

1994-95
ACADEMIC SENATE
California State University, Sacramento

Thursday, March 16, 1995
Forest Suite, University Union
2:30-4:30 p.m.

AS 95-16/Flr. FACULTY ACCOUNTABILITY

receives motion passed, carried to subs
The Academic Senate ~~adopts~~ the report of the Steering Committee ["Planning, Budgeting, and Accountability in the CSU System (Comment)", Attachment A] in response to President Gerth's request of January 9, 1995.

Discussion of faculty accountability (see Attachment B).

PLANNING, BUDGETING, AND ACCOUNTABILITY IN THE CSU SYSTEM (Comment)

The purpose of this comment is to provide a basis for continued review and discussion of the System proposal "Planning, Budgeting, and Accountability In the CSU System." Additionally, the comment provides an analytical framework and perspective within which the assumptions, concepts and operational definitions presented in the proposal can be addressed in a systematic and coherent manner.

INTRODUCTION

In its present form the document "Planning, Budgeting, and Accountability In the CSU System" (PBA) raises more issues than it clarifies about what accountability means, its relationship to productivity, who is to be held accountable, how it is to be measured, and what are its operational linkages to planning and budgeting. These issues aside for the moment, what the PBA does provide is the realization that *accountability* is a *force* that will effect profound changes in how and what we do as educators and scholars, and that accountability can no longer be viewed as just another fashionable paradigm surfacing on the distant horizon. As President Gerth succinctly states, "Accountability is more than an institutional question, and it affects every individual on the faculty and staff, as well as students."

Despite its apparent importance, a meaningful critique of the PBA document is difficult in the absence of any understanding of its history and motivational context. It is not clear whether the document is:

- An attempt to defend against public attack;
- An attempt to make cosmetic, linguistic modifications to give an appearance that change is taking place;
- An "honest" attempt to transform the priorities and activities of higher education; or
- Some combination of the above.

Until the purpose and context of the PBA are provided, one is at a loss to know exactly how to respond -- the nature and substance of a response depends on understanding what the authors of the PBA had intended. Additionally, without a careful discussion of background and context, the ideas presented in the document cannot be tied to a vision that is clear and compelling. Thus, the

reader is left puzzled not only as to the purpose(s) of the document, but also, its intended use, the changes to be attempted, and its possible effects on the System and Campus. In the absence of such a perspective, the document is accepted for critique at “face value.” Below, the ideological, structural and operational issues presented in, and/or raised by the PBA document are discussed.

