

Dan Walters: Jerry Brown 2.0 gets his way on state budget

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Published: Tuesday, Jun. 11, 2013

Jerry Brown spent most of his first governorship running for office – twice for president, once for re-election and once for the U.S. Senate – rather than running the state.

The Legislature, although controlled by his fellow Democrats, didn't take the then-young governor seriously because he didn't take governing seriously and was often openly hostile. So while Brown, for instance, once signed the Legislature's budget without changing a single item, legislators often overrode the vetoes he deigned to issue.

Brown 2.0 is a different kettle of fish. Older and presumably wiser, he's fully engaged and has not hesitated to confront the Legislature, still controlled by his fellow Democrats. He usually gets his way, as the 2013-14 budget deal that emerged Monday indicates.

This is an important budget, the first since voters voted to temporarily raise sales and income taxes and one that sets the fiscal tone for the remainder of Brown's second stint, assuming that he wins another term next year.

Brown wants to put the state's chronic budget problems behind him, at least for the rest of his time in the Capitol, and get on with other matters on which he intends to leave his mark, such as the bullet train project, completing his father's water system and changing the way schools are financed.

Brown wanted to devote nearly all of the new tax revenue to schools, some of it to repay shortages in legally mandated levels of aid from past years and some to shift more money to districts with large numbers of poor and/or English-learner students.

It is, he contends, a moral imperative to help those disadvantaged students – Latino and black kids, mostly – catch up in academic achievement. But school districts that didn't qualify for the extra funds objected and began leaning on their legislators to make changes.

The school plan that emerged Monday does change Brown's plan somewhat, providing \$3 billion more in "base grants" and less in the "supplemental grants" and "concentration grants" to targeted districts.

However, it retains the core of what Brown wanted, avoids the fatal delay that some critics sought and thus provides the wherewithal to prove – or disprove – his theory that such a shift will, indeed, generate a marked improvement in achievement.

Brown also persuaded – or compelled – the Legislature to accept his relatively conservative estimate of revenue and turned back efforts by liberals to sharply expand health and welfare spending, both aimed at avoiding another budget crisis down the road.

So the governor gets his way, and that's a considerable political achievement.

It also means he now owns it, and if matters go awry – such as the extra school money not producing noticeable classroom results – he'll have that on his record as well.

Community college stopgap

EDITORIAL

By The Times editorial board

June 11, 2013

Even though the state's budget situation has improved, it will be years before California's community colleges will be able to offer adequate numbers of courses. Hundreds of thousands of students will continue to be shut out of classes they need.

Though normally we would deplore creating a two-tiered educational system within the community colleges, now isn't the time to stick to lofty principles about equal pricing for all. The loftiest thing that state legislators could do now is to help students of all financial backgrounds get through college. AB 955, by Assemblyman Das Williams (D-Santa Barbara), would do that by allowing community college districts to offer extension courses over the summer and during winter vacation for which students would pay a higher price, much as they do for extension classes at California State University and the University of California.

The courses would cost up to \$200 per unit, or \$600 for a three-unit class, which is close to five times as much as a regular state-subsidized class.

We opposed a similar effort last year at Santa Monica College largely because of a concern that it would give the college an incentive to cut back on its state-subsidized offerings. Williams' legislation, however, addresses this concern. Extension courses could be offered only on campuses where classes already were full, and would have to be offered in addition to the full menu of regular courses, not in place of them.

Opponents complain that this will create an elite system in which students with money will graduate earlier than others. To some extent that's true, and it's not something to cheer about. But what makes the proposal hard to resist is that it would help other students as well. Students who take extension classes free up seats in regular classes. Furthermore, one-third of the extension revenue would have to be spent on scholarships so that low-income students could attend the classes as well. The law would sunset in 2020, by which time, it's hoped, the colleges will have adequate state funding.

The bill does leave one troubling loophole: If revenue outstrips expenses, the colleges would get to keep the profit. Prices should be limited to the colleges' cost; the prospect of making money is too tantalizing an incentive to offer only the most profitable courses or to emphasize extension courses over subsidized ones.

Williams makes an important point: Living expenses cost more than extension courses, and students with the money to wait months or years for a spot in a class have a better

chance of completing their education than those without. In other words, the system already benefits those with money, while doing nothing for everyone else.

Diversity Offices Aren't What They Used to Be

The Chronicle of Higher Education

June 9, 2013

By Ben Gose

Ronald Taylor, a sociologist who became a top diversity officer at the University of Connecticut, had built one of the broadest campus-diversity offices in the country by 2008. UConn's Office of Multicultural and International Affairs, a part of the provost's office, was responsible not only for cultural centers, ethnic-studies departments, and the equal-opportunity office, but also for several international units that typically aren't included under diversity programs. Among those were the European-studies department, other area-studies programs, and the study-abroad office.

