

President's Report

January 31, 2018

Guided Pathways, Guided Pathways, Guided Pathways . . .

The Board of Trustees meeting, Jan 9, 2018. The Board increased to five minutes the time for reports. I used the five minutes to talk about Guided Pathways and the upcoming decision to sign, or not, to participate in the Guided Pathways Grant Program

FACCC Policy Forum, Jan 19, San Diego City College. This Policy Forum consisted of a panel of four:

- Laura Hope (Executive Vice Chancellor, Educational Services and Support)
- Janice Warden-Washington (Chief Consultant, Assembly Committee on Higher Education),
- Randy Beach (Executive Committee Member, Academic Senate for California Community Colleges) and
- (our own) **Alexa Forrester** (Chair, Philosophy, Humanities and Religion Department, SRJC, and co-author of Response to the Vision).

In addition to Alexa on the panel, and myself, there were two other SRJC faculty in attendance: Deidre Frontczak and Orlando Raoul. There were approximate 100 people in the audience, mostly faculty from the San Diego and LA areas. The event was moderated by Jonathan Lightman, Executive Director of FACCC, and went for two hours. There seemed to be general agreement that it should have been longer. Note that although the topics were separated in the program: The Vision, Guided Pathways, The Budget (a forth advertised item was never discussed) these three were basically discussed together and not sharply distinguished. Highlights:

From **Laura Hope** we heard that the goals of The Vision are aspirational, and not necessarily realistic; that the Chancellor's Office intends to improve the quality of life through education; that the system is currently organized in such a way "that privileges access over completion"; she sees this as a problem to rectify, and clearly supported a common Guided Pathways viewpoint that access might need to give in favor of completion. She said that we need more 'high touch' programs like Puente—but Puente is too small, we need the 'high touch' to apply to all students; that faculty are to design the Pathways.

From **Janice Warden-Washington** we heard that most legislators don't understand, or even know anything about faculty concerns, and that "We don't hear [Alexa's argument] in Sacramento"; when asked what the Legislature wants in return for 150 million, she said, "A lot." The she added, "We live in a microwave culture; they are looking for fast results." She added that some legislators are former faculty and "get it," but most do not. She said that she would carry the concerns and arguments heard today to the legislature, and that this is a work in progress, a living document (with reference to The Vision and the relevant legislation).

From **Randy Beach** we heard that the faculty "are not enjoying the level of collaboration we want," and characterized The Vision and the Chancellor's ideas of implementation a case of "mission by consultant." There was a tense back and forth between Randy and Laura on the issue of the Senate's endorsement. Randy said Senate President Julie Bruno was asked at a Board of Governors meeting to affirm the Vision, and, put on the spot, approved the general idea of the goals to improve completion and close equity gaps, but with respect to the development of the Vision, he said, "The faculty gave data but were not consulted, and made no meaningful contribution with respect to outcomes or goals." Laura Hope asked if the

Senate's support for Guided Pathways is foundational or political. Randy did not definitively answer that. My answer is the latter. Laura protested that if the Senate didn't approve, it should not acquiesce and give the appearance of approval.

Alexa Forrester celebrated the Vision's ambitious goal of closing equity gaps, but pointed out that the Vision has "an impoverished view of empowerment, reducing it to economics alone. There are many other kinds that the Vision speaks nothing of." Connected to this, The Vision, and much of Guided Pathways literature, abandon the notion of education as a public good, and replace it with the notion of education as a private good, demanding that we subjugate our educational systems to the whims of the marketplace.

She used the analogy of the body as society, with the circulatory system as the economy and the brain's frontal lobe as higher education. The brain's function of telling the circulatory system to work is vitally important, but it does a lot of other things too. She used the example of literacy as a form of empowerment. Literacy empowers students not just to aid in gaining employment, but to communicate effectively in interpersonal relationships, to participate in the political process, to initiate social change such as spending time writing critiques of the Vision which do not contribute at all to "upward mobility." Guided Pathways, as expressed in The Vision and the Self-Assessment ask us to tie all programs and courses to specific career or transfer outcomes with data on the salaries students can expect. It doesn't invite us to analyze the fact that petroleum engineering is at the top of the salary scale, and child development is at the bottom, and what that implies for the good of the world.

