

The model on which the task force was built worked well. In many ways the Student Success Task Force provides an ideal model for policy development as well as reflecting the difficult realities of that environment. In the final analysis the structure provided for discussions was successful, though not necessarily in the ways that one might have envisioned.

The intentional structure of the task force in terms of the degree of stakeholder representation as well as their exposure to foundational research would seem ideal. That this structure does not seem to have significantly changed the dynamics of that development in terms of shifting the perspectives of the majority of task force members is significant; however, the agreement on the part of a majority of those interviewed that the expert presentations had some limited impact on discussions, even if only to support predetermined agendas and opinions has some significance. Also relevant is the the assertion that the period of presentations served as a mechanism to guide the group through a necessary period of bonding. Whether this was intentional on the part of the task force architects is unclear; however, the model clearly gave the group the necessary space to move past initial suspicion and disagreement and to form the basis for the compromise necessary to create the task force recommendations.

Use the model of the Student Success Task Force to create action-oriented groups of more limited scope. While the task force produced actionable recommendations that have largely been implemented, there are clearly areas that were not addressed or which were addressed superficially. The recommendation on basic skills

instruction (Final Report, 2012, p.43), considered by many of those interviewed to be one of the weaker recommendations, provides a good example. It is the only recommendation that directly addresses classroom practice, unless one includes the recommendation on professional development (Final Report, 2012, p.49). In any case these recommendations imply a need to adopt more effective classroom practice and methodology, but stop short of actually making those recommendations.

As has been discussed, the failure to include recommendations regarding instructional methodology may have been the result of an intentional deflection from these issues on the part of some task force members, or simply that the scope of the issue was too large given the limitations of time and the multitude of other issues with which the task force was charged with addressing. In any case, it would seem like a good idea to use the model of the task force to address these more specific issues, including classroom practice and alternative funding models.

This model has been used recently to address issues having to do with career and technical education (CTE), which was also notably absent from the task force discussions. In November of 2014, the California Community College Board of Governors authorized the creation of the Strong Workforce Task Force (Board of Governors Report, 2015, p.15) which produced a report containing 25 recommendations for addressing issues associated with CTE. The model used by this task force is very similar to that of the Student Success Task Force and also contains specific, action-oriented recommendations.

It is important, however, to note that the success of the Student Success Task Force was not a result primarily of its structure but of its leadership and the integrity of

the intent of its members. Chancellor Scott, as both the designer and captain of the ship provided vision and direction that guided members toward concrete and actionable recommendations, and the integrity of the intent of those members allowed for the success of that vision and direction.

The California community college system must re-examine its funding model.

One of the central purposes of the Student Success Task Force was to create an alternative to the Senate bill that proposed a performance-based funding model. While the research clearly indicates that community college leaders, with sound justification, opposed performance-based funding, it is clear, as well, that the current growth-based funding model, while perhaps not as potentially destructive as the original performance-based funding model might have been, is far from ideal in terms of helping colleges address the needs of students. The model pre-supposes that access, in the form of growth, is the primary mission of community colleges. While few practitioners would argue against access as a central mission of community colleges, it is also true that a cycle of perpetual growth is unrealistic given fluctuations in the economy as well as geographic and physical constraints that are realities for some community colleges. There are also those who argue with good reason that growth funding is, in fact, performance based funding, and that the measure of performance is growth (Shulock, 2011. P.1).

What the task force did not do was examine a range of options that address funding. That the majority of the task force members opposed performance-based funding is clear, but the work of the task force ended with this opposition rather than moving to provide alternative recommendations. While this is understandable, it seems very much like a missed opportunity in terms of exploring a more nuanced and complex

vision for funding that might address the multi-faceted needs of California's community colleges and the students they serve. In any case, it is essential that the California community college system re-examine its funding model and create a mechanism that comprehensively addresses the needs of students and colleges. We must create a funding model that is both flexible and sustainable, one that takes into account the dynamics of student populations as well as the fluctuations in the economy that affect enrollment. It must be a model that ensures the community college mission of access as well as one that incentivizes solutions to the systems challenges.

