

12/10/98

**FS 98- (F1) English Diagnostic Test ---Recision of Differential English Requirements based on National Origin**

The Faculty Senate finds the University Policy that requires undergraduate students who are Permanent Residents or International Students on VISA from non-English Speaking countries take the English Diagnostic test in addition to the English Placement Test, and that bars students from registering for failure to take the exam (pg. 69, 1998-2000 CSUS Catalog), to be a form of discrimination on the basis of national origin in conflict with the University's non-discrimination policy (pg. 576, CSUS Catalog). Therefore, be it resolved, the Faculty Senate strongly recommends to the President that the policy promulgated under the title, "English Requirements for International Students (on Visa) and Permanent Residents" (pg. 68, 1998-2000 CSUS Catalog) be rescinded.

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English Requirements for International Students (on Visa) and Permanent Residents" (pg. 68, 1998-2000 CSUS Catalog)

**English Diagnostic Test**

All undergraduate international students (on visa) and permanent residents (green card holders) from non-English speaking countries must take both the English Placement Test (unless exempt; see above) and the English Diagnostic Test (EDT). All other native speakers of languages other than English are encouraged to take the EDT as well. The English Diagnostic Test will determine placement in the most appropriate course for each student and will determine which students are eligible for the ESL administration of the Writing Proficiency Exam. Until this test requirement is met, International students and permanent residents will not be allowed to register for any classes, including ESL classes.

**NONDISCRIMINATION POLICY** (pg. 596, 1998-2000 CSUS Catalog)

**Age, Ethnicity, Sexual Orientation, Religion, Marital, Pregnancy, or Vietnam Era Veteran Status**

California State University, Sacramento does not discriminate on the basis of age, ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation, marital status, pregnancy or Vietnam Era veteran status in any of its programs or activities. CSUS complies with all applicable federal, state, and Trustee policies in this area.

**Race, Color or National Origin**

California State University, Sacramento complies with the requirements of Titles VI and VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the regulations adopted thereunder. No person shall, on the grounds of race, color, or national origin be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be otherwise subjected to discrimination (including harassment) under any program of the California State University.

J. Keltner distributed  
before 12/10/98  
Senale

From: "v. t. hornback" <hornbackv@skynet2.csus.edu>  
Organization: CSU Sacramento  
To: thornback@csus.edu  
Date sent: Thu, 10 Dec 1998 13:25:42 PST8PDT  
Subject: (Fwd) [Fwd: "'Cornerstones Implementation Plan': Two Th  
Send reply to: thornback@csus.edu  
Priority: normal

I thought you might be interested in seeing this piece which I've sent to my fellow senators at SDSU.

Jerry Farber

The "Cornerstones Implementation Plan": Two Thumbs Down

I want to propose that, in reviewing this plan, we need to see it less as a collection of recommendations to be addressed one by one than as a coherent text where the interrelationships among the parts may be more meaningful than the separate parts themselves. In fact, this "Cornerstones Implementation Plan," when you look at it as a whole, turns out to have something like a plot. (Actually, there may be a plot here in as many as three senses of the word, but at this point I'm concerned with "plot" as a sequence of events--in this case, a classic Aristotelian plot, with a beginning, a middle, and an end.)

BEGINNING: THE NEW AGE OF "OUTCOMES"

So what is this tale that the chancellor's office has to tell? I would say it starts in Section "A" with "outcomes assessment." For every major (the story begins), for every GE program, we are to identify "outcomes" and establish a process for measuring the extent to which students achieve them. And then we're to make such measurements a basis for assessing the programs themselves. OK. But note how even at the outset this story skillfully creates a certain tension in the reader, raises certain intriguing questions.

Many of us are aware that, at its worst, "outcomes assessment" may be little more than bureaucratic busywork: a mindless, off-center, time-wasting exercise in going through the motions. But even at its best, "outcomes assessment" may force us to choose between either setting up broad and appropriate goals which don't lend themselves at all well to precise measurement or establishing sharp-edged, easily measurable goals which ignore or marginalize much of what may matter most in a particular program. One way or another, there's going to be a lot of fudging going on as programs and departments scurry to survive unscathed under this new set of management mandates. (One imagines something along the lines of a Dilbert comic strip.) And, of course, it's not as though we don't do, and undergo, an extraordinary amount of assessment already. Many of us may feel that we already spend half our time involved with one kind of assessment or another.

So what is it exactly that's to be gained, the reader wonders, by adding yet another layer of assessment to our working lives?

Well, let's find out. This "Cornerstones Implementation Plan" is becoming something of a page-turner.

