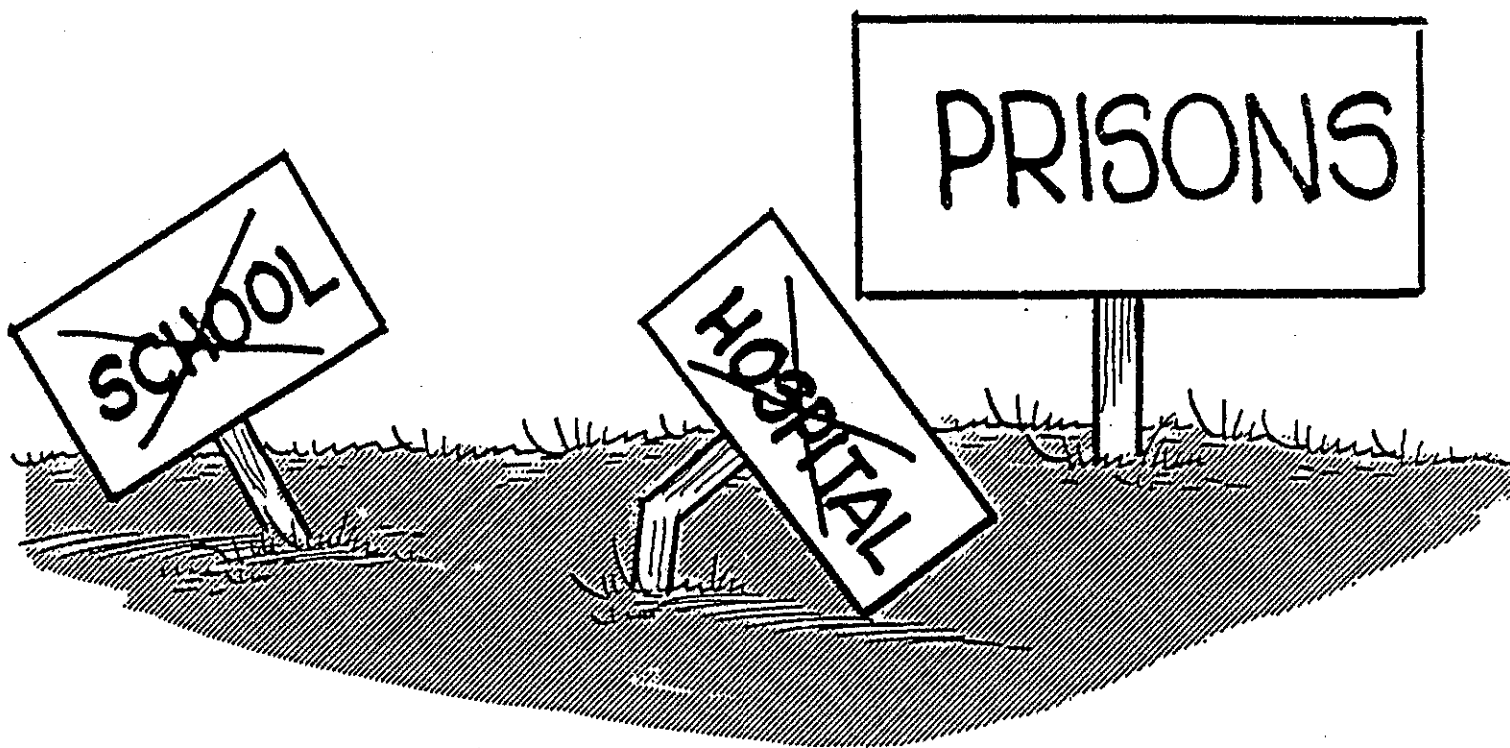


# Trading Books for Bars: The Lopsided Funding Battle Between Prisons and Universities

WHAT'S WRONG WITH  
THIS PICTURE ?...



Prepared by the  
Center on Juvenile and Criminal Justice  
MAY 1994

Noah Baum and Brooke Bedrick

## CHANGING PRIORITIES IN THE CALIFORNIA BUDGET

This year, for the first time, California will spend as much on its corrections system as on its universities (UC and CSU systems combined).<sup>1</sup> Just over 10 years ago, the state spent more than two and one-half times as much on its universities as on corrections (See Graph I). During that same time span, the state constructed 19 prisons, but only one State University and no U.C. Campuses (See Graph II). Today's spending parity indicates a dramatic shift in the state's priorities, from an open-door policy for higher education to an open-door policy for incarceration.