The success of the task force depended on the strength of its leadership. If the Student Success Task Force is any indicator, the strength of similar efforts in terms of their formation, the quality of their discussions, and the degree to which recommendations are implemented will be dependent on the quality of their leadership. In the case of the Student Success Task Force, primary leadership was provided by Chancellor Scott, who, according to the research, was not only a skilled leader and mediator but had experience at every level of the larger community educational system as it has been defined for this study. Chancellor Scott had extensive experience at virtually every level of that system. He was a faculty member at Pepperdine University, a Dean of Instruction at Orange Coast College, and President at Cypress College and Pasadena City College. Additionally, Chancellor Scott, before becoming Chancellor of California's Community Colleges had served in both California State Assembly as well as the California State Senate.

His strength of leadership provided a foundation that allowed him both to design and lead the task force through a combination of knowledge, experience, and a network

of connections that allowed him to recruit and vet task force members whose contributions would be grounded in experience and knowledge.

Leadership within the task force was also clearly demonstrated by the community college CEOs who also had considerable experience and knowledge, and according to those interviewed, were also effective mediators. Faculty leaders were also very effective in directing discussion, and the researchers, Dr. Robert Gabriner and Dr. Nancy Shulock brought a great deal of experience and knowledge to the task force discussions.

In one way or another, all of those interviewed commented on the importance of leadership within the task force as well as its influence on the formation of the task force and the degree to which the recommendations of the task force were implemented. In shaping future endeavors, policy makers would do well to ensure a similar strength of leadership.

Recommendations for Future Research

Research should examine the effects of the implementation of the Student Success Task Force recommendations. Future research would do well to thoroughly examine the effects of the implementation of the Student Success Task Force. As has been noted, efforts to implement the recommendations have been significant, and by some counts, 21 of the 22 recommendations have been implemented in some form. It is important that researchers examine not just the implementation of the Student Success Task Force Recommendations but the question of whether these recommendations have had a significant effect on student success.

A study that examines the question of success from the standpoint of the system as well as individual colleges would be very useful. Such a study could examine the

question of success, as it has been defined by the task force and the Student Success Scorecard, from a system-wide standpoint but also examine the effects of implementation on individual colleges with different student populations and differing local demographics and employment profiles. It is unlikely that the effects will be consistent across all 114 community colleges that make up California's community college system. A profile of how the effects of implementation differ and if patterns emerge among these differences, may be significant in terms of creating more effective and useful understanding of student success and potentially more effective ways of funding that success.

Research should examine the ways in which student success is measured. One of the things that was clear in examining the work of the Student Success Task Force as well as the literature regarding student success is that the measurement of student success is anything but straight forward. The California Community College Scorecard (2016) includes in its measurements "the percentage of first-time students who attempted any math or English in the first three years and achieved either a degree or certificate, transferred to a four-year institution, or became transfer prepared. This measurement, applied to a cohort over 6 years, resulted in a system-wide success rate of about 70% for those defined as college-prepared and 39% for those who were not prepared, and a 47% overall rate of success. The Chronicle of Higher Education's College Completion Website (2010), on the other hand measures only first-time, full-time students, which results in an overall success rate of 26.2%. College Completion (2010) also notes, however, that their measurement only includes 22.7% of attending California Community Colleges. The disparities revealed by these numbers are

significant, and certainly seem to support Mullin's (2012) conclusion that finding a measure of success that will apply across all circumstances will be difficult if not impossible.

It is possible that a substantial study of measurements of student success might yield a more nuanced understanding of the circumstances under which various formula's might be useful as well as providing the foundation for a more complex definition of success that is both more inclusive and more accurate.

Research should examine the effects of experienced and effective leadership on policy development groups. It is clear that the leadership provided by Chancellor Scott had a significant effect on the development of the Student Success Task Force as well as on its discussions and on the implementation of its recommendations. A study that provides a broader view of leadership under these circumstances and examines a range of policy development initiatives might yield a more generalizable understanding of leadership and the ways in which it influences policy development.

While it is unlikely that a study would find that leadership does not have a significant effect on policy development a more granular understanding of what that effect might be and what elements of leadership have the most effect has the potential to yield significant results. For instance, it was clear, that positional leadership as well as direct experience in terms of community college practice was significant in terms of influencing discussion. It would be interesting to understand if these conditions apply equally to different groups, including the Task Force on Workforce, Job Creation, and a Strong Economy (2015). A study might also examine at what levels leadership has the most significant influence, whether that is at the outset in terms of forming a group,

during the discussions, or in influencing the implementation of policy recommendations.

