

DRAFT
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REFLECTIONS OF A COMMISSIONER

I don't know how many of you have had a chance to read the report Building Communities, so let me start by making two broad observations about the report.

First, the report consists of 63 recommendations, most of them good things to do and with very few exceptions, all non-controversial.

Second, the report of the Commission doesn't rattle anyone's cage or threaten anyone's livelihood. It does not suggest that the comprehensive community college should give up any of its far-flung enterprises. This approach results in few enemies or critics and so far I have seen nothing but praise -- a standing ovation upon its unveiling before the 1988 AACJC convention, and virtually no criticism from any quarter in the six months of its existence.

This widespread acceptance stands in modest contrast to past suggestions for the future of community colleges. In recent history, since the era of the so-called comprehensive community college (mid 1970s to roughly the mid 1980s, ^{which began in the} (Deegan and Tillery, 1985), most suggestions for reform have recommended that the comprehensive community college define its mission more sharply, recognizing that in an era of limited resources it cannot be all things to all people. The California Post-Secondary Education Commission noted in 1981, for example, that "Unless the colleges make programmatic choices and set budget

priorities, they will probably do many things less well and some things unsatisfactorily in the future" (CPEC, 1981, Preface).

In 1981, Breneman and Nelson (1981) economists at the Brookings Institution, roused the ire of community college leaders by taking what was to them the dispassionate economists' position favoring a distribution of labor -- ^{direct more} fewer full-time transfer students ^{to the US} for ~~community colleges~~, while ^{helping cc develop} retaining dominance in areas that four-year colleges have not undertaken and cannot do as well. (p. 211-212). Ed Gleazer was no better received when he made the radical suggestion that community colleges should de-emphasize the "college" and re-emphasize "community," becoming community learning centers for adults.

^{In Calif especially, but nationwide there has been a reassertion of transfer edu unopposed by a more less explicit rejection of Gleazer's vision of comm} Perhaps because California community colleges had moved further than many other states toward the Gleazer image of community-based learning centers, the California leadership seemed ^{more incensed} more incensed than most about the drift of the transfer function. ^{So the comm. mission has been under question, & priorities have been major and} Led largely by spokesmen from the University of California -- Arthur Cohen at UCLA, the famed Kissler Report, plus a series of other studies and reports, the California leadership reasserted vigorously a ^{major} major re-emphasis on the transfer function.

^{recent} In any event, ~~Against this~~ controversy about what community colleges should stop doing in order to do what they should be doing better, along came the soothing and authoritative Futures Commission saying that community colleges could have it all. ^{They can be comp & excellent too.} No wonder it was so well-received.

^{realistic in times of limited resources?} Is the Commission's report ~~then currying favor by being~~ unrealistic? Should the Commission have taken a stronger and more

requiring a more limited mission?
 forceful position ~~on the reality of being all things to all people in a~~ *these*
 time of emphasis on quality coupled with the reality of limited
 resources?

I would argue now that it is
 I don't think so. Part of the genius of the Commission's report
 is that it avoided divisiveness. It said in essence, you can have it all
 -- transfer, general, and community education, remediation, open
 access and equal opportunity, career education and high quality too.

At this point, I need to distinguish between my role as a
 commissioner in the meetings and my role as an analyst reflecting
 back on the outcomes.. *This series, I am mostly reflecting*

as I look only over the back of my seat.
 Strangely enough, there was no major discussion about
 whether the community college mission was too broad to be
 effective. The divisiveness of whose ox to gore was avoided, not by
 conscious decision, but by what appeared to be oversight ^{or} maybe *just*
to argue it out. lack of time. *We* They just never engaged the question. The meetings
 were, by and large, amiable and upbeat, and there was a desire to
 include positive suggestions from all quarters without question or
 challenge.

all-inclusive sweep
 The question is, does that sort of harmonious waffling and
 refusing to take a stance serve the needs of troubled community
 colleges that really need a sense of direction? Virtually everyone
 heard something they wanted to hear in the 63 recommendations,
 and the overall tone of the report was upbeat and leaned heavily on
 inspiration.