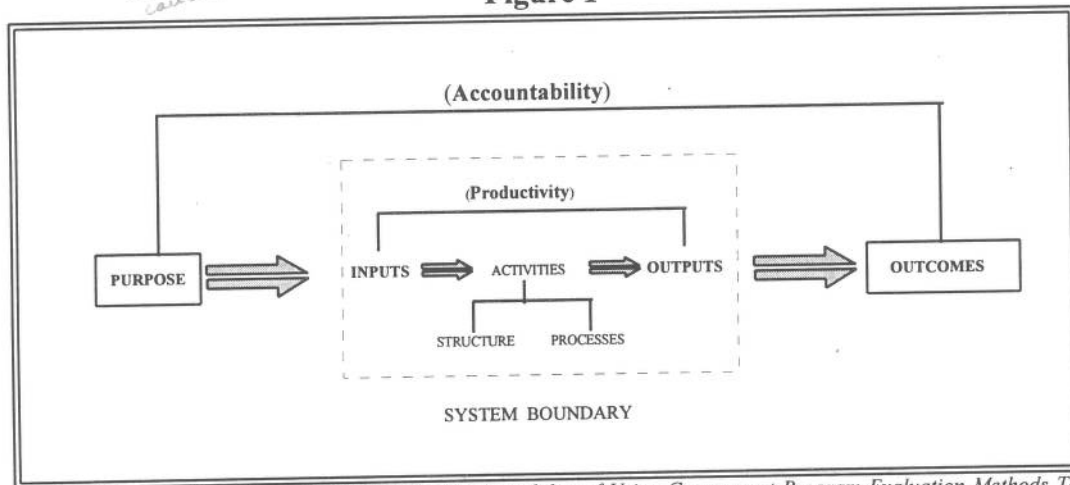
GENERAL FRAMEWORK

The principle construct on which the PBA is based is that of *accountability*. From a system policy perspective, accountability is often referred to as the responsibility to provide evidence to sponsors and stakeholders that what was “paid for” and deemed desirable was actually undertaken, i.e., evidence that a program is operating in conformity to its intended mission and design. Alternatively, from a micro, or managerial perspective, accountability may be viewed as a *tool* to assess the efficiency and effectiveness of program activities. From either vantage, accountability requires evidence of compliance of outcomes with that of intended purpose(s). If the focus is on assessing outputs relative to inputs, the evidentiary issue now becomes one of *productivity* (i.e., how well resources are being used to transform inputs to outputs), not accountability. Figure 1 attempts to depict the conceptual and operational differences between accountability and productivity. Here, delineation of a *system boundary* is used to separate endogenous and exogenous elements with respect to system functions, activities and control.

Produced
 from within

derived
 or developed
 from external
 causes

Figure 1



Modified from working manuscript *Examining The Feasibility of Using Government Program Evaluation Methods To Improve Business Service Quality*: Professor Joseph Orsini, Department of Management, SBA, CSUS.

BASIC ASSUMPTIONS OF THE PROPOSAL

Implied Purpose

Under the section title “Assumptions of this Proposal” (PBA, items 1. and 2., page 1) the following definitions are offered:

“Accountability is a term that refers to the general activity of linking planning priorities, goals, and budgeting to outcomes. (Did the campus achieve what it set out to achieve? Did the campus achieve what the system asked the campus to achieve?)”

“The phrase “accountability measures” refers generally to the evidence offered that links the goal and the degree of its achievement.”

Taken together, the two statements suggests that accountability as applied in the PBA document incorporates both a system policy and a managerial tool perspective. Further, when viewed within the context of the entire document it is evident that accountability has formative as well as summative implications for campus and program review.

Linkage To System-Wide Goals

Assumption 3 appearing on page 2 (“Assumptions of this Proposal”) states that the general areas of campus accountability will be linked to system-wide goals and the system may declare that certain measures are to be used by each campus, e.g., FTES, as indicators of achievement towards these goals. With the inclusion of Assumption 4 (see below), it appears that the authors also intended to provide flexibility at the campus level by including locally focused measures of accountability.

*“Each campus should, however, have the opportunity to select other appropriate measures that demonstrate achievement of both system-wide goals **and** campus determined planning priorities consistent with the distinctive mission of the campus. Therefore, while some measures of accountability will be system-wide, there will also be substantial variations from campus to campus. Accountability measures are not designed for cross-campus comparisons; rather measures are to be used to gauge progress by each campus in achieving its goals.”*

What is confusing is that the phrase “... opportunity to select other measures that demonstrate achievement of **both** system-wide goals **and** campus determined planning priorities ...” implies that campus specific measures must jointly address both local and system-wide goals. That is, the measures related to the distinctive mission of each campus must be in fact, derivatives of those prescribed at the system level. Thus, the arguments (statements) that permit flexibility at the campus level are not well articulated in the document.

If all campus measures are to be fundamentally linked to system-wide goals, then perhaps the intent of Assumption 4 may be clarified by Assumption 5:

“The interpretation of most accountability measures, even those that are system-wide, should not be absolute, but rather must be interpreted in the context of the individual campus (e.g., while time-to-degree will, and should, vary from campus to campus depending on the nature of the student population, each campus should be held accountable to measures of its own progress in maintaining or changing the time-to-degree of its students).”

That is, the *interpretation* of system-wide accountability measures are to be campus specific rather than the measure themselves -- monitoring the progress of each campus in terms of the *individual standards* each has established. Thus, issue of campus flexibility may deal more with the setting standards, not that of selecting accountability measures that are appropriate with respect to campus goals.