Concluding Statement

The recommendations of the Student Success Task Force have resulted in measures of implementation that have significantly altered the landscape of California's community colleges to a degree that is significant if not unprecedented. It is clear from the research that the effort was well-intentioned and that those who participated were experienced and qualified leaders. The recommendations that the task force produced were carefully considered and the public was given ample opportunity to consider and comment on the recommendations before the final report was released. Moreover, it is clear that public commentary had a significant influence in terms of changing recommendations before the final report was released. What is less clear is whether the task force recommendations had unintended consequences that may have had a significant effect on the growth-funding mechanism employed by the California Community College System.

In response, the community college policy system, as it has been defined for this study, must direct its efforts toward creating a funding mechanism that is consistent with the measures imposed on colleges. The funding mechanism must reflect the complexity and diversity of the system as well as the needs of students. While a funding mechanism based on growth or performance, as it was defined in the original SB 1143, allow for a simple method of allocating funding, they do not necessarily represent the best method for serving students.

The student success task force did an excellent job of avoiding performance based funding and it also produced a significant number of actionable recommendations that

members believed would benefit students. What did not happen was the creation of a solution to the problem of funding community colleges. While there is sound basis for avoiding the solution brought forward by Senator Liu, the problem of a sustainable funding mechanism remains.

The first step toward creating a funding model that does serve student need may be to create a model that embraces complexity and diversity, allowing for colleges to receive funding based on a more complex and diverse set of criteria that include local student need. The model of the Student Success Task Force might well prove productive in terms of establishing recommendations for a more effective funding mechanism; however, it is clear that the leadership of such a task force would need a foundation of experience and wisdom equivalent to that of the Student Success Task Force.

Creating such a solution relies in part on creating a definition of student success that accounts for real student learning and also one that provides for the diverse needs and challenges of community colleges. Student success is not a matter of measurement but a matter of learning. The task force recommendations do an excellent job of helping institutions place students on the path toward learning, but they do little in terms of helping to shape the learning experience itself. This would seem to be the central challenge, and whatever funding mechanism the system creates must support rather than undermine this central mission.

Another point that came up with some regularity in the course of gathering the data was the degree to which the work of the task force changed the discussion that surrounds the community college mission. In the past, discussion focused mostly on access: giving every student who wanted a college education the opportunity to try. The

funding model, which places a premium on growth, is based on this presumption of mission. The discussion out of which the task force grew, and on which is recommendations are based is a discussion of a mission based on access and success. The new model asserts that without success access is of limited value. The question, however, is whether access and success are mutually compatible or whether they are mutually limiting, whether attempts to increase success will result in limits on access in the same way that some have asserted that a focus on access limits success.

Perhaps the aspect that resonates the most about the task force is the integrity of the intent of those who formed the task force and those who served on it. There seems in many cases to be an underlying suspicion of their motives; however, what emerged from the study could not be further from this assertion. Those who served were universally committed to the service of students and to doing what they could to increase the ability of community colleges to succeed in their mission to serve students at the highest level. In the words of one task force member:

In its day the task force and the invention of the task force by the leadership of the State Chancellor's office and certainly by Jack [Scott] was a valiant effort to address the ongoing severe problems of funding and student success of the community colleges. I say a valiant effort because it sought to be comprehensive, even though I think the history of it will be primarily focused on only a few areas of the delivery of education... At the end of that story it will not have addressed all of the problems that the community colleges were facing. But it was a valiant effort.

It's to Jack's credit and to the credit of Peter [MacDougall] and the board of governors that they were willing to take that route. To some degree, that's the best that we could have hoped for at that point in time. I really think that Jack Scott and his crew were genuinely interested in significant reform and change ... we'll have to see what history writes about it. But it was I think a very genuine, well-intended, valiant effort.

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Appendix A

Email Invitation

Dear _____,

I am writing to request your participation in a dissertation study that I am conducting as a doctoral candidate at California State University, Northridge. My study explores the work of the Student Success Task Force appointed by the California Community College Chancellor's office in 2010.

As part of the study, I am interviewing members of the task force as well as others instrumental in the formation of the task force or in the implementation of its recommendations. Each interview will be approximately one hour in length. Your participation in the study will remain confidential, and your name will not be associated with the content of the study.