Then Mr. Taylor retired from his position as senior vice provost; a new university president came on board; and the diversity office was largely dismantled. Damon A. Williams, co-author of a new book about the structure of the large diversity offices that have sprung up in academe in the past decade, recounts the UConn tale to illustrate how vulnerable those offices remain, even as more and more colleges create them.

"Put simply, the division was 'personalized' and not institutionalized as part of the university's infrastructure," he and Katrina C. Wade-Golden write in *The Chief Diversity Officer: Strategy Structure and Change Management* (Stylus Publishing).

Big campus-diversity offices, often headed by a chief diversity officer, are going through growing pains as they enter their second decade. To be sure, major universities aren't backing away. But the scope and tactics of diversity offices are changing.

Debate about how best to structure the offices often centers on three issues: Tight state budgets limit spending at public universities, and as a new kid on the block, diversity offices are particularly exposed, advocates say. Meanwhile, some insiders say the offices' very structure—with a high-profile leader who may be viewed as "responsible" for diversity—takes pressure off presidents and provosts to champion the cause. And longtime foes of affirmative action—groups like the Center for Equal Opportunity and the National Association of Scholars—argue that diversity offices aren't transparent about their spending and can point to precious few metrics to demonstrate what they've accomplished.

Amid the criticism, tight budgets, and administrative flip-flops, universities are likely to continue to innovate to try to find the best structure. "There's no clear mold," says Diana I. Córdoba, a vice president at the American Council on Education, and an expert on diversity issues.

Last year Cornell University decided it didn't need a chief diversity officer at all. Instead it has a team of five diversity officers, each responsible for a separate unit: academics, undergraduates, graduate students and postdocs, faculty, and staff. Lynette Chappell-Williams, associate vice president for inclusion and work-force diversity, says Cornell adopted the model after hearing stories from campuses elsewhere about the challenges faced by an individual shouldering the entire diversity effort.

"It's easy to shoot the messenger," she says. "But when you have more than one person as the messenger, and you keep hearing the same messages coming from different voices, it's amazing what impact that has."

When a controversy or crisis arises, the five officers can be reached through a single e-mail address. Sometimes they'll chat online to reach consensus on a big decision.

The most scathing critique of diversity offices from an insider may have come in 2008, when Evelyn Hu-DeHart, a history professor who is director of Brown University's Center for the Study of Race and Ethnicity in America, argued at a conference that the very presence of chief diversity officers has allowed presidents and provosts to shed their own responsibility for a lack of diversity on campus.

"Walk away from your job as it is and renegotiate," she said, as quoted in a [Chronicle article](#). Ms. Hu-DeHart was traveling internationally and was unavailable for comment.

Most campuses still have one person in charge of diversity—even if there is uncertainty about what that individual should be responsible for. The changes at UConn "dramatically destabilized" the diversity office and led some people to question the university's commitment to diversity, writes Mr. Williams, the author. (He was assistant vice provost at UConn before leaving, in 2008, to become chief diversity officer at the University of Wisconsin at Madison.)

UConn changed the title of the diversity office's leader from vice provost to vice president in 2009—to reflect the office's no longer having much academic responsibility—and elevated the affirmative-action officer to the vice presidency. Last year a new interim provost overhauled the office yet again, appointing Jeffrey O.G. Ogbar, a historian of black nationalism, as vice provost for diversity. But the office remains a shadow of its former self, with the academic and international units now housed elsewhere.

Mr. Ogbar says the restructuring makes sense because it puts academic units, including ethnic and international studies, into the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences, where most professors are tenured. Student cultural centers now report to student affairs, joining such groups as fraternities and sororities.

Many campus-diversity offices started back in the 1960s or 70s with a single minority-affairs director, whose focus was to get more underrepresented minority students on the

campuses and make sure that minority candidates weren't discriminated against in the hiring process. But Benjamin D. Reese Jr., vice president for the Office for Institutional Equity at Duke University and president of the National Association of Diversity Officers in Higher Education, says the task for today's top diversity officers is much different.

"Back then it was all about breaking through structural and societal barriers," he says. "Now the work is much more strategic in trying to create an environment in which all students can gain the kind of skills they need to prepare for diverse environments."

In previous decades, diversity officials were often tightly linked with their colleagues in student affairs. But colleges are increasingly tapping faculty members for the top diversity job, since much of the work focuses on faculty hiring, changes in the curriculum, and evaluating research related to student surveys on campus climate and student engagement.