This parity will not last. California's prison population, which has already more than quadrupled since 1980, will continue to grow well into the next millennium. Even before the new "three strikes" legislation, the California Department of Corrections predicted that its 1999 prison population would be more than seven times what it was in 1980. Now the CDC reports that "three strikes" will increase this number by more than half again (95,697 additional prisoners in the year 2000/01). The CDC estimates that at full impact, "three strikes" will add a whopping 275,621 additional inmates, increasing annual costs by \$6.7 billion, including construction costs and debt service on bonds. According to the CDC, "three strikes" will require the construction of at least 20 prisons in addition to the dozen already in process (see Graph III).

In a time of fiscal crisis and increasingly limited discretionary spending, such vast increases in prison spending will necessarily threaten both the quality and availability of higher education in California. For example, since fiscal '83/'84, while there has been an astonishing 169% *increase* in the number of correctional employees, there has been an 8.7% *reduction* in the number of higher education employees. (See Graph IV) Governor Wilson is proposing to increase correctional employees again this year by 7.5% (2,879) while reducing higher education staff by 1.1% (968). Overall, all state departments other than corrections will lose 3,058 employees this year, while corrections adds 2,879 staff. (See Graph V) Perhaps even more remarkably, the increase in the number of correctional employees since fiscal '83/'84 (25,864) has substantially exceeded the increase in the number of *all other state employees, combined* (15,989). (See Graph IV)

- As noted in the Assembly Ways and Means *Initial Review of the 1994/95 Budget*: "Corrections spending has grown more than twice as fast as total state spending.... In a climate of significantly reduced resources because of the state's economic decline,

---

<sup>1</sup> The Governor's '94/'95 budget contains a \$39 million difference between spending on corrections and on higher education. This gap is almost exactly closed by the \$38 million additional costs the California Department of Corrections estimates it will need in '94/'95 due to the passage of "three strikes" legislation in March 1994.

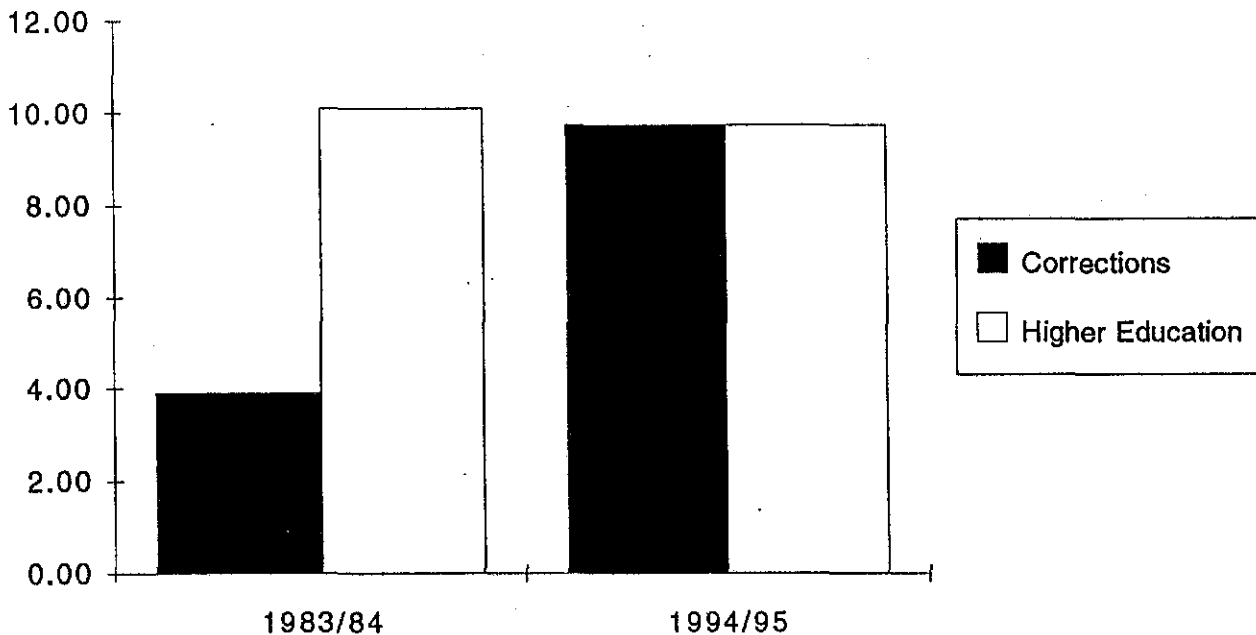
this explosive growth has come at the expense of spending for other programs, primarily higher education" (pp. 5-6).