Your perceptions regarding the work of the task force and its recommendations are essential in forming a larger understanding of this important milestone in the history of educational policy, and your participation in this study has the potential to benefit educational practitioners and policymakers in their efforts to more effectively serve California's community college students.

If you would like to participate, please contact me at ritterbrown@mac.com or you may call me at (323) 829-2885.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Michael Ritterbrown

Appendix B

Informed Consent

California State University, Northridge

CONSENT TO ACT AS A HUMAN RESEARCH PARTICIPANT

A Case Study of the Student Success Task Force

You are being asked to participate in a research study focusing on the perceptions and definitions of student success employed by members of the Student Success Task Force. *A Case Study of the Student Success Task Force*, a study conducted by Iain Michael Ritterbrown as part of the requirements for the Ed.D degree in Educational Leadership. Participation in this study is completely voluntary. Please read the information below and ask questions about anything that you do not understand before deciding if you want to participate. A researcher listed below will be available to answer your questions.

RESEARCH TEAM

Researcher:

Iain Michael Ritterbrown

Department of Educational Leadership

18111 Nordhoff St.

Northridge, CA 91330

(323) 829-2885

ritterbrown@mac.com

Faculty Advisor:

Dr. Richard Moore

Department of Business and Economics

18111 Nordhoff St.

Northridge, CA 91330

(818) 677-2416

richard.moore@csun.edu

PURPOSE OF STUDY

The purpose of this research study is to explore the formation of community college educational policy by examining the perceptions and definitions of student success employed by members of the Student Success Task Force and the ways in which individual perceptions and definitions of student success influenced the development of the definitions and perceptions of the task force as a whole represented by the 22 recommendations contained in the final task force report.

SUBJECTS

Inclusion Requirements

You are eligible to participate in this study if you were a member of the Student Success Taskforce appointed by the California Community College Chancellor's office or participated in the development of the taskforce or participated in the implementation of the recommendations of the task force.

Time Commitment

This study will involve approximately one hour of your time.

PROCEDURES

The following procedures will occur: You will participate in a semi-structured interview with the researcher.

RISKS AND DISCOMFORTS

The possible risks and/or discomforts associated with the procedures described in this study include: mild emotional discomfort associated with answering questions regarding contributions to and participation in the work of the task force. There is also potential

social risks associated with the fact that members of the task force and those associated with its formation are a limited and publicly acknowledged group, and the knowledge that some were interviewed may pose some risk within a circle of professional association. Risks will be minimized by assuring your anonymity. This study involves no more than minimal risk. There are no known harms or discomforts associated with this study beyond those encountered in normal daily life.

BENEFITS

Subject Benefits

You will not directly benefit from participation in this study.

Benefits to Others or Society

The study will contribute to a more substantial understanding of the work of the task force in relation to student success and of how educational policy is shaped and the relationship of that policy to educational research and practice.

ALTERNATIVES TO PARTICIPATION

The only alternative to participation in this study is not to participate.

COMPENSATION, COSTS AND REIMBURSEMENT

Compensation for Participation

You will not be paid for your participation in this research study.

WITHDRAWAL OR TERMINATION FROM THE STUDY AND CONSEQUENCES

You are free to withdraw from this study at any time. **If you decide to withdraw from this study you should notify the research team immediately.**

CONFIDENTIALITY

Subject Identifiable Data

All identifiable information that will be collected about you will be removed and replaced with a code. A list linking the code and your identifiable information will be kept separate from the research data.

Data Storage

All research data will be stored on a portable hard drive, which will be stored in a locked container in the home of the researcher.

Data Access

The researcher and faculty advisor named on the first page of this form will have access to your study records. Any information derived from this research project that personally identifies you will not be voluntarily released or disclosed without your separate consent, except as specifically required by law. Publications and/or presentations that result from this study will not include identifiable information about you.

Data Retention

The researchers intend to keep the research data until the research is published and/or presented and then it will be destroyed.

IF YOU HAVE QUESTIONS

If you have any comments, concerns, or questions regarding the conduct of this research please contact the research team listed on the first page of this form.

If you have concerns or complaints about the research study, research team, or questions about your rights as a research participant, please contact Research and Sponsored Projects, 18111 Nordhoff Street, California State University, Northridge, Northridge, CA 91330-8232, or phone 818-677-2901.