"If you don't have a faculty background, you're going to have some trouble," says Lisa M. McBride, who in May became the first diversity officer at the Philadelphia College of Osteopathic Medicine. She taught criminology at Tallahassee Community College before taking her first top diversity post, at California University of Pennsylvania, in 2009.

Ms. McBride acknowledges that she could run into trouble anyway, as do some chief diversity officers in newly created offices. "You have to produce," she says. "These are jobs where you see a lot of turnover because the expectations are so great."

Many diversity chiefs note that their primary role is to inspire, or, if necessary, cajole others into making diversity a priority.

Valarie King is retiring as director of the Office of Diversity Initiatives at the University of Central Florida this summer, after 19 years on the job. The university won an award for institutional excellence from the national diversity officers association this year, but Ms. King, unlike many newer diversity officers, doesn't have "vice" in her title. She has to build relationships to get things done.

She worked closely with the faculty over several years, pushing them to work 21 "cultural competencies" into the curriculum, with the expectation that each student would be exposed to all of them by graduation. Examples include "Recognize instances in which you have stereotyped others" and "Use inclusive language in classroom, social, and professional settings."

Ms. King is proud of that accomplishment, but she also realizes that the major decisions affecting campus diversity—whether to modify the curriculum, whom to admit, which faculty members to hire—are out of her hands.

"I would not feel totally responsible if things went wrong, and I wouldn't want to accept total credit if things went right," she says. "The way our structure is set up, it's a real collaboration."

But if diversity offices don't hold themselves accountable for meeting measurable objectives, say critics, how can colleges evaluate whether they're getting a good return on the money they spend each year on diversity programs?

"I'm constantly looking for this kind of information, and I've never been able to find it," says Peter Wood, president of the National Association of Scholars, which has opposed racial preferences in admissions. "That doesn't mean that there aren't colleges here and there that are doing this kind of examination, but if they are, they're doing it very secretly."

Ms. Córdova, of the American Council on Education, responds that most administrative units, including student affairs, face similar challenges. "It's very hard to track return on investment for any specific function or unit within a university," she says.

Diversity offices were among the first to take budget cuts when the economy fell apart, in 2008, she adds. But conservative critics argue that colleges continued spending on diversity even as other programs were cut during the recession.

Heather Mac Donald, a fellow at the Manhattan Institute for Policy Research, a conservative group, last fall denounced the University of California at San Diego for creating a new position—vice chancellor for equity, diversity, and inclusion—at a time when the institution was facing budget cuts. "Campus leaders established this post even as state budget cuts resulted in the loss of star scientists to competing universities, as humanities classes and degree programs were eliminated to save money, and as tuition continued its nearly 75 percent, five-year rise," she wrote in a magazine published by the institute.

Lee Hansen, an emeritus professor of economics at Wisconsin and a longtime critic of spending on diversity programs, estimated on his own Web site in May that the university had spent \$500-million on programs for minority and disadvantaged students over the past 15 years.

"I've done numerous open-records requests, and it's hard to find much of anything to determine if these programs are successful," he says. "The question is, What have we achieved?"

Damon Williams, the university's vice provost for diversity and climate, says he can't confirm Mr. Hansen's numbers. But he says diversity spending should be considered in the context of the university's roughly \$3-billion annual budget.

Trying to calculate diversity spending is "very complex," he says, since the money is spent by admissions, financial aid, student affairs, and various other entities. "It would become an abstract exercise to try to pull those things out," he says.

Mr. Williams declines to specify the annual operating budget for his own office, noting that it isn't broken out in the "red book," Wisconsin's budget document, from other

spending within the provost's office. And some other top diversity officials are similarly reluctant to share such information. When Mr. Reese, at Duke, was asked for his office's annual budget, he responded, "I don't want to share the budget without presidential approval."

Mr. Williams says the conservative critics of diversity offices are too wedded to thinking from the 1990s, when the operations were more sharply focused on recruiting and retaining black and Hispanic students.

These days, he says, inclusion of diverse experiences is a main goal. He recently visited New York University, for example, which just spent tens of millions of dollars building a Center for Spiritual Life, which includes rooms for prayer, yoga, and meditation.

And as Wisconsin and other universities build out the infrastructure for offering MOOCs (massive open online courses), he says, they should ensure that low-income people, who tend to use the Internet via phones, aren't excluded.

Should such expenditures be considered part of a campus's diversity spending? Mr. Williams thinks so.