- According to Franklin Zimring, Director of Boalt Hall's Earl Warren Legal Institute: "In the fiscally strained 1990s, California's prison situation and its school budget are linked as never before. The unquenchable appetite for expanding prisons is in a zero-sum competition with other essential services."
- Jerome Skolnick, Professor of Jurisprudence and Social Policy at U.C. Berkeley puts the matter more bluntly: "Students are bearing the brunt of prison spending. When tuition goes up, they're not paying for better education, they're paying for prisons."

The trade-off between education and incarceration has been ignored in the legislative and gubernatorial frenzy to appear "tough on crime". This issue should be brought into the policy debate before we mortgage our educational future.

GRAPH I

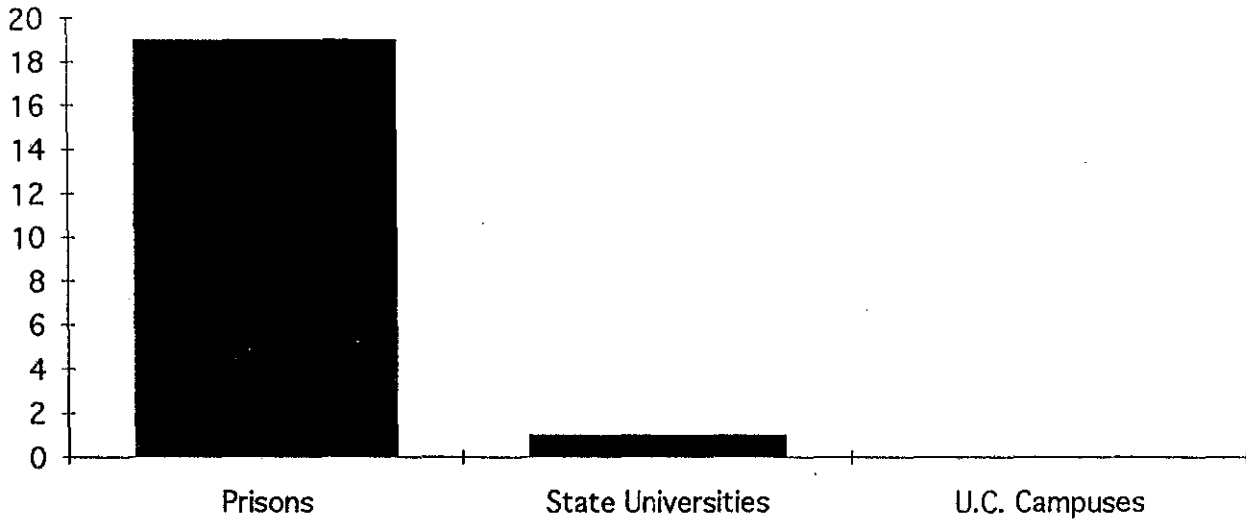
SPENDING AS % OF GENERAL FUND



Sources: Assembly Ways & Means Committee, California Dept. of Corrections.