VOLUNTARY PARTICIPATION STATEMENT

You should not sign this form unless you have read it and been given a copy of it to keep.

Participation in this study is voluntary. You may refuse to answer any question or discontinue your involvement at any time. Your signature below indicates that you have read the information in this consent form and have had a chance to ask any questions that you have about the study.

I agree to participate in the study.

I agree to be audio recorded

I do not wish to be audio recorded

Participant Signature

Date

Printed Name of Participant

Researcher Signature

Date

Printed Name of Researcher

Appendix C

Interview Protocol

**CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY, NORTHRIDGE STUDENT
STUDENT SUCCESS TASK FORCE CASE STUDY
INTERVIEW PROTOCOL**

I. Pre-interview Session: Introduction/Background

Welcome and introduction:

Good morning/afternoon/evening. Thanks again for agreeing to meet with me today.

Before we begin the interview, I'd like to give you a chance to read and sign the Consent to Participate in Research.

Purpose of the interview:

As we discussed, this interview will inform a research study that explores the formation of community college policy by examining the perceptions of individual members Student Success Task Force and how those perceptions contributed to the final recommendations of the task force. During this interview, we will explore your perceptions with regard to student success as well as your impressions of the ways in which the task force worked together to form its final recommendations.

Timing:

Today's interview will last approximately 45 to 60 minutes. Do you have any questions

before I get started?

II. Interview Session

Main Questions:

1. How did you come to be a member of the Student Success Task Force?
2. Could you describe in general terms your experience working on the task force?
3. What do you feel were the expectations for the task force?
4. Did you consider yourself a representative of a particular stakeholder or interest group in terms of your participation?
 - 4.1.1. How did this influence your participation?
 - 4.1.2. Did interest groups other than your own provide significant influence regarding the development of specific recommendations or of the general direction of the taskforce>
5. What previous involvement have you had with the issue of student success and with the development of policy of research about the issue?
 - 5.1.1. Did you feel others were equally informed?
 - 5.1.2. How did this affect discussions and deliberations?

6. What were the dynamics like within the group?
 - 6.1.1. What coalitions or alliances emerged within the group?
 - 6.1.2. Do you feel that interest group affiliations had an effect on the work of the task force?

7. In what way did the educational theorists and researchers who addressed the task force influence the formation of the task force recommendations?
 - 7.1.1. Were there other experts, either from your own background of knowledge or that others cited in discussions, who had a substantial influence on the conclusions of the task force?

8. What would you say is the most important aspect of the task force's work?
 - 8.1.1. Why?
 - 8.1.2. What recommendation do you feel will benefit students the most?
 - 8.1.3. Why?
 - 8.1.4. Are there any of the recommendations with which you disagree or which you would like to see amended?
 - 8.1.5. Why?

9. How do you believe accountability efforts recommended by the task force and implemented by the state have affected or will affect community colleges and student success?
 - 9.1.1. Did you or do you support outcomes-based funding for community colleges?

9.1.1.1.1. Why or why not?

10. Do you believe that the implementation of task force recommendations will have an effect on student access and equity?

11. How would you define student success?

11.1.1. How was this definition formed?

11.1.2. How would you say that your definition of success corresponds to the definition of success represented by the recommendations of the task force?

11.1.3. Did your definition change during the process of working with the task force?

11.1.4. How?

11.1.5. What influenced that change?

12. If you were speaking to a community college faculty member, staff member, or administrator, what is the most important thing you would want to tell him or her about the work of the task force?

13. What are your impressions of the implementation of the task force recommendations represented by the provisions of the Student Success and Support Program?

14. How do you believe the work of the task force is perceived by the general public?

14.1.1. Do you believe it is viewed in the same way by community college educators?

14.1.2. How will it be viewed in 10 years?

Closing Questions:

Before we finish, Do you think there is anything else I should ask you about, anything important that I've missed? Do you have anything else to add at this time? If there is anything else that you recall after our interview session, would you be willing to contact me?

III. Post-Interview Session: Debriefing and Closing

Thank you for participating in today's interview. I appreciate your time and your contribution to this study. I also want to reiterate that what you have shared with me is confidential. No part of our discussion that includes names or other identifiable characteristics will be used in any report or document. Finally, I want to provide you with a chance to ask any questions that you might have about this interview. Do you have any questions for me at this time?