In retrospect, I would observe that the Commission may have
 missed an opportunity to build a pragmatic -- some would say
 realistic -- rationale for the theme of ^{building} community, taking instead the

~~emotional~~ and inspirational route. Emotionally, the theme *building community* appeals to the sense of loss that is being exploited in the current political campaign--a loss of the communities of family and neighborhoods to the rise of yuppiedom, narcissism, and atomistic individualism. Inspirationally, the theme *building community*, speaks to the need to heal racial tensions and to build a better nation through giving everyone a chance to develop their talents for the betterment of all. The language is this: "The building of community, in its broadest and best sense, encompasses a concern for the whole, for integration and collaboration, for openness and integrity, for inclusiveness and self-renewal." (p.7). *A felt need of society's survival & nothing else -- but is it sufficient? head-headed or times?*

It now seems to me that a pragmatic case for the commission's support of the comprehensive mission ^{should} can be made in an argument that the Learning Society calls for the sharing of educational resources. The comprehensive community college cannot be all things to all people with limited resources; but it can expand its resources by sharing the responsibility for ~~the~~ lifelong education of ~~the citizens of the community~~ with other agencies and providers of educational services.

The Learning Society has two interpretations -- one uses learning as a verb, the other as an adjective. One calls for lifelong learning as an activity that most people are going to be engaged with ⁱⁿ the rest of their lives. The emphasis is on learning as an active verb.

a soc. in which most are living for -- a year & lives is a living soc.
 # Learning as an adjective can be used to describe a society in which the capital resources have become the brains and ideas of its

workers. Where we once referred to the agrarian society, and then the industrial society, we now refer to the learning society. *because living is critical to productivity & internal competition.*

Whichever interpretation you use, the learning society has spawned a great number of new providers of educational services. Many of them could be considered competitive with ^{CCs} higher education. For example, there are now roughly two dozen ^{"colleges"} educational programs founded by corporations, fully accredited and given authority to grant degrees, ranging from associate to doctoral. ^{And} Indeed, the education enterprise outside of formal education, consisting of the military, government, corporations, employers, professional associations, and independent entrepreneurs, continues to grow faster ~~in terms of numbers of learners served~~ than higher education. It thus makes some sense to argue that this is not an era in which educational resources are limited; it is an era of rapidly expanding educational providers. Thus the sensible thing to do is to expand the resource pie through building communities and partnerships rather than competing for scarce resources.

In essence, the Commission did that. ^{while they} They just did not present the pragmatic rationale for building partnerships in order to share resources. The report, ~~however~~, is replete with concrete recommendations for collaboration. ^{In this they avoided the controversy of past futurists.} Instead of pitting the advocates of transfer education against community educators for resources that are assumed limited, for example, the Commission recommended that transfer educators build partnerships and share responsibilities with high schools and four-year colleges, that career educators build communities with employers, that community educators strengthen their resources by sharing continuing education responsibilities with employers, civic agencies and others. ^{The comp. mission is}

^{feasible is requiring cooperation & sharing rather than competition}
^{no eventual} ^{elimination of one or more or both functions.}

My reflection is C's implicit support of comp. mission leads to conclude that is a good route for 2 reasons:
 1) It avoided divisiveness of the CC, not a corp. with complete
 2) It never devalued the role of the community

It seems to me that the inspiration of the report can be bolstered by the pragmatic argument that building communities is not only a good thing to do, but it is also realistic and cost effective in this era of the Learning Society. Whatever the rationale, the Commission used the theme *Building Communities* to rally people and infuse them with new energy to do what they are already doing better. It didn't just say "work harder" it suggested new and energizing activities -- go out and make some new alliances to help you do your job better.