GRAPH II

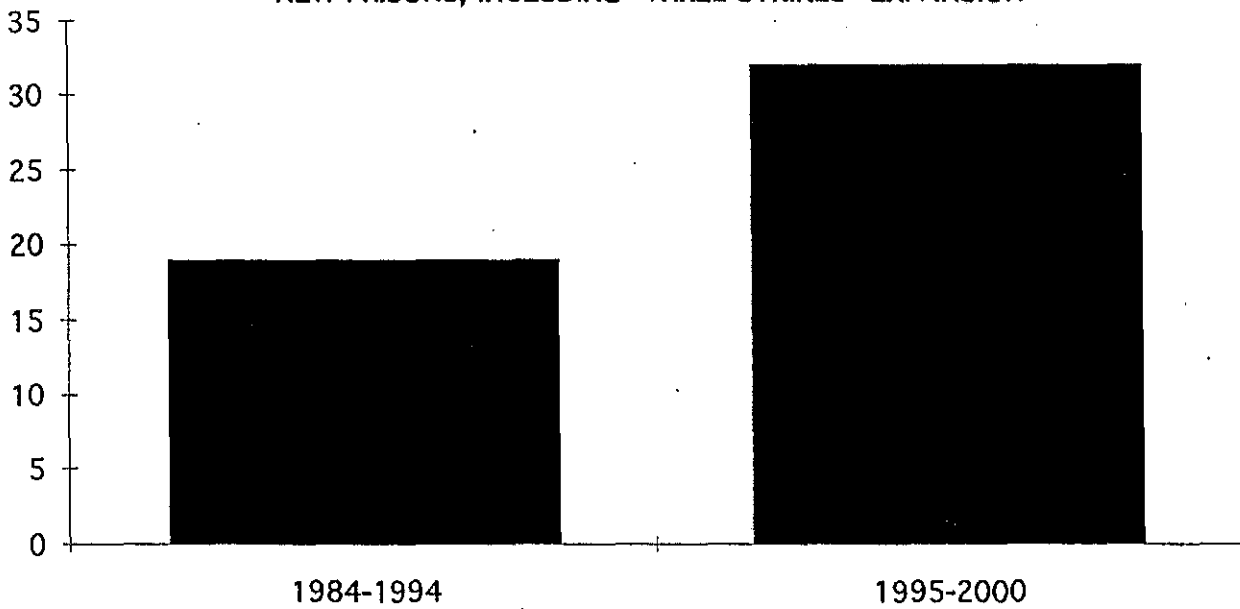
PRISONS VS CAMPUS CONSTRUCTION, 1984-1994