Jonathan Lightman interjected several points as a faculty advocate. One point was, in references to the Governor's proposed budget, that without funding to bring us to 75:25, that the premise of the whole program remains that this initiative will be done "on the backs of part time faculty." Laura Hope retorted that we can't wait for faculty development toward 75:25 because in the meantime our students are suffering now, and besides, she added, "We can't expect these problems to go away if we hire more full time faculty, That is oversimplifying."

For their final statements, the panelists were asked to give a picture of where we'll be in five years' time if The Vision and the Governor's budget were fully enacted. Janice said that there is a lot of ignorance in Sacramento; they don't understand the unintended consequences of performance based funding; Laura Hope said we're in for a recession in 3 years' time and this engagement will ease it for some; Randy Beach simply said, "We're in trouble," and Alexa worried more about performance based funding than about Guided Pathways.

There were also contributions of questions and statements from the audience which was dominated by faculty. The general tenor of the remarks was that faculty were not being honestly included in the process. One speaker protested that, although there are a lot of dissenting opinions at his college, the Senate President signed the thing without faculty discussion.

I met with Board President Maggie Fishman to discuss Guided Pathways, Jan 24, 2018, 12:30-1:15. She expressed an interest to hear faculty points of view, have more dialogue, and expressed an awareness of the objections of some faculty, as she has heard them many times at Board meetings.

A special Board of Trustees meeting was held Jan 24, 2018, 2:00-3:00 pm. Many spoke for and against Guided Pathways. The Board voted unanimously to sign the Self-Assessment

Immediately following this, there was a special Academic Senate meeting to discuss Guided Pathways. We heard from guests from the Executive Committee for ASCCC: Ginni May and Carrie Robertson. The meeting went from approximately 3:20 to 5:10, and was broadcast via Zoom, and by the Oakleaf. Ginni

outlined four options: Sign as a commitment to the whole program, sign for the first installment and opt out later, don't sign for the first installment and opt in later, and don't sign as a permanent commitment of non-compliance. Many speakers argued primarily for the middle two options. We heard from two student leaders, and a couple of administrators made comments, but most contributors were faculty. The main points of view expressed were

- Guided Pathways offers good things that can help our students and it makes sense to take the Grant money offered to adopt some of those practices
- We haven't had the time to inform ourselves, and don't feel ready to make a commitment; therefore we should not sign, study it further, and we can join next year if we want
- Take the straw people off the table: the debate too often brings acrimonious and fallacious characterizations of debate opponents
- Our completion and equity gap statistics are deplorable and we need to do something about that, especially for the sake of underserved and disadvantaged populations
- Students have not been included in the discussion and most students don't know what "Guided Pathways" means

In continuing conversation after the meeting with the state senate leadership, who carefully avoided giving us any particular advice about the decision, they did urge us to think about the following points:

- Re: the Board Meeting earlier in the day, that Guided Pathways is Senate purview (10 + 1 #'s 1, 2, 4, 5, 6, 8, 9, and 10) and that the Board should realize their legal responsibility to "rely primarily" on the Academic Senate in this; the ASCCC members did not have the impression that the Board's discussion and vote showed this understanding
- That the Self-Assessment rubric asks for a commitment to have had "cross-functional" dialogue as a decision making process *leading up to the signing* of the document; if what the student leadership said about students not having been included is true, we need to be cautioned that if we sign it, we could be misrepresenting ourselves
- That the Governor's budget holds us harmless for the first year, the budget has not been approved, and funding for AB 19 has not been established, so the financial consequences of not signing are, at this point uncertain

The Oakleaf Commentary

Co-Editor-In-Chief Brandon McCapes published a commentary early this week arguing that Guided Pathways is not a choice because of the funding attached to it. He also cited the more than six years the average student takes to complete a program at the JC. Noting that Dr. Chong remarked at the Board meeting on Jan 24 that we are in a sense "held hostage" by AB 19 and the link of GP to BSI funding, McCape argued that, because of this funding reality, affecting student financial aid, signing on to Guided Pathways is "really no choice at all; to reject it would be catastrophic."

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TneQZSg3J9E&feature=youtu.be>

Respectfully submitted,

Eric Thompson