

PARTNERSHIP FOR EXCELLENCE

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

Revised as of July 28, 1999

The budget language for the Partnership is provided in SB 1564, SEC. 35, Section 84754 (www.cccco.edu/partnership.htm). Following are the key principles from the Concept Paper driving the Partnership:

“The Partnership for Excellence is a mutual commitment by the State of California and the California Community Colleges system to significantly expand the contribution of the community colleges to the social and economic success of California. It is structured in phases, with substantial financial investment by the State in exchange for a credible commitment from the System to specific student and performance outcomes.”

“The State shall commit first to fully funding enrollment expansion both to meet population growth and to expand the college participation rate, and to protecting the colleges against inflationary erosion through annual cost-of-living adjustments. The State shall then commit to annually investing \$100 million as an infusion into base apportionment funding.”

The key dates associated with the implementation of the Partnership are provided below:

1998-99 to 2000-01

Partnership for Excellence funds are distributed to districts following the usual FTES basis, which includes credit and noncredit enrollment. \$100 million was allocated in the 1998-99 budget year and an additional \$45 million will be allocated in the 1999-00 budget year. Therefore, your district will receive an FTES based portion of \$145 million for 1999-00.

January 12, 1999

- 1) Utilizing the Consultation process, the Chancellor proposed and the Board of Governors (BOG) adopted the Partnership goals and measures. (See www.cccco.edu/partnership.htm for a copy of the document).
- 2) The decision the BOG made was based not only on the results of Consultation, but also on efforts by the Chancellor to seek general concurrence from the California Postsecondary Education Commission (CPEC), the Department of Finance (DOF), and the Legislative Analyst. As part of the concurrence process, the Chancellor was to propose some additional goals in the areas of ‘transfer ready’ and ‘certificates of less than 18 units in duration’ as suggested by the Department of Finance, the Legislative Analyst and the California Postsecondary Education Commission (see Appendix C of the FACT Book at www.cccco.edu/partnership.htm for more information).

The Accountability Umbrella Group, a task force of the Consultation Council, has been working on these measures.

Annually on April 15
(beginning 1999)

The Chancellor is to compile and analyze data and report to the Legislature, Governor, CPEC, and other interested parties, information on the progress of the Partnership for Excellence. The report is to include data specific to each district and college and progress toward the goals with respect to the differences in student population and student preparedness by each district and college.

The first edition of this report, entitled *The Partnership for Excellence FACT Book, District and Baseline Data for 1995-96, 1996-97, and 1997-98 (May 1999)*, was distributed to all stakeholders. Copies are available upon request from Douglas Jordan at (916) 322-5229 or djordan@cccco.edu and are also available on the Chancellor's Office web site at www.cccco.edu/partnership.htm. *Note: It is anticipated that the 1998-99 data will be published in a similar format in October, 1999.*

April 15, 2000

- 1) Utilizing the Consultation Process, the Chancellor is to propose to the Board of Governors one or more contingent funding allocation method(s) and criteria that would require the implementation of these options (i.e., a district specific funding mechanism).
- 2) When making its decision the BOG is to consider comments by the DOF, CPEC, and the Legislative Analyst.
- 3) Chief Deputy Chancellor Glee Johnson is chairing a Contingent Funding Task Force charged with this activity.

April 15, 2001

- 1) The BOG shall assess and report the extent to which achievement of goals has been satisfactory or less than satisfactory, using the criteria developed previously.
- 2) The BOG, based on input from Consultation, shall decide whether or not to implement a contingent district specific funding plan.

Annually by September 30
(beginning 1999)

Individual colleges/districts will submit a list of actual PFE expenditures for the current budget year, as well as proposed expenditures for the following budget year.

2001-2002
(or any year thereafter)

The BOG is authorized to allocate all or a portion of Partnership for Excellence funds among districts pursuant to the contingent funding allocation method.

January 1, 2005 *Education Code*, Section 84754, Partnership for Excellence, will sunset unless a later statute enacted before January 1, 2005, deletes or extends the date.

FINANCES

- 1. Are the Partnership dollars in the system's base funding? Are they in the district's base? Should they be treated as on-going funds? What happens if a college carries PFE funds over to subsequent budget years?**

Yes, they are in the system's base. If the system decides it is necessary to shift to a contingent district specific funding mechanism in year four, it is possible that the base of individual districts could be affected. We will seek, as a system, to avoid that contingency by making progress toward the goals. Since PFE funds are not categorical, but rather based on FTES, they should be treated the same as other carried-over funds.

