

“Early College Commitment: Ensuring the Next Generation of Educated Californians”

Ms. Michele Siqueiros

Associate Director, Campaign for College Opportunity

March 16, 2007

Ms. Michele Siqueiros, the Associate Director of the Campaign for College Opportunity evoked the memory of Governor Pat Brown as she introduced her organization’s commitment to the 1960s Master Plan for Higher Education. The Campaign for College Opportunity, described Ms. Siqueiros, aims to uphold California’s promise to provide a place in college for all students who seek it. This promise, not found anywhere else in the country, said Ms. Siqueiros, is threatened due to a declining college-going rate (California is ranked 40th in the nation), a persistent education achievement gap, a growing high school drop-out rate, and lack of college preparation. There is however, tremendous opportunity, she emphasized, because demographically speaking, the time is right for educational investment in California. Much like Pat Brown’s era, when the baby boomers came of college-ready age, over the next ten years California’s population of 18-24 year olds will soar. In the absence of a renewed commitment to the master plan, however, California will experience declining personal income and state tax revenue, a shortage of highly educated workers, and a growing gap between the rich and the poor. The Campaign for College Opportunity has created the Early College Commitment Program, modeled after successful programs in other states, in an effort to increase the level of educational attainment in California. This program, based on educational opportunity and joint responsibility, concluded Ms. Siqueiros, will hopefully ensure that every student in California who wants to attend college has the chance.