Linkage To Budget

It is clear that one of the major purposes of the PBA proposal is to describe the link between system-wide and campus specific priorities, planning, and budget processes. What is not clear is the conceptual and operational link between campus performance, and budget processes and allocations. When considering the later part of Assumption 4, “... Therefore ... Accountability measures are not designed for cross-campus comparisons ...”, one is left with the impression that the accountability-budget link is applicable at only the intra- and not inter-campus level. Given this interpretation, it is difficult to conceive the role that accountability will play in how the system will desegregate its budget at the campus level. As it is currently written, the PBA proposal does not provide any clear evidence that the budgeting process will ever be based on anything other than FTES.

Finally, the logical and operational connection between accountability and budget action as described in Assumption 6 is not clear. Specifically, why is it necessary:

“For the accountability process to measure meaningful change in campus performance, ...”,

“... there must be a clear and significant association between campus performance and budget action.”

The **ability** of the accountability process to measure changes in campus performance, has little to do with the precondition that campus performance is related to budget action. If the intent was to provide explicit linkages between accountability, campus performance and budget action, the statement should be modified to read:

*"For the accountability process to ~~measure~~ **effect** meaningful change in campus performance, ...",*

"... there must be a clear and significant association between campus performance and budget action."

If one accepts the linkages implied by the above statement, the operational philosophy governing budget action(s) needs to be addressed within the PBA proposal. With the provision of such a philosophy units will have a clearer understanding of the budget consequences of programs that are "weak" and/or not performing within their targeted limits -- do these programs receive less or more resources.

ACCOUNTABILITY

Accountability or Productivity

Let us momentarily accept that the four values/goals outlined in the PBA (Access, Representation, Academic Quality, Provision of a Public Good) accurately and exhaustively reflect the *purpose(s)* of the [CSUS] system. For accountability to be an appropriate PBA construct, the proposed measures of accountability must be **outcome** based and direct expressions of exogenous system objectives (determined by system stakeholders and sponsors) - this is a simply a matter of definition. Consider FTES, headcount, graduation rates, retention rates and the numerous other "counting" based measures proposed in the PBA. These unidimensional, numeric indicators are more closely related to system **outputs** rather than system outcomes. As such, they are **productivity**, not accountability focused. The reasonableness of this conclusion is particularly cogent if one equates any or all of these measures to inputs (resources) -- the ratio of outputs to inputs is the classic operational definition of productivity, e.g., program FTES to program dollars. On the other hand, the proposed satisfaction based indicators, e.g., student and employer satisfaction, may serve as better proxies to system outcomes as they relate to quality -- the totality of features and characteristics of a product or service that bears on its ability to satisfy given needs (American Society for Quality Control). Here, the issue is more than a matter of definition, the difference between productivity and accountability, but is one of operation or implementation. If we are dealing with outputs-to-inputs, i.e., productivity, then positive changes in productivity may be readily accomplished at the expense of diminished outcomes. *For the sake of discussion let us consider the standard operational definition of productivity:*¹

Productivity = outputs/inputs.

¹ Typically in service institution, e.g., education, productivity is defined as the ratio of total benefits to total cost. 1995 AAHE Conference; Massy and Winger; "Faculty Productivity."

Clearly, productivity can be increased in a variety of ways, all with little or no regard for outcomes related to teaching and learning, excellence, service to students, community, etc.:

- Increasing the numerator, e.g., FTES, with the denominator held constant, e.g., faculty dollars;
- Decreasing the denominator, e.g., faculty dollars, with the numerator held constant, e.g., FTES; or
- Some combination of the above.

Beyond these operational concerns, the *major source of potential conflict* between system entities with respect to the PBA document will be found in how each defines the purpose, outcomes, inputs, and outputs of the system. In light of the differences in roles, functions, expectations and responsibilities between administrative and faculty entities, one would expect to find corresponding differences in how each of these terms are defined. Administrative entities may tend to have a policy, resource, quantitative management orientation, and faculty entities finding themselves operating singularly within a people, process, qualitative based paradigm. While both perspectives may be essential to the vitality of the system, they may serve as the major source of disagreement between faculty and administration. Are system inputs dollars or students, or both? Are outputs numeric “things” or qualitative “things,” or both? Are we interested in campus or faculty accountability and productivity or both? The answer to these questions is that, it depends. It depends on who is asking and the contextual level of reference, e.g., instructional, campus, or [CSU] system. Until there is common agreement as to what constitutes the purpose, outcomes, inputs, and outputs of the system for each level of context (instructional, campus, CSU), little progress will be made towards developing formative and/or summative accountability and/or productive measures.