- 2. What happens if there is a downturn in the economy and a reduction of state funding for the California Community Colleges? What is the district's obligation if the funds are reduced in future budgets?**

The goals and outcome measures, as stated in the legislation, have always been proposed and intended as increases that could be accomplished with funding in addition to full funding of the statutory requirements for COLA and growth. The Partnership represents a mutual commitment made by the state and the community college system. Thus, any reduction in funding will significantly impact the districts' ability to improve beyond what could be expected with just COLA and growth funding.

- 3. If after three years the system changes to district specific allocations, will the contingent funding be based on future augmentations or the funding districts have already received up to that point as part of their base allocation?**

It is unlikely that any proposal to redistribute the funding received to date could be implemented, but certainly any redistribution proposal is not possible in advance of the development of the specific contingent funding mechanism. A Contingent Funding Task Force has been formed to begin consideration of a wide range of factors that may affect future funding allocations. An initial discussion of elements which might be considered part of a contingent funding mechanism are provided in "Developing Contingent Funding Methods for the Partnership for Excellence: a Chancellor's Office Working Paper (March 1999) (www.cccco.edu/partnership.htm).

- 4. Does the district have to make improvements in all of the outcome measures to receive funding?**

During the first three years the districts will receive funding on an FTES basis. At this time, we have developed system goals and outcome measures allowing districts the flexibility to make improvements in any of the outcome measures.

- 5. Is the Partnership a categorical program for the purposes of Education Code Section 87470?**

No. Permissible uses of the funds

- 6. The Governor approved \$145 million in 1999-00 to Partnership for Excellence with an intent that those colleges with low transfer rates to universities and colleges must improve their transfer rates by 15%. How will the Chancellor's Office determine which colleges have low transfer rates?**

At the writing of this FAQs, the definition of low transfer rate has not been determined. Chancellor's Office staff is developing several options which will be taken to the Accountability Umbrella Group for review.

PERMISSIBLE USES OF THE FUNDS

- 7. How can the Partnership funds be used?**

Consistent with the system's concept for the Partnership and the budget act language, funds may be used in any manner, developed through the appropriate consultative and participatory governance requirements locally, that is designed to bring progress on the goals. Suggested areas include the following, but other creative approaches are expected to be identified and pursued:

“Improving course, certificate, and degree completion rates by enhancing libraries and learning resource centers, lowering student-to-instructor and student-to-counselor ratios, expanding articulation with colleges and schools, increasing the proportion of credit instruction taught by full-time faculty, continuously enhancing the professional development of faculty and staff, conducting evaluative research on student success, enriching student services programs such as matriculation, and reinvigorating transfer centers.”

“Intensifying the economic impact of the colleges by expanding access to high-demand occupational programs, continuously aligning the curriculum to meet workforce demand and stimulate economic development, and developing specialized employer-based training in response to dynamic local needs.”

- 8. Is there any general rule or standard that can be applied in determining whether Partnership funds can be used for a given purpose?**

Yes, expenditure of Partnership funds is appropriate if such use can reasonably be expected to help achieve Partnership goals by improving student success. The important factor is the nexus between the system goals being worked on and the expenditure of the funds. The Chancellor's Office does not intend to publish a list of permissible and impermissible uses. It will be up to the districts to target their use of the funds toward the Partnership goals, and to assess locally how the goals can best be affected in each unique situation.

Districts need to be cognizant of the implications of the use of these funds for the district's status in relation to the 50% law.

9. What about using Partnership funds for salary increases?

While not illegal per se, we advise against the use of Partnership funds for general salary increases for at least two important reasons. First, it is not clear how a general salary increase can reasonably be expected to help achieve Partnership goals. Second, one or more state agencies that will be reviewing and recommending future funding for the Partnership for Excellence (the Department of Finance) view the use of Partnership funds for salary increases as an inappropriate use of these funds. Again, the concern is that the funds be used for activities and programs that are specifically designed to improve performance on the system's goals. While the use of Partnership funds for some sort of salary increase is not illegal per se, we all need to be concerned about the future success and funding for the program. Accordingly, we advise extreme caution in this regard.

10. What about using Partnership funds to retire debt or build reserves?

One-time use of the funds in 1998-99 for debt retirement might have been appropriate if it were related to the goals (i.e., if the debt is a barrier to goal attainment). The legislative intent for use of the funds is to advance system goals. Continuation of Partnership funding in the future depends in part on a good faith effort of districts to meet this intent. Districts are encouraged to use a majority of these funds for new activities or enhancement of existing activities related to the goals, but this is a decision which would be made locally. Such action is not restricted but it is not advised. As for building reserves, use of the funds for this purpose is not directly related to progress toward the goals.

11. Is there something for which we *have* to spend the money?

No, there are no specific required expenditures.