#### THE MIDDLE: "OUTCOMES" IN, UNITS OUT

Plot-wise, the middle of this story falls in Section "C." Here we learn that CSU policy is to be revised to "minimize references to units required." This is going to include GE, but apparently will not be limited to it. Immediately a question is likely to arise in the reader's mind: just why is it so important to minimize references to units? We're not supposed to mention units? What's going on?

The answer follows immediately and, for attentive readers, inevitably. What the chancellor's office has in mind is a move away from courses and units and toward those very outcomes that were mandated at the outset. It's all spelled out in "C-3": the reason trustee policy is going to be revised is "to enable universities to shift attention to student learning outcomes and away from course and unit-based curricula."

The tension at this point is mounting. "Outcomes," apparently, were put in place so that they could then be substituted for courses and units. But then where are these outcomes supposed to come out from? Granted, it seems terribly efficient to pare postsecondary education down to outcomes. And yes, courses and units have always been a bit of a bother: students, for example, have to make lists, and choose, and add up units, and what all. So is it some sort of Socratic model the chancellor's office has in mind? Are we just going to wander sandal-shod with our students through whatever grove is handy until they're ready to come out with their outcomes?

The answer is not long in arriving.

#### THE END: BEYOND TIME AND SPACE

It is in Section "D" that we learn that the university is to be freed not only from "course-based units," but also from the constraints of time and space. Reading this only increases our bewilderment. Yet there it is, right in front of us: universities are going to set about "removing, to the extent possible, constraints on teaching and learning caused by time or location." How on earth do you manage that? But it is at this point, when the plot seems at its most bizarre, when it appears utterly unresolvable, that the denouement takes place. "D-3" gives us a list of ways in which the university is to transcend time and place in order to accommodate "the personal situations of students"; and in this list we find:

- "certification of learning,"
- "job-site teaching/learning,"
- "use of technology mediated instruction."

Oh.

Of course. As in a good mystery, it all makes sense when you look back. The plot comes into focus. First, we're to reduce what we're doing to a set of measurable outcomes. Then we're to substitute these outcomes for courses and units. And then, of course, what used to be called education becomes essentially a matter of assessing outcomes, which students will acquire in whatever way is most convenient. Some may choose to show up at a university campus, if it's nearby, or at their neighborhood center. Some will pick up their outcomes wherever they can--on the Web, by correspondence school, wherever--and come to us to have them certified. Some will learn without ever having to leave their workplace as the university learns to blend seamlessly and profitably into corporate in-service programs. And a great many will get their outcomes from CSU via the computer screen. Certainly, if you want to free yourself from the constraints of time and space, the screen is definitely the way to go. And, to this end, we learn in Section "G" that (poor as the CSU is supposed to be) one thing we can count on will be support for training in technology-mediated instruction and for "conversion of courses and program to new modes of instruction."

It's a fairly exciting plot and one with an ingenious conclusion. But the problem, as with so many of these stories, is that it's just not true to life. In fact, not to mince words, it's incredibly stupid. Don't they know in the chancellor's office that what you can measure is only a part, albeit an essential one, of postsecondary education? Don't they know that one crucial reason why assessment has to be handled wisely and with the most judicious restraint, from elementary school to graduate school, is to prevent it from constricting education to its own dimensions?

It's a story I just can't buy. Does the chancellor's office honestly expect readers to believe that the university campus represents nothing more than an inconvenience from which tomorrow's students (and their employers) must be freed? Do they really think you can move education intact from the campus and the classroom to the screen? These people are supposed to be educators--are they entirely unaware of the research which demonstrates the crucial importance of student-student interaction and student-faculty interaction, both inside and outside of class, in bringing about the wide range of effects that are produced by university education?\*

And do they really think that education, important as its economic role is, is only about economics?

So, gripping as this story is, I'm afraid we're going to have to give it two thumbs down. It just doesn't wash.

But, at the same time, I keep wondering if it may not be my own naivete that's keeping me from appreciating this text. I can hear someone telling me, "Farber, don't be such a fool. You say it's not true to life. But that's because you yourself are totally out of touch. Open your eyes: this is where things are going! Get with the

program! Here you are yammering on about 'education.' Wake up! Education isn't even an issue with these people. Don't you understand? They're going to let the UC system take care of 'education,' whatever that means. Meanwhile, the CSU system is being converted to a tightly centralized, market-based, tenure-free job training enterprise. Period. This story is as realistic as it can be, and it's happening, whether you like it or not."