Sources: Assembly Ways & Means Committee

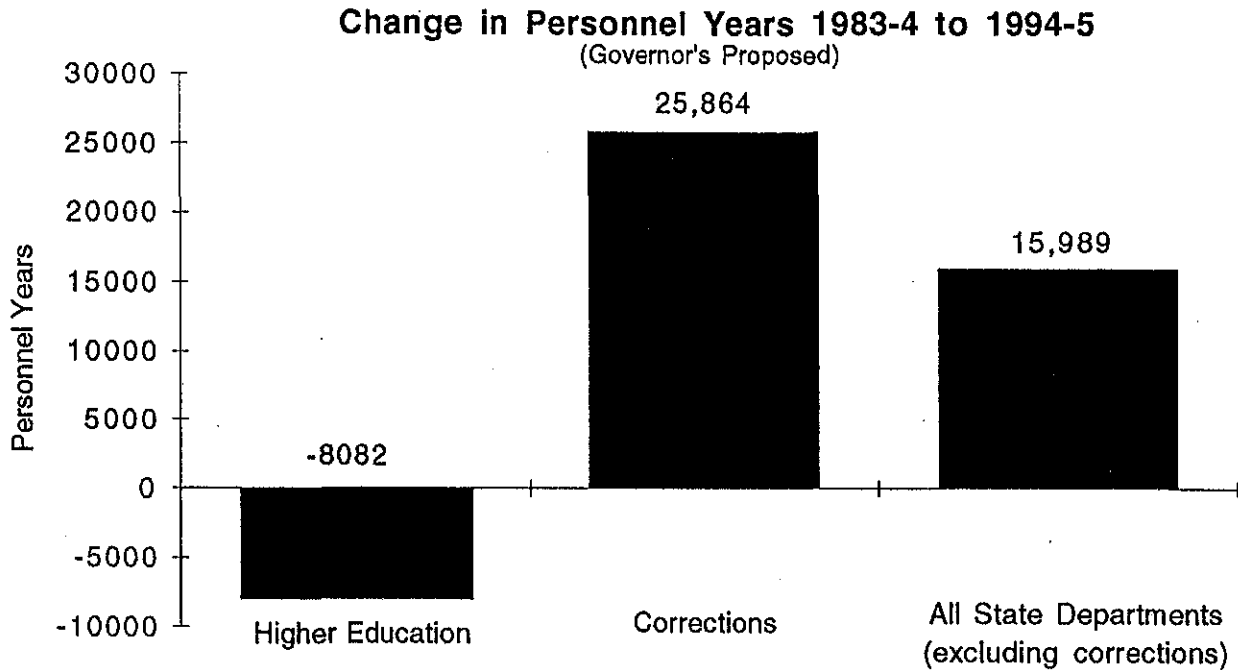
GRAPH III

NEW PRISONS, INCLUDING "THREE STRIKES" EXPANSION



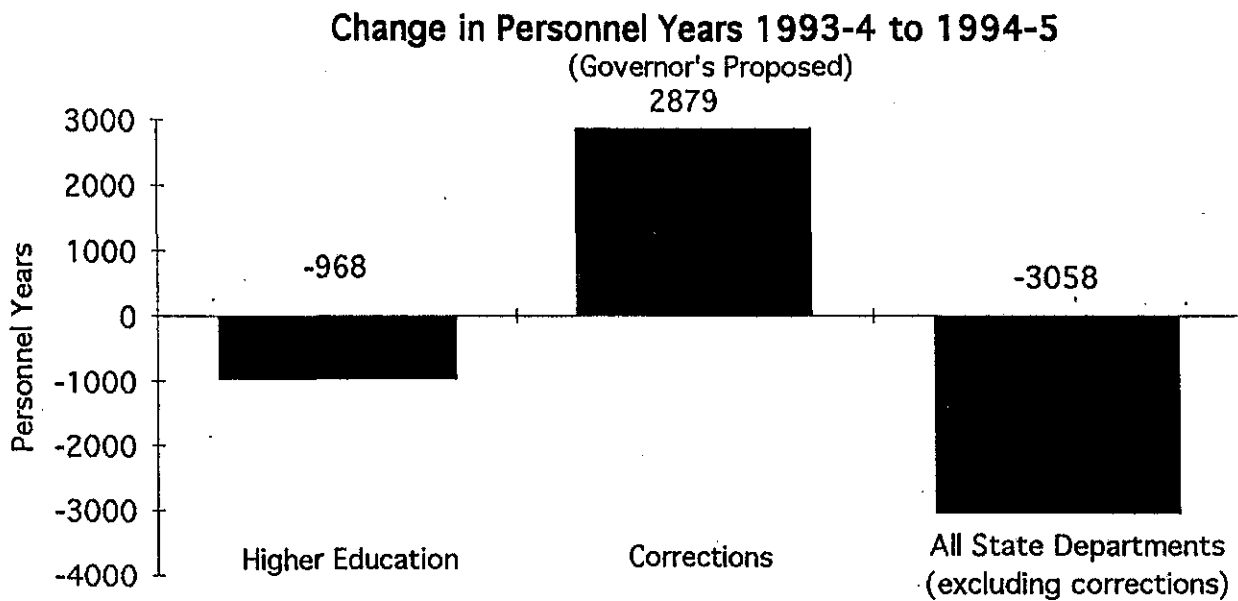
Sources: California Dept. of Corrections, Assembly Ways & Means Committee.

Graph IV



Source: Assembly Ways & Means Committee

GRAPH V



Source: Assembly Ways & Means Committee

## COMPARING INVESTMENTS: PRISONERS VS. STUDENTS

When we decide to invest increasingly scarce resources in incarceration or higher education, we should consider the relative costs. For the cost of incarcerating one prisoner for one year we can educate 10 community college students, five CSU students, or two UC students (See Graph VI). Thus, the decision to impose a 40-year sentence on a third-strike burglar is the decision to forego 200 two-year community college educations.

Higher education is an increasingly necessary prerequisite to participation in today's complex economy. Sharp increases in prison spending mean less investment in education for tomorrow's workers and citizens. Will high technology businesses who used to flock to California for its educated work force seek other states or countries? Will an increasingly uneducated workforce be able to participate in an increasingly complex economy? Or will even more of our state's youth decide there is no place for them in the legitimate economy and turn instead to a life of crime? If just one of the 200 people denied affordable education turns instead to crime, the massive cost of incarcerating our third-strike burglar will not even have lowered the crime rate. Meanwhile, it will have decreased our educated workforce by 200 people. We can only speculate as to how the other 199 will respond.