Now I want to turn to a brief look at one of the few controversies that I recall in the 100 hours of discussion in the Commission meetings. The issue arose over whether the major theme of the report should be *building community* or quality in teaching and learning. Frankly, I thought the Commission should take as its theme the development of distinction as teaching institutions. The most articulate spokesperson for the emphasis on building communities was Wilhelmina Delco, a legislator from Texas. The typical response of this harmony-loving group was, why choose? We can do them both.

So while I concede that the title of the report and much of the tone is community-oriented, my interests in developing high quality teaching institutions are represented throughout the report by language such as this, "Thus building community through dedicated teaching is the vision and the inspiration of this report." (p. 8) And "It is the conviction of the Commission that the theme *Building Community*, is applied most appropriately to the classroom" (p. 25), and "We recommend that good teaching should be the hallmark of

the community college movement." (p. 27) And, right on the button, "The community college should be the nation's premier teaching institution." (p. 25). *So one of the C opts for broad coverage & a desire to please the people make the report*

The question, however, is not whether ~~Wilhelmina and I~~ are ~~happy~~, but whether the recommendations strengthen community colleges and whether this report does indeed serve as a "rallying point" for community colleges as the Commission had hoped. So let me reflect on the viability of what is basically ^a two-legged report -- although I'm not sure that this double theme is universally perceived.

The first analogy that comes to mind is that of the person with one foot on the pier and the other in the boat. The imagery of the stretch required if the boat starts to move is a vivid reminder of the dangers of a straddling position.

Let me carry the analogy further by likening the pier to a firm anchor to the past of community colleges and the boat, possibly ready to move, to the future. The theme of *community* is firmly anchored in the traditions and history of community colleges as local institutions serving their communities. To encourage community colleges to build on the familiar traditions of community is, *probably* I think, a good idea in times of threat and doubt. *But I would argue that* ~~But~~ to repair and strengthen the pier ^{while somewhat comfortable,} is not an exciting venture that will lead community colleges to new and energizing visions of the future. The more venturesome of the community college leadership is going to want to get into the boat and go some place -- to chart new waters and explore new possibilities.

Why, you might legitimately ask, do the community colleges need a new and energizing vision, and is it wise for community colleges to go sailing off into uncharted waters?

When I did some research on the perceptions of community college missions in the late 1970s, the community colleges looked tired, and I wrote these words, "The late 1970s and early 1980s represent a plateau between two periods of high energy and a sense of mission in the community colleges. The old ideals that sparked enthusiasm and a sense of common purpose in community colleges have receded, and new ideals have not yet emerged to take their place" (1981, p. 113).

The old ideals were, of course, access and equal opportunity. While the access issues that charged community colleges with a sense of mission and common cause in the 1950s and 1960s are not ^{really} solved, they have changed direction. The problem worrying most people now is not access per se, but the education of the population that so recently gained access to higher education through the open doors of community colleges.

Access issues are basically management and administrative matters. They call for ^{building buildings} getting money and commitment, recruiting faculty and students, developing new programs, and in general, ^{& expanding} building. ^{as it now has} If the mission shifts to educational issues, then leadership ^{involved in} is less managerial and more ^{issues on the 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31, 32, 33, 34, 35, 36, 37, 38, 39, 40, 41, 42, 43, 44, 45, 46, 47, 48, 49, 50, 51, 52, 53, 54, 55, 56, 57, 58, 59, 60, 61, 62, 63, 64, 65, 66, 67, 68, 69, 70, 71, 72, 73, 74, 75, 76, 77, 78, 79, 80, 81, 82, 83, 84, 85, 86, 87, 88, 89, 90, 91, 92, 93, 94, 95, 96, 97, 98, 99, 100} educational, involving concerns about faculty, curriculum, teaching and learning, assessment, and retention.

There are signs all around us that the community colleges are at a point of transition. Deegan and Tillery (1985) make a convincing case that the fourth generation of the comprehensive community

college ended in the mid-1980s, and we now stand on the threshold of the fifth generation. While they don't define the fifth generation, they do offer the opinion that "The common themes of quality and productivity will set the climate for the foreseeable future...(p. 304)."

