



Sustaining City College— A Vision for Equity and Justice

A Statement on City College by Coleman Advocates for Children and Youth

THE FUTURE OF SAN FRANCISCO

There are over 4,000 current juniors in San Francisco public schools. They are the next generation of San Franciscans, the predominantly working class young people of color who claim this city as their own. They are our future teachers, nurses, construction workers, lawyers, engineers, janitors, caterers, and elected officials, and it will be because we invest in their success, that our city will continue to be great. In two years, these students will leave San Francisco Unified School District; some will go on to four-year colleges and universities, some will join the labor force, and approximately 33% of SFUSD graduates will land at City College of SF, many of whom have already begun the road to matriculation to CCSF through orientation and dual enrollment.

The fact is CCSF has long been the destination for thousands of SFUSD graduates and San Francisco residents to incubate their dreams, to make success a reality. City College has always been *our* college, the school of the people. And, there have also been obstacles that get in the way of our students' success. Less than 25% of African American, Latino and Pacific Islander students end up completing their degree or transferring to four-year colleges or universities. Policies like the placement test and lengthy course sequences lead to four and five year careers at this two-year community college for many students of color. And the voices of students, when they speak up about the need for transformation, are too often silenced.

It's clear we have work to do to improve City College. But it is *our* college, and we are committed to fighting for it to be more equitable and accessible. It is *our* college, and we are committed to making sure the doors stay open for low-income and working class students of color, to move towards accomplishing their goals for higher education and beyond.

WHAT'S AT STAKE

It is simply not an option to allow City College to lose its accreditation, close its doors, or be taken over by the state or another community college district. This college is too valuable to tens of thousands of students who depend on their counselors, teachers and resource staff to provide them with a quality education—and without this critical resource, we are shutting the doors of opportunity on thousands of students, largely low-income students of color who are looking to actualize educational and economic justice in their lives.

The truth is that City College is currently in a state of crisis. This is the moment for our forces—students, teachers, classified staff, community and administration—to unify, and ensure the security of this great institution. Unfortunately, there is a great deal of disunity among the City College community—and the reality is that this disharmony is jeopardizing the future of the college itself, and the future of the thousands of students depending on its existence.

AT A CROSSROADS

In March of 2012, the Accreditation Commission visited City College of San Francisco for four days and shortly afterwards released their findings, which included fourteen key recommendations, eight of which were previously highlighted as critical for the college to address in its 2006 findings. **In this moment, whether or not these recommendations are followed will determine if City College maintains its accreditation, which gives it the legal ability to issue degrees and certificates.** While the

Accreditation Commission and their agenda have been widely critiqued, the truth is that this body holds in its hands the fate of the college and each member of its broad community—and if these recommendations are not implemented, the future of the college is in jeopardy.

We are at a crossroads, which requires horribly difficult decisions that impact many sectors of the City College community. We do not pretend that the decisions made by the administration or the Board of Trustees are ideal. But in reality, if City College had made some of these key reforms years ago, we may not be in the precarious position that we are in now. A recent fiscal review of the college found what many have experienced for years—that many decisions made by former administrations were fiscally irresponsible, doing more to maintain the status quo than to serve the best interest of students and the fiduciary responsibilities of the college. The college community, and especially the students that depend on the college, are now feeling the repercussions of those decisions.

THE BOTTOM LINE: SAVE CITY COLLEGE

This moment requires sacrifices. And anyone who knows Coleman's work knows that we fight tooth and nail to make sure that resources stay in our schools and benefit our students first. Students paying higher fees, classified staff and counselors getting laid off: these are awful impacts to the CCSF community, as a result of the college's significant fiscal challenges. But the financial reality the college faces currently includes paying back retirement benefits, rebuilding their reserve, and a declining student population that has led to \$3-6 million in budget cuts just this year. If these issues are not fixed, *our* college will continue to struggle financially and is likely to lose its accreditation, leaving thousands of students in the lurch.