"Diversity doesn't reside in one office anymore," he says. "And those who try to make it as such are missing the point of the world we live in."

Dan Walters: Is California's new budget balanced? Not really

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[Published: Wednesday, Jun. 12, 2013](#)

Gov. Jerry Brown blunted the expansionist tendencies of his fellow Democrats in writing a new state budget, but that doesn't mean it's the "balanced" spending plan that he and other Capitol politicians are claiming.

They define "balanced" as the state's having enough revenue to pay for the 2013-14 budget's appropriations. However, their budget ignores some very real obligations that, if recognized, would put the state many billions of dollars in the red.

Moreover, many of the commitments the budget does make – such as a sharp increase in school spending – could bite back later in the decade because they are financed from the temporary sales and income tax increases that voters passed last year.

It's important to remember both of those points because the politicians are already patting themselves on the back, such as Assembly Speaker John A. Pérez's self-appraisal, "a tremendous achievement," or Senate President Pro Tem Darrell Steinberg's claim: "Ho-hum, another on-time, balanced budget. This is the third year in a row."

The obligations being ignored include the California State Teachers' Retirement System's declaration that it needs \$4.5 billion more per year to maintain solvency, and more than \$50 billion in unfunded liabilities for state retiree health care.

Both of those debts – that's what they truly are – are growing by millions of dollars each day, as is the \$10 billion that the state has borrowed from the federal government to prop up its insolvent Unemployment Insurance Fund.

A big chunk of the temporary tax increase is going to schools, as required by the state constitution. Some repays debts owed to the schools and some finances the governor's overhaul of how state aid is distributed, giving more to districts with large numbers of poor and/or English-learner students.

Indirectly, by shifting a portion of the sales tax to counties, the state is giving them more than \$5 billion a year to finance another Brown priority, a so-called realignment of low-level felons into county jails and supervision.

What happens when the temporary taxes run out in a few years? How will the big boost in school money and realignment be financed then? Implicitly, the budget assumes that either the extra taxes will be made permanent or the economy will be booming again.

Meanwhile, Brown's fellow Democrats have only temporarily abandoned plans for rolling back earlier reductions in health and welfare programs. If revenues spike upward later in the year, they said, they'll try again, arguing that welfare grants, home-aid

assistance and other "safety net" services are life-and-death issues for the poor and infirm.

Within a few months, Brown may face this dilemma – whether to pay debts and build reserves or expand spending that others in his party seek.

Tough choices at LAUSD

By The Times editorial board

June 18, 2013, 5:00 a.m.

After four very dry years, money is finally flowing again to Los Angeles Unified schools. Next year's budget already is set, but for the three years after, there appear to be almost as many ideas for using the funds as there are actual dollars. Union allies put new hiring at the top of the spending list. The superintendent wants to raise salaries instead. The board president is more interested in extending the school year. Who would have guessed spending money could be this hard?

In a school district that needs extra teachers and tutors, extra campus security, preschool and after-school programs, extra everything, practically all of the ideas on the table have at least some merit. And many of them — too many of them — will come up in the form of resolutions at Tuesday's school board meeting. There should be hiring, to be sure. Too many librarians were cut during the downturn, and the number of guidance counselors must be boosted as well if the district wants to succeed with its new policies that raise graduation requirements and call for sending more students to college.

But one of the resolutions, promoted by board member Bennett Kayser, calls for restoring some staffing to pre-recession, 2007-08 levels. That makes no sense because L.A. Unified no longer has a pre-recession student population; the number of students has dropped by about 100,000, or 15%. Kayser also wants to reduce class sizes, but although that might be appropriate in some cases, Supt. John Deasy points out that research doesn't back up the value of smaller classes until they drop to 18 or fewer students, a level that L.A. Unified can't achieve. Another resolution by Kayser calls for a series of public budget meetings and also requires the district to confer with its unions on their ideas for spending money, and even to solicit the opinions of student body presidents. That's just silly. Some public hearings are necessary, of course, but let's not turn the budget into a giant administrative headache.

EDUCATION: California Schools Guide

After years of leaner incomes due to unpaid furlough days, teachers and other staff deserve more money — but the smartest way to do that may be through the resolution that board President Monica Garcia has advanced, increasing the length of the academic year and paying teachers for the added work days. There is proven benefit to students in having more instructional time.

At the moment, the budget is in danger of being resolutioned to death, especially since most of the items on the agenda call on Deasy to investigate, come up with plans and report back. As Deasy's bosses, board members are supposed to voice their wish lists and set priorities. That's different from micromanaging how many students he has to confer with or how many janitors he has to rehire.