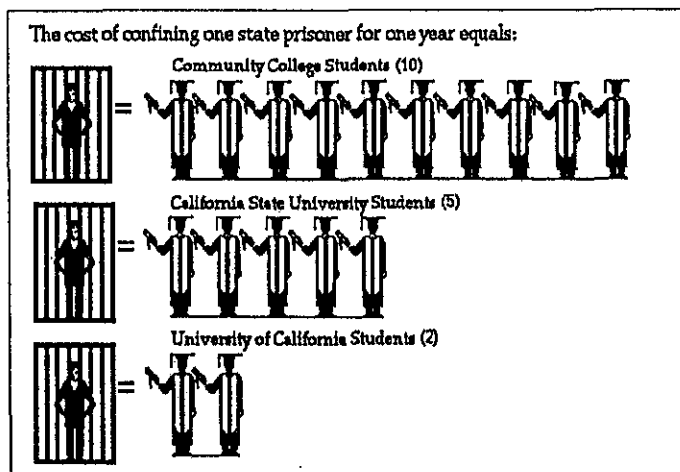
The state of California made a commitment to provide university education to its most promising young citizens, and to provide a baseline of higher education and skills training to all who were motivated to better themselves. The current frenzy to increase incarceration is deeply compromising this commitment. Already course offerings have been cut significantly and the state has sponsored massive waves of faculty retirements that leave the future quality of higher education in question. Constant fee increases totaling over 800% for CSU students and 500% for UC students since 1978 now place a university education beyond the reach of many (See Graph VII).

According to Elliott Currie, Criminologist at U.C. Berkeley Center for the Study of Law and Society, "Diverting resources from higher education to corrections will make the crime problem worse." By committing ourselves to a vastly expanding correctional infra-structure while reducing state support for higher education we ensure that even more young people will become prison graduates rather than college graduates.

Furthermore, in addition to the massive expansion of our state's prisons over the past decade at the expense of higher education, California currently has the **best paid prison guards in the country**. California's prison guards earn **58% more than the average salary for guards nationally**, while our U.C. and California State University Professors earn **12.6% and 6.8% less than professors at comparable universities**, according to the California Postsecondary Education Commission. This is particularly disturbing since California competes for professors on a national

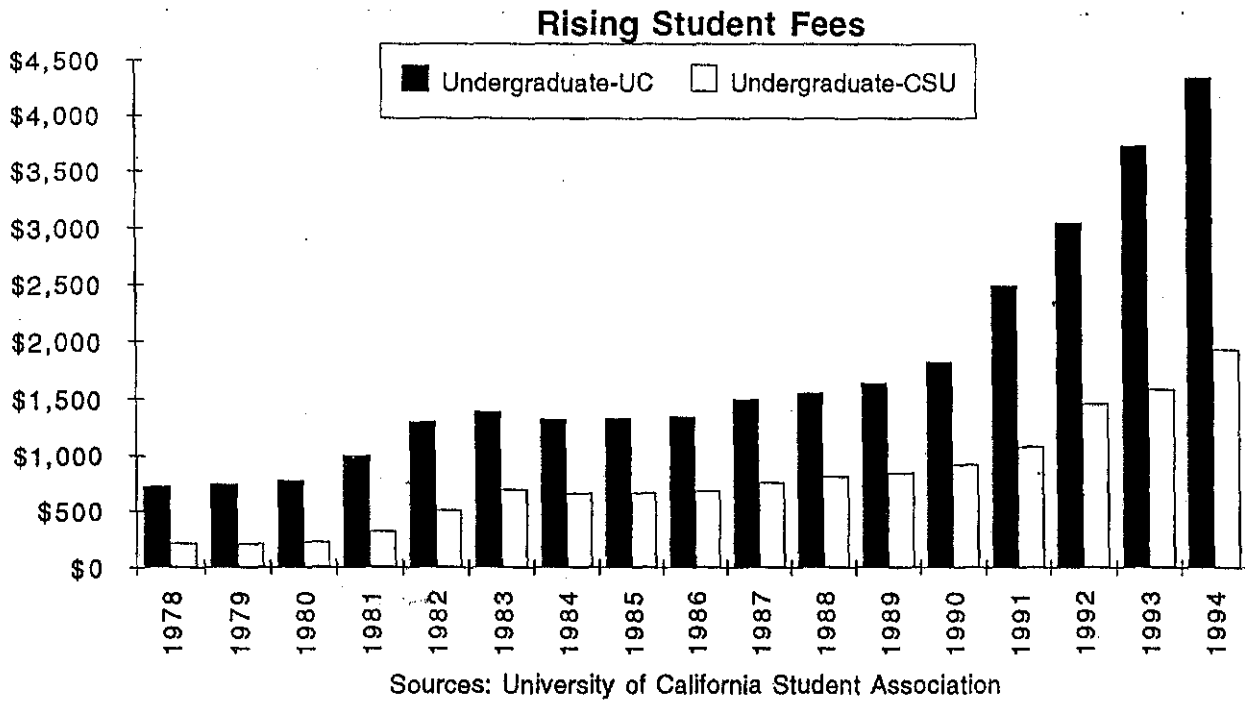
market, whereas most of California's prisons have been constructed in areas so depressed that a more moderate salary, approaching the national average, would have sufficed to attract qualified candidates. While professors may move (and indeed are moving) to the University of Michigan for a tenure-track position, higher pay, or superior laboratory facilities, it is unlikely that prison guards will be lured to the Michigan Department of Corrections in search of better salaries.