MOVING FORWARD WITH PRINCIPLES: CREATING OUR 21ST CENTURY CITY COLLEGE

Some may think that it is impossible to meet these challenges in an equitable and just way, but we believe it *is* possible. Learning from the past, we are calling on the City College community to unify around principles that lift up a vision of City College as a center for social justice, equity and 21st Century success. Right here in San Francisco, while historic movements have fought for and won many protections for labor, community and beyond, it is clear that economic inequality, persistent poverty, and structural racism are major barriers to meeting the needs of marginalized students at CCSF. We believe that **two principles** can guide the City College community to unify and successfully rebuild an institution that will serve students for many generations to come.

Guiding Principles

1. Social Justice, Racial Justice, Access & Equity

We believe that genuine racial justice will reinforce policies and attitudes that produce *equitable* power, access, opportunity and outcomes for all. Access and equity means the ability to ensure that all students are served according to their individual need by providing the adequate supply of classes, instructors, programs, and services that give everyone the opportunity to be successful. To be clear, by definition, equity means: *One size does not fit all.*

Furthermore, the education technology revolution is personalizing learning techniques that attempt to correct learning gaps directly. These new tools are disruptive in nature as they challenge the status quo and force innovation that otherwise would not occur in large academic institutions. *Disruptive innovation is absolutely necessary to evolve.*

2. Student-Centered Service Theory

We must create college guidelines ensuring that all faculty, staff and administration treat all students with the utmost dignity and respect. We believe that a student-centered service theory

provides the opportunity for all educational resources- economic, financial, personnel and political - to be centered on students' needs. We believe in the power of student voice, representation and participation in decision-making, and that a dynamic education system is built on recognizing the rights and needs of students and their communities *first*. We also acknowledge that student participation is not only their right, but is a necessity for responsible management and leadership. Yet, students are often ignored, making the college lose insight and feedback from those who know best whether the system is working. Students, faculty, and administrators must work together to design a system that works for students – the primary user.

Recommendations

Applying these guiding principles to our reform efforts at CCSF, we have developed the following recommendations. If implemented, these recommendations can help save our college and prove, unequivocally, that it is possible to have an equitable college system, one that recognizes racial injustices, is truly student centric, and actively pursues innovative practices that continuously increase instructional quality and outcomes.

- 1. *Protect and expand reform efforts that institutionalize equity and are fiscally sound.*** City College must prioritize policy efforts that transform the college to better support *all* students. The Placement Plus One policy passed last year is a key example of removing the significant barriers to student educational success, particularly for students of color. Other ideas include: redesign of the course sequence by shortening the sequence, including accelerated learning and innovative practices; or expanding those classes and programs with the highest student demand.
- 2. *Protect faculty and staff positions that are focused on providing direct services and instructional time to students, meeting the greatest student need and showing the highest success rates.***
- 3. *Support high-level and rigorous learning environments for students.*** We have seen institutionalized low expectations for CCSF students, particularly for students of color. CCSF should prioritize the Student Learning Outcomes, and identify best practices that are refined and implemented within each discipline, to ensure we collectively hold high expectations for both students and instructors. It is also critical that the college support student success and achievement through the active and consistent review of data and the setting of benchmarks to assess progress.
- 4. *Prioritize student voice and representation in decision-making, implementation and evaluation.*** Students must not only be respected by administration, faculty and staff, but be included in discussions about the college, as well as genuine decision-making spaces. It is unacceptable that student voice and representation is often ignored, diminished or intentionally silenced. As the consumers of the college, they can see the college's pitfalls, and can offer creative ideas as solutions. But they must be included at the decision-making table.

We believe in City College—in its mission, its goals, its teachers, its leadership, and especially in its students, the powerful next generation of San Francisco! It is time for us to come together and unite in our vision for *our* City College- a vibrant, equitable and just college preparing the future leaders of San Francisco.

Coleman Advocates for Children and Youth is a member-led, multi-racial community organization working to create a city of hope, opportunity, and justice for all children and all families in San Francisco. We organize and support the leadership of students and parents in San Francisco Unified School District and City College of San Francisco, to fight for a more equitable and just education for all students. Please visit our website for more information:

www.colemanadvocates.org.