Joint Accountability

The document also lacks any sense of *reciprocal accountability*, a prized element in such a management tool. When accountability is "reciprocal", it details the ways in which all parties in the system (here, the campus, system and even the legislature) are accountable to each other in achieving desired system outcomes. Take the goal of access, for example. To place accountability for access at the campus level, *for all who are prepared for and wish to participate in collegiate study*, is stunningly unfair. The system must also be held accountable for their support (or lack thereof) and the legislature, for its funding, policy decisions and mandates. It most disturbing that the PBA presents accountability solely on the shoulders of each campus. If accountability is to be taken seriously, then all parties that are responsible for maintaining compliance of outcomes with intended purpose must be equally subject to the provision of evidence.

PROPOSED GOALS AND MEASURES

In light of the issues discussed thus far, there is little point in responding to each of the thirty proposed system-wide accountability measures. The basic framework of the proposal requires such mending, that it would be unproductive to discuss these granular components at this time. However, several general observations can be made. First, the four goals described (Access, Representation, Academic Quality, Provision of a Public Good) in the document lack *face* and *content validity*; nor have they been logically linked to intended purpose and desired outcomes. What is needed is a clear statement of purpose -- the desired outcomes and appropriate measures will logically follow, albeit, with much effort. Second, the proposal fails to recognize that desired outcomes are not the same as outcome measures. Outcomes are either ideals to strive for (long-term), or steps (sub-goals) leading to the achievement of these ideals (short-term) -- steps that are reasonable to achieve, given both the constraints and the opportunities available. On the other hand, outcome *measures* are indicators that are used to evaluate the progress towards achieving desired outcomes. Finally, and in operational terms most critically, the proposed measures of accountability are not accompanied by performance standards. It is impossible to determine appropriate levels of performance in the absence of such standards.

REMARKS

Perhaps, the real issue before us is not one of accountability but that of change. In questioning the role (purpose) and desired outcomes of higher education, we are challenged to find new paradigms of change. Issues of how we as an institution will identify and respond to the driving forces of change, and the manner by which we evaluate our outcomes and outputs for the purpose of continuous improvement, go to the very heart of the accountability issue.

If the system is to successfully move towards a new paradigm of planning, budgeting and accountability, then all stakeholders, students, staff, faculty and administrators, must be included in its development, and all must be held subject to the performance expectation(s) of the paradigm. In this participatory spirit, the current proposal should be set aside and the process start anew. Providing a genuine participative and conceptual foundation will determine the ultimate success or failure of the process. Have all constituents begin with the basics of accountability. Have them identify, from their own perspective, the purpose and outcomes for each system level (CSU, campus, program, faculty, and etc.) -- the level of granularity to be determined by objectives of the accountability plan. Then, for each level and perspective, have the participants define the basic elements of productivity -- inputs and outputs. Given this inclusive base, identifying valid measures and operational procedures becomes technical, although nontrivial activities of the design process.

Steering Committee
CSUS Academic Senate

FACULTY ACCOUNTABILITY

FORMAT FOR DISCUSSION

I. KEY DEFINITIONS

A. Accountability:

Evidence that a program is operating in conformity to its intended mission and design. More precisely, evidence that there is congruence between the **INTENDED PURPOSE & OUTCOMES of a system or program.**

There are two uses of accountability: 1) summative--accountability of the whole/of a system (CSUS has a purpose and outcomes) and 2) formative--accountability of the pieces of the whole--formative accountability is used as a management tool, much like "process monitoring", to improve pieces of the system gone awry (is Social Work "producing" social workers)

TO DETERMINE ACCOUNTABILITY ONE MUST KNOW THE PURPOSE OF THE ENTITY BEING HELD ACCOUNTABLE AND THE OUTCOME EXPECTED BY THAT SAME ENTITY.