"Not true!" I cry. "Didn't you read the Cornerstones document itself? These people are totally dedicated to a decentralized system. I still remember the words; I got all teary-eyed just reading them: 'We will insist on the greatest possible autonomy for our campuses to reach our statewide goals.'"

But this voice just laughs: "Right. If it's the rhetoric you want, they'll ladle it on to your heart's desire. But the reality is another story. Look at the implementation plan, fool. Can't you see that these people are moving toward systemwide GE requirements. In fact, they want systemwide preparation-for-the-major requirements. Everything's going to be totally standardized and centralized. So what's next? Systemwide majors? And all this "virtual university" business, and this new distance-learning teacher-training program they're buying from the Open University. Don't you see that the chancellor's office is taking more and more into its own hands, and using the statewide academic senate as its patsy? Don't you see that distance learning is the wave the chancellor and his people are going to ride in on? Campuses are an anachronism in cyberspace, so what does autonomy mean? There's just going to be one single university--if you can still call it a university. Forget autonomy. They'll let you guys in San Diego have your own team name and your own selection of corporate logos on the letterhead; that's going to be your autonomy, and that's going to be all the autonomy you get."

"OK, OK, but not 'tenure-free,'" I protest weakly. "Charlie Reed says he doesn't want to get rid of tenure."

The voice is relentless. "Oh, sure, not in a frontal assault maybe. Of course. But notice that what he wants is to establish the principle that the university will have a mix of some tenured positions and some positions on, say, a three-to-five year contract. So they can have "flexibility"--which is administrative-ese for being fully market-driven. And then you'll get to "negotiate" the percentage of each. Just like you people are "negotiating" with them now about merit raises. Lots of luck to you! And with every percentage point they're able to reduce tenure-track faculty, resistance will decrease and the process will accelerate."

Well, one way or another. Either the voice is right or I am. Either the story is wildly unrealistic, because the chancellor's office doesn't know what education is and only needs to be taught--or the story is true to life because education is simply not an issue with them and nothing's going to stop them from turning the CSU system, as quickly as possible, into a cheesy, mass-production,

lowest-cost-per-unit job training mill.

So what do you think? Is the story realistic or a fantasy? What I want to suggest, having thought about it, is that this is really up to us to decide.

Some of us may remember that they tried to pitch this story to us a year and a half ago with the original Cornerstones document. But the CSU campuses wouldn't buy it. So they came back with a somewhat more realistic story: Cornerstones II. It had more than a few weaknesses, but it played a little better. But you see, that first story, that basic story, that original story, seems to be one they're not willing to let go of. Because this new so-called "Implementation Plan" is really Cornerstones III, and it's the worst of all. It's the story that won't die. And I don't think we should find it reassuring that the vice-chancellor is humbly presenting this plan to us as a mere "starting point for campus discussion." We can tinker with the plan, and amend it (in the two months they've allotted to us), but then what if they just wait a month or two and come up with essentially the same old story or something worse still, decked out in a fresh coat of crowd-pleasing rhetoric, and then speed it through the Board of Trustees, touting it as "the result of years of thoughtful planning and scrupulous statewide consultation." The chancellor's office is after something and they simply don't want to let it go, no matter what we say and no matter how ostensibly open and collegial they may appear. We're here to be "managed," and manipulated, not heeded. That's the second meaning of "plot" that I referred to at the outset. And the third meaning, of course, is the place marked out for a burial. Because what this text is about, when you read it attentively, is the death of a university system.

Some of us may well choose to enjoy this "Implementation Plan" as a scary, trashy fantasy, released appropriately a couple of weeks before Halloween. And that's fine. I'm hardly a literary purist. But dear colleagues, we don't have to live it. We don't have to make it real. We don't have to buy it as the representation of some inevitable future. This "inevitabilism," this helpless hand-wringing, this standing around in the corridors and saying, "Oh well, it's all going to hell, but what can you do about it, and besides I'm out of here in [X] years," is nothing less than irresponsible. If we don't defend the university, who will? What we need to do with this plan is not try to amend it in small ways here and there, but bury it, in its own plot, with a stake through its heart, and get on with writing our own stories. Stories, not story. In the CSU system of universities: twenty-two separate stories. Great ones, if possible.

Jerry Farber

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NOTE:

\*I summarize research on college effects and discuss the role played in them by interaction with faculty and students, by the classroom setting, and by the larger physical setting of the university campus, in an article, "The Third Circle: On Education and Distance Learning,"

which will be appearing shortly in a special issue of Sociological Perspectives (Vol. 41, No. 4, 1998).