12. Can the Partnership for Excellence funds be spent to strengthen student service support programs? For example, can colleges use funds to add counselors, provide for greater support of Transfer Centers, and improve matriculation and other student services programs?

Partnership for Excellence funding can and should be used on programs that will assist colleges as they make a contribution to the system goals. Matriculation data show that colleges place a good deal of their matriculation funding into access services, such as assessment, admissions, orientation and initial advisement, but spend fewer dollars per student on follow-up and research aspects of matriculation. Partnership for Excellence funds could be used to strengthen programs that will directly impact students attaining their goals. Since students may change their goals, such funds might be used to strengthen programs such as career counseling, transfer centers, tutoring, educational advisement, counseling and other student service programs.

13. What is the role of contract education, fee-based courses and noncredit in the Partnership?

The goal on workforce development includes contract education offerings in the areas of: the number of California businesses benefiting from training, the number of employees benefiting from training, and the number of individuals receiving fee-based training. As is noted elsewhere, the mechanisms for counting these activities are under development. ED>Net data will be used at first to capture contract education activities and job-related fee-based courses with the hope that these data may be captured in MIS in the future. It is appropriate to use the funds in areas that relate to contract education. Community services courses which are not job related are not a part of the Partnership for Excellence goals. Some noncredit course activities will be captured in the goal on Basic Skills. There is currently no separate goal on noncredit programs.

14. How can a district find out about “best practices” in use by other districts in moving toward the goals?

This subject was a focus of the annual spring “mega-conference” sponsored by the Board of Governors and the Chancellor’s Office and staff have participated in numerous workshops, seminars and meetings on this topic since then. Also the Chancellor’s Office continues to work with the Academic Senate, Community College League, CIOs, CSSOs, and others in identifying best practices.

GOALS

15. What happens after three years?

The third year report by the Board of Governors to the Legislature will use 1999-2000 data and, where available and appropriate, Fall 2000 data. These data will be made available in the spring of 2001. It will indicate whether reasonable progress has been made toward the system goals. If reasonable progress has been made, based on agreed-upon criteria, then funding will continue to be allocated on a per FTES basis, unless the system elects to reward significant or sustained achievement. System performance would then be assessed annually. On the other hand, if the state fulfills its investment commitment, and the system makes little or no progress, the Board of Governors would be authorized to take action to assure system accountability, such as sharing and distributing accountability among the districts through a contingent funding allocation, which would create direct incentives at the district level for achievement of the goals, or some other approach which may be identified. The earliest such a change would take place is the 2001-02 fiscal year.

16. Is there a coordinated, systemwide strategic plan for achievement of the goals?

No, the goals are for the system as a whole, but the progress toward them will depend on the individual actions of each district. The Chancellor’s Office will facilitate the sharing of “best practices,” but the success of the Partnership depends upon the wisdom, experience, professionalism and commitment of the staff and governing boards of each district. On the other hand, the Chancellor will collect and combine the efforts of the 71 districts, and we will analyze the cumulative effort against the system goals. This will enable the system to provide additional leadership and direction to ensure that all system goals are addressed. The PFE FACT Book

(May 1999) presents three years (1995-96, 1996-97 and 1997-98) of college and district specific baseline information to enable colleges to set their own goals.

17. What is the base year?

It is 1995-96 for all goals, except for certain sub-goals within the Workforce Development goal. MIS data will be used to report on the Workforce Development goal of Successful Course Completions for Vocational Education courses, However, ED>Net data will be used to report on the Workforce Development sub-goals of a) increasing the number of California businesses benefiting from training through contract education, b) increasing the number of employees benefiting from training through contract education and c) increasing the number of individuals receiving fee-based job training, and that baseline year is 1996-97.

18. Will students be counted under more than one goal?

Yes. Because there is some natural overlap among goals (e.g. successful course completions and vocational course completions), the records of students will sometimes be counted in more than one goal. As an example, a student may get a degree and may also transfer. We are counting outcomes, not individuals.

19. Where can we get information on our own district's performance relative to the goals?

The Partnership for Excellence "FACT Book" (May 1999) contains district- and college-specific performance information relative to each of the goals. Copies of the "FACT Book" have been distributed to all districts and colleges and are also available on the Chancellor's Office website. Please contact Douglas Jordan at (916) 322-5229 or djordan@cccco.edu regarding requests for copies of the FACT Book. Questions regarding information contained in the report should be directed to ZoAnn V. Laurente at (916) 322-2818 or zlaurent@cccco.edu.

In addition, the District/College Report on Degrees, Certificates, and Transfers contains performance information relative to Partnership goals and the most recent edition (May 1999) has been distributed to numerous people on your campuses. Requests for copies should be directed to Douglas Jordan at (916) 322-5229 or djordan@cccco.edu. Questions regarding the report should be directed to Leonard Shymoniak at (916) 327-5884 or lshymoni@cccco.edu.