B. Productivity:

Is a measure of inputs to outputs--is generally a measure telling "how well" resources are being used to transform inputs to outputs, i.e. a measure of efficiency.

C. Quality:

The totality of features and characteristics of a product or service that bears on its ability to satisfy given needs.

NOTE: NO WHERE IN THE DEFINITIONS OF ACCOUNTABILITY AND PRODUCTIVITY IS THERE AN IMPLIED QUALITY.

II. KEY CONCEPTS

A. Context for Accountability:

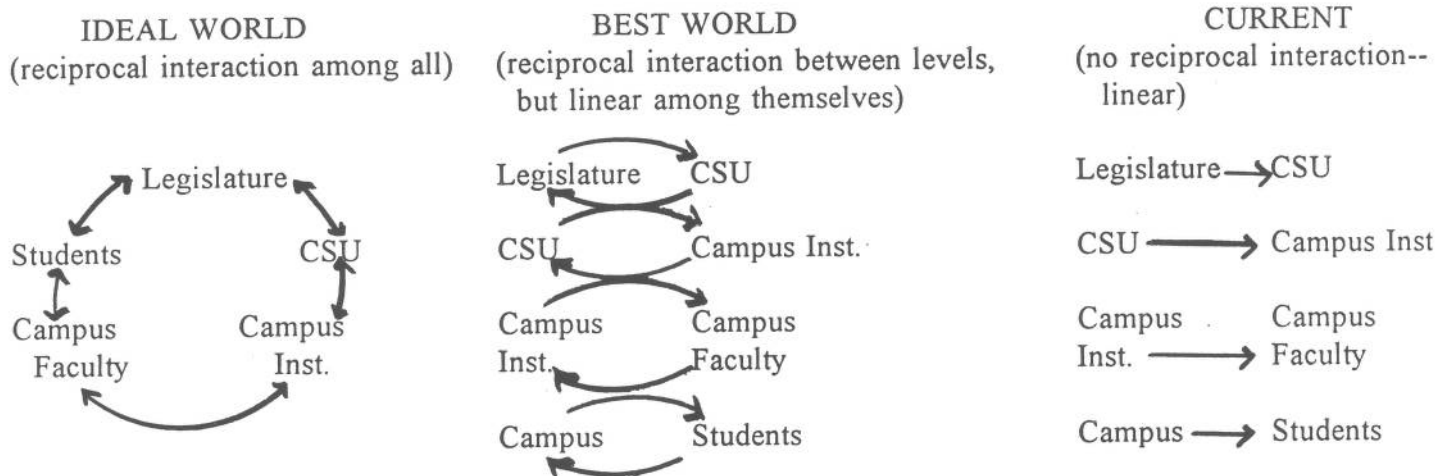
There are different contexts, or combination of contexts, within which a discussion of accountability in Higher Education could take place--

- *State/Legislative (Legislature) level as context
- *CSU System level as context
- *Campus level Institutional/Administrative context
- *Campus level Instructional Program/Faculty (the Collective) as context
- *Campus Student body as context

B. Reciprocal Accountability:

Identifies the complex network (and interdependencies) of relationships within an organization or system that details the ways in which all parties in the organization are accountable to each other in meeting a standard.

Reciprocal Accountability is depicted graphically below "in an ideal world", "in the best of worlds", and "in our current situation":



III. BEGINNING THE DISCUSSION (an example)

To begin a discussion of Accountability we must begin asking and answering a set of questions. For example, if we were to engage in a discussion of accountability for Higher Education in general (THE CONTEXT) we would ask the following questions:

1. What is the PURPOSE of higher education?
2. If there is more than one specified purpose, how shall the multiple purposes be prioritized?
3. What are the expected OUTCOMES by which a singular PURPOSE is judged to have been achieved?
4. What are the STANDARDS by which an OUTCOME is judged to be of quality or acceptability?