The Commission, it is apparent, agrees. But it has gone further and offered the energizing vision of the community college as the "nation's premier teaching institution." (p. 25)

At the moment, becoming the nation's "premier teaching institution" comes alarmingly close to the fluffy boosterism for which community colleges have been criticized in the past. But the timing of this vision seems right, and the community colleges are probably the most likely candidates to take on the challenge.

The timing is right for four reasons:

First, the tide of public interest is certainly focused on the quality of education and on demonstrable results. To continue my watery analogy, serious attention to the quality of teaching and learning puts community colleges in the swim of the 1980s reforms and in the mainstream of the action.

Second, community colleges are about to replace half of their teaching faculty, and there is both a clear need and an opportunity to establish the criteria for hiring. Who is hired in the coming decade will have a lot to do with shaping the mission and operation of community colleges well into the 21st century.

Third, cognitive psychology as a discipline is now exploding with the knowledge necessary to sustain and advance a science of instruction. "Instructional psychology" has, according to the experts, "become a vigorous part of the mainstream of research on human

cognition and development." (Glaser and Bassok, 1988, p. 1) When community colleges first tackled the learning problems that came with open admissions, they were not standing on the shoulders of giants. There were no studies, nor guides, nor methods to turn to for help. The probability now exists that a "psychology of instruction" would be a resource for improving the quality of instruction.

Fourth, community college teachers are tired, burned-out with heavy teaching loads and not enough intellectual stimulation to maintain vigor and enthusiasm. If community colleges are to become premier teaching institutions, now is the time to offer intellectual challenge, ^{not} in aping the requirements for discipline-based research that is dominant in the universities, but in offering community college teachers the opportunity for the scholarly pursuit of knowledge in the art and science of teaching. *Insert 10*

My proposal for CR
The community colleges are the "naturals" to lead in the *professionalizing of teaching* ~~revolution of college~~ teaching for four reasons:

First, community colleges are teaching institutions. The task and the reward structures are reasonably clear, and it is surely time *but we need to offer CC the same opp. to seek recognition & to practice profession & all* ~~to offer the recognition and intellectual stimulation that goes with~~ *challenge of* ~~being an authority in the art and science of teaching.~~

Second, no other type of institution has quite the challenge or quite the obligation ^{for} of excellence in teaching that the community college has. Battles won for access and equal opportunity are meaningless unless the populations newly-admitted are gaining ^{the Q of} access to education that makes some difference in their lives.

Third, the curriculum of the comprehensive community college offers an especially rich and potentially productive laboratory for

gaining knowledge about learning. The curricular mix of vocational, academic, developmental, and adult education offers one of the richest resources available for study.

Fourth, the bright side of the concentration of students with learning problems in community colleges is that sometimes the best way to understand a process is to look at what goes wrong when things aren't working right. It is probably more productive to study the impact of teaching on learning in students whose learning is heavily dependent on the structuring of the task by teachers than it is to study self-propelled learners who will learn under almost any condition.

Although I have taken this opportunity to argue somewhat more persuasively than I think the Commission report does for attention to taking on the challenge of becoming the "nation's premier teaching institutions," I confess that I like the Commission's vision of the future. I think its intention to inspire and create unity is commendable, and probably also justifiable and workable. If the boat of teaching improvement continues to sit at the dock, community colleges can work safely and constructively at *building community* on shore. If the ^{Q of Ling} boat does take off, as I think it should, those aboard will be in the lead, and community colleges will at last have a worthy and appropriate claim to modest fame.

Now let's turn from an analysis of the report itself to a preliminary look at how it is being perceived -- which you may know better than I. I have already noted its wide acceptance in principle. There really isn't much to object to, but with so many

recommendations on so many topics, the matter of priority is of interest.