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Extended Opportunity Programs And Services: Our Past, Present, And Future

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Synopsis

EOPS has been a model program proven to significantly benefit student success and yet, as the State of California faces an extreme budget crisis, the future of Community College Extended Opportunity Programs and Services (EOPS) is at risk. During these times it is important to remember the past and to review the rationale for creating the program in the first place.



Article

Extended Opportunity Programs and Services formally was set in motion in July of 1969, with the enactment of SB 164 by Senator Alquist (urgency legislation). The issues that put this legislation into place can best be remembered in reviewing the political and social climate of the 1950's and 1960's. With the advent of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 both overt and covert discrimination came under the law. This was the most comprehensive attempt to equalize human rights since the Civil War.

In California in 1965 the Watts Riots stunned the state. Until we saw the burning buildings and raging riots it was hard to comprehend that a true equality of opportunity did not exist. Later there was the Poor Peoples' March in 1968 in our nation's capitol, and many student-led disturbances in the San Francisco area. Even on our community college campuses there was unrest with issues of the Vietnam war, student power, financial aid, and racism.

SB 164 was incorporated into the California Education Code in July

of 1969, as follows:

The California Education Code, Article 8, Section 69640 states:

- *It is the intent of the Legislature that the California community colleges recognize the need and accept the responsibility for extending the opportunities for community college education to all who may profit therefrom regardless of economic, social, and educational status. It is the intent and purpose of the Legislature in establishing the Community College Extended Opportunity Programs and Services (EOPS) to encourage local community colleges to establish and implement programs directed to identifying those students affected by language, social, and economic handicaps, to increase the number of eligible EOPS students served, and to assist those students to achieve their educational objective and goals, including, but not limited to, obtaining job skills, occupational certificates, or associate degrees, and transferring to four-year institutions.*

After the passage of SB 164 there was a hectic scramble to implement EOPS without much consideration or thoughtful deliberation. The Statutory Advisory Committee was established and along with other public groups including the Chancellor's Office staff, legislature, EOPS students, and Governors staff began the start-up programs statewide. That first year EOPS was funded with slightly less than \$2.8 M at 46 campuses and served approximately 14, 000 students.

Early in the process it became apparent that this group of students had much potential. But they had been overlooked historically and had much need for additional supportive services and instructional assistance to facilitate success and make an effective transition. Recruitment efforts began early to identify targeted groups, assessment of student needs for remediation, development of specialized instructional components, tutorial programs, summer bridge programs, counseling services, peer advisors and specialized services that met the needs of these unique students in nontraditional ways, to facilitate their move into four-year institutions and meaningful employment.

Title V is the implementing Rules and Regulations that put the law into effect. Title V guidelines for EOPS were established by the Board of Governors and continues to be the most often referred to document with EOPS. Throughout the years since 1969 there have been relatively few changes in Title V until new guidelines for Title V were enacted in October 1987 after a two year effort on the part of both the EOPS programs in the field and Chancellor's staff. These changes in Title V clearly define the eligibility of students, minimum professional standards for staff, services to be provided,

assessment standards, accountability, student outcome measures, and requirements for reporting standards to measure program effectiveness and program reviews as well as a host of other areas.

Many activities originated by EOPS programs statewide are now institutionalized in colleges, clear evidence that EOPS is a role model worthy of emulating. For instance, the first Transfer Center originated in an EOPS program, with the overriding efforts to provide students with exposure to various transfer institutions. Most colleges in the state now include a Transfer Center as part of their core of student services. Likewise, tutorial assistance programs began in EOPS with the recognition that underprepared and disadvantaged EOPS students could benefit dramatically from tutoring and learning assistance programs. Today, virtually all community colleges in California have tutoring programs. Matriculation has as it's model EOPS with component activities in assessment, orientation, admissions, outreach, counseling, and program evaluation.

We in EOPS are proud of our contribution to the colleges we belong to and the students we have served. And we continue our tradition of providing services and support to California's disadvantaged population in ways that enhance and expand existing services provided by the college "...over, and above, and in addition to..." campus EOPS programs have been able to expand their services to students and have developed unique collaborative learning components, provided books and supplies for students, assisted students with child care funds, extensive and comprehensive counseling that enhances Retention and transition, assisted students with transportation costs, provided emergency loans and financial aid assistance and developed special classes to bridge the gap for students in transition.

MIS reports for our 2001-02 fiscal year indicates that EOPS served a total of 108,321 students, and our combined fiscal allocation (CARE and EOPS) for 2002-03 exceeds \$96M. It is ironic as I conclude this article as requested by a former supervisor and friend I worked with many years ago, that the EOPS program is being besieged on all fronts as never before in its history. We could say "...these are exciting times. . ." but such excitement has much stress and uncertainty for the future of EOPS statewide.

EOPS has been a role model for development of other programs within the college, has proven to be accountable in producing statistically significant outcome measures, has evidenced high levels of persistence, retention, and transition. Students served by the

program – in spite of their educational and economic disadvantages have shown to achieve at the same or higher rates than their more disadvantaged classmates. This has been possible through the “over and above” support provided by this significant categorical program. We have been enormously successful in developing comprehensive services to meet the needs of our colleges’ unique disadvantaged students, and provided these services in an accountable, efficient, and effective manner.

With the spectre of massive cuts (approximately 45% proposed by Governor Davis in January 2003), the impact of these cuts on the program and the students served cannot be over stated. Estimates are that the general cuts in community colleges will reduce enrollment over 200,000 a year; many will be EOPS students.

If massive cuts are not enough, we are attacked by potential legislation that eliminates virtually all categorical programs (including EOPS) in California to establish block grants. This amounts to using the most disadvantaged of students—the poorest and most underrepresented groups—to cover the campus shortfalls, with the rationalization of “greatest benefit to many” at the expense of the few, the voiceless, and most disenfranchised.

I am proud of Extended Opportunity Programs and Services. I am proud of the history it has produced, and the students whose lives we have changed. And most of all I’m proud of the small part I have had since 1976 when I first came to Orange Coast College until now with Coastline Community College. We in EOPS have a legacy to be proud of and students that depend on us; we are hopeful for the future and the students yet to come.