5. What kinds of measures will tell us if the STANDARDS are met?
6. What are the ACTIVITIES engaged in by higher education to carry out its purpose?

The above questions get us to a point of ascertaining Summative Accountability. The following question would engage us in a discussion of Formative Accountability:

7. What kinds of measures will tell us whether or not an activity "is working" or "not working" and why (this is an example of "formative accountability"). Of course, for every activity identified in #3 above, there must also be a specified purpose, related outcome and corresponding standards and measures.

IV. THE MARCH 16TH DISCUSSION

To begin OUR discussion, we must first SET THE CONTEXT. It is for us a given: Campus level, Instructional Program/CSUS Faculty. Having set the context, we shall frame our discussion by asking and answering (through dialogue) the questions identified in III above.

A. What is our purpose as A FACULTY?

- * is it the growth and development of people (students)^{of faculty}
- * is it "education" towards a specific purpose, e.g. jobs, mastery of specific skills (critical thinking, writing, reading, computer literacy, problems solving)
- * is it production of new knowledge
- * is it public/community service other than "education" or the growth and development of students
- * is it to provide a place for Academics "to be" (exist)
- * is it ...(any faculty member can fill in the space as a way of suggesting other alternatives)

B. If we, the FACULTY as a COLLECTIVE, have multiple purposes, in what priority order shall we place them?

C. OUTCOMES: What are the descriptive behaviors/measures indicative of having accomplished each singular purpose?

D. What STANDARDS may be used to judge the quality of each OUTCOME?

E. What measures may be used to ascertain the degree to which a standard was met or exceeded or not met?

F. What activities of the Faculty contribute directly to the accomplishment of the stated PURPOSE and its corresponding OUTCOMES?

G. Given what we (the Faculty) have just said (having delineated our purpose, outcomes, standards, and measures) by what outcomes, standards, and measures shall the CSUS campus and the CSU system be held accountable, so that we (the Faculty) may be held accountable in return? THIS IS THE QUESTION OF "RECIPROCAL ACCOUNTABILITY"--A PROPOSITION WITHOUT WHICH "FACULTY ACCOUNTABILITY HAS NO MERIT. Reciprocal accountability contains negotiated properties between and among the different entities of one system.

This set of questions is presumed to lead us in the pursuit of answering the following question: On the basis of what should we, as a FACULTY, HOLD OURSELVES accountable for that which we do. Arriving at a consensus does not guarantee that the legislature, system, or public will agree to our purpose or set of accountability measures, but at least we, as A FACULTY, will have said our piece about that which is reasonable and appropriate for CSUS.

Notes from 3/16/95 Academic Senate Meeting re Faculty Accountability

PURPOSE

qualitative* measures
home rule
multiple purposes
discovery in the eye of the student
student talent development, more human aspect of students
role and responsibility of faculty
growth and development of students and faculty
facilitate persistence in learning
support the community
rational and humane society
move a student from A to B
 student self evaluation
 pre/post test
 portfolio
continuation of the University
growth and development and discovery on part of both faculty and students
baseline of where students are
teaching students vs teaching a subject
holistic view (faculty responsibility for the whole)
rational and humane world
how accountability is currently measured in higher education
survey of alumni
successful (are our students)
did we help them become successful
are you happy--your life vs \$75,000/year
why is a university accessible to all important to a society?
rationality
involvement in public life
commitment to cause

educated citizenry
we forget this is a political struggle
relative position of higher education in the world
 order
feedback from alumni
takes time to realize importance
higher education--master process in change in self and others vs vocational education
high to establish milestones along the way to determine if the process is being mastered
 measurable objectives
what should students be able to do upon graduation?
read, write, and get a job
the intangibles + read, write, and get a job--
 universal and higher purpose
accountability vs productivity
the education of students vs production of degrees, jobs, etc.
values vs production
set lofty ideals (sell them to the public)
play the game--deal with legislature
 how to pay the game
we have to be convinced that we are doing well
 by our students
be strategic without compromising our values
deal w/people (voters)
we are not using our relationship with the public
argue for those terms, we have to take the turf
explain ourselves