20. How can we expect to make an impact on the numbers when we will really only have from now until Fall 2000 to affect the outcomes data?

The Partnership involves goals beginning in the base year of 1995-96 through the year 2005-06. At the three-year point (including data for Fall 2000), an assessment will be made relative to whether the system has made "reasonable progress" toward the goals. That assessment will take into account the actual timeline and progress made to date.

21. What are the exact goals?

The current goals include improvement in the areas of transfers, degrees and certificates, successful course completion, workforce development, and an increase in the numbers of students completing coursework at least one level above their basic skills enrollment. Currently,

there is a proposal to add additional goals on 'Transfer-Ready' and 'certificates of less than 18 units in duration' (see Appendix C of the FACT Book: Letter to the Chancellor from the Department of Finance, Legislative Analyst's Office, and the California Postsecondary Education Commission for more information).

DISTRICT REPORTING

22. What is the district's reporting requirement to the Chancellor's Office?

Wherever possible information on the goals will be collected through the unitary elements of MIS. It will be important for Districts to report accurate and timely information on all MIS elements. Districts will not be making separate reports to MIS. The transfer information will come from CPEC's Student Profiles report and the workforce development information on contract education will come from ED>Net.

In addition, districts will be asked to report each year on the goals on which they are working and the ways they are actually expending the funds. By no later than September 30, 1999, districts/colleges will be asked to report actual expenditures related the goals and activities. This information will appear in the annual PFE reports. The first edition of the expenditures report (including proposed expenditures only), entitled "PFE REPORT of Reports, Partnership for Excellence Expenditures for 1998-99 and 1999-00 (May 1999) was distributed to all districts and colleges and is also available on the Chancellor's Office web site. Requests for copies should be directed to Douglas Jordan at (916) 322-5229 or djordan@cccco.edu. Questions regarding information contained in the report should be directed to ZoAnn V. Laurente at (916) 322-2818 or zlaurent@cccco.edu.

23. What reporting requirements are specified in the budget act language?

The budget language provides as follows:

"The annual reports shall include data for each district and college with respect both to levels of achievement and relative progress towards the goals that recognizes differences in student populations and student preparedness. The Chancellor may provide technical assistance to districts, as he or she best determines. Acceptance of funds from Partnership for Excellence allocations shall constitute concurrence by the district or college to collect and provide to the Chancellor of the California Community Colleges all information necessary to quantify baseline performance and annually report changes in outcome measures to the Chancellor if, in the judgment of the Chancellor, current MIS system data are insufficient for the purpose of any of the approved measures."

As mentioned in Item 22, information is also being collected in order to assist with assuring the Legislature that the colleges are putting the funds to effective use while advocacy for subsequent year funding is ongoing. Districts are being asked to identify very briefly the kinds of uses to which they put Partnership funds for 1998-99 and proposed for 1999-2000, relative to each of the goals although funds need not be directed to all of them. Initial information provided by the districts and colleges was compiled and included in the PFE REPORT of Reports (May 1999). Updated information provided by September 30 of each year will be published in subsequent

editions of the REPORT of Reports. Specific dates for continuing activities are provided on pages 1 through 4 of this document.

24. To what extent is the BOG going to regulate the utilization of these funds?

Districts have broad flexibility in their uses of the funds, and we are not otherwise asking the Board to regulate or control expenditures for the foreseeable future. The budget language provides as follows:

“Funds provided under this program to districts shall not be considered program improvement funds within the meaning of Sections 84755 and 87482.6, and shall only be spent to improve student learning and success as determined by the Board of Governors of the California Community Colleges which shall be subject to conditions as the board may determine.”

Finally, if after three years the system is not making reasonable progress toward the goals, a district-specific funding mechanism may be utilized which is tied to district-specific performance on the goals.

FURTHER QUESTIONS

25. What other sources of information are there?

Workshops on the subject of the Partnership have been conducted at numerous conferences. For future workshops on this topic, check the Chancellor's Office web site or the conference agendas of educational organizations including: Assessment Institute (October 11-12, 1999. Web address: www.ca-assessment-inst.org), Association of Instructional Administrators (October, 1999), California Community Colleges Association for Occupational Education (CCCAOE), Chief Instructional Officers (CIOs), Chief Executive Officers (CEOs), Chief Business Officers (CBOs), Chief Student Services Officers (CSSOs), and the Community College League of California (CCLC). This list of FAQs is on the Chancellor's Office website at www.cccco.edu/partnership.htm and will be updated as needed.

26. Whom should we contact for further questions about the Partnership?

For questions contact:

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