GRAPH VI

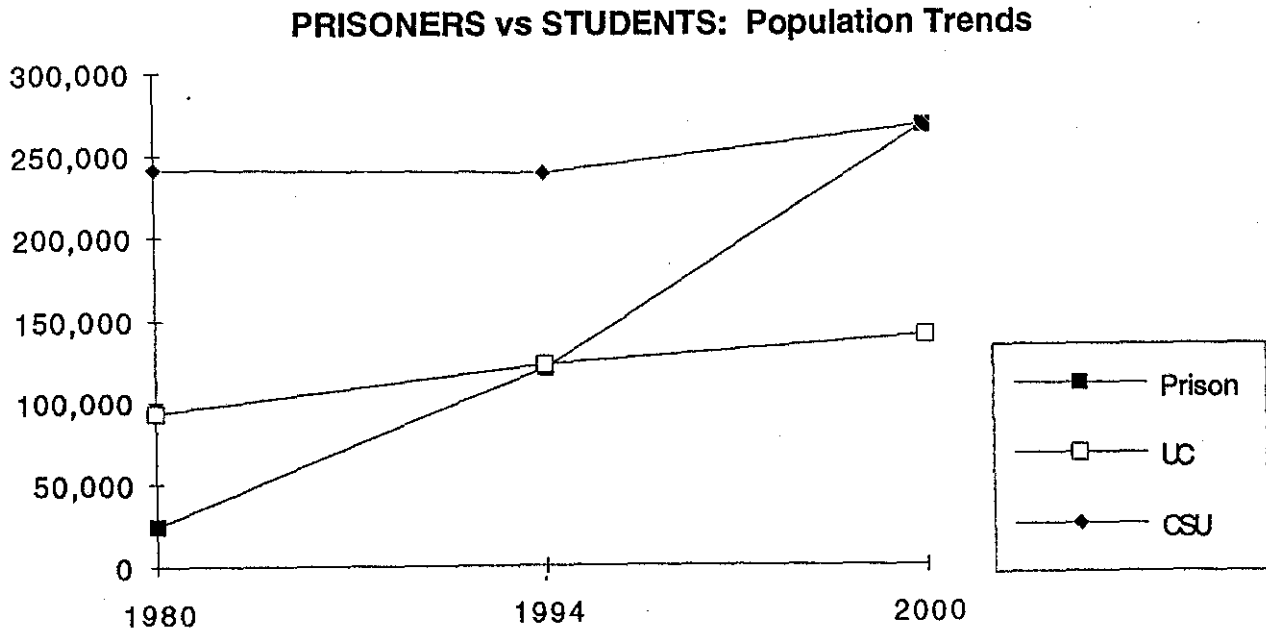


Source: Caleb Foote, Center on Juvenile and Criminal Justice 1993

GRAPH VII



GRAPH VIII

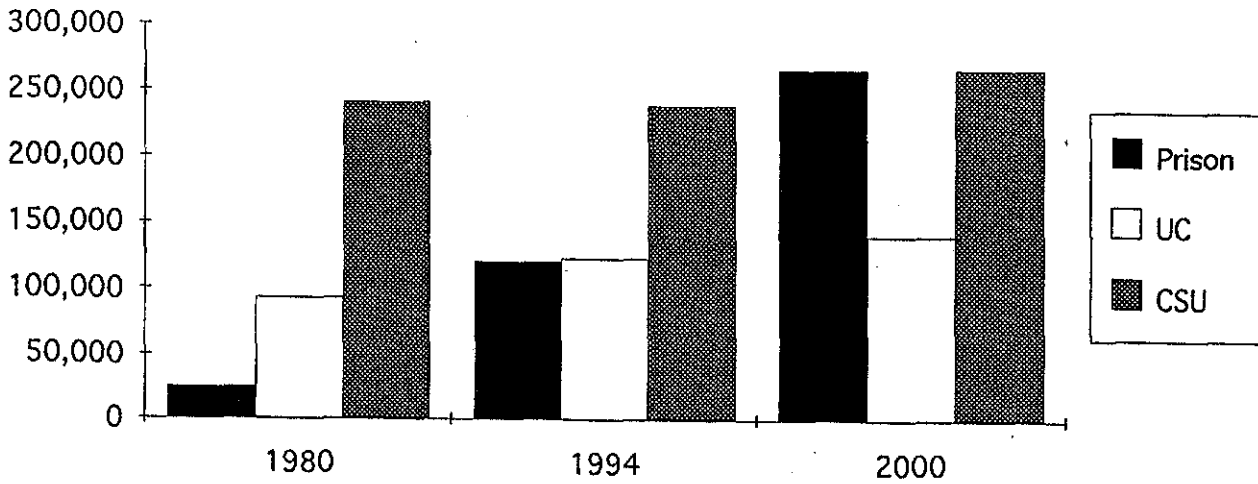


Sources: CDC, Assembly Ways & Means Committee, California Postsecondary Education Commission, U.C. Office of the President



GRAPH IX

**PRISONERS vs STUDENTS: Population Trends**



Sources: CDC, Assembly Ways & Means Committee, California Postsecondary Education Commission, U.C. Office of the President

TABLE 1

**THREE STRIKES AND YOU'RE OUT**

Would you be willing or unwilling to accept cuts in the state higher education budget in order to fund the new prisons needed under the "three strikes" law?

Willing	22%
Unwilling	72%
Don't know	6%

Source: Los Angeles Times April 2, 1994

## WE'RE NUMBER ONE

California is at the lead of a nationwide incarceration frenzy that has skyrocketed the US incarceration rate well beyond that of South Africa, the former world leader. The Department of Corrections reports that California's incarceration rate more than tripled between 1980 and 1990. This trend will continue into the next millennium.

The incarceration frenzy has had a tremendously disproportional effect on the African-American male population. An African-American male is more than seven times as likely to be incarcerated as the average American. Shockingly, he is almost five times as likely to be incarcerated as his black male counterpart in South Africa. **One in three African American men in their twenties in California is under some form of criminal justice control, four times as many as are enrolled in four year degree programs or better.** California's African-American children, already facing enormous obstacles to their full participation in the economy and society, now must face a future in which it is far more likely that they will be incarcerated in a California prison than that they will attend a California university. This is not only a powerful statement of the daunting odds they face, but also of our society's lack of commitment to their success.

Noah Baum and Brooke Bedrick are U.C. Berkeley Ph.D. students in Jurisprudence and Social Policy.

The Center on Juvenile and Criminal Justice is a public policy organization which engages in research and provides technical assistance on criminal and juvenile justice issues.

*Support the Center on Juvenile & Criminal Justice*

\_\_\_\_\_ Yes, I support CJCJ and wish to receive all your publications.

Organizational Supporter      \$100

Individual Supporter          \$35

Inmate Supporter              \$5

A check in the amount of \$\_\_\_\_\_ is enclosed.

\_\_\_\_\_ Yes, I support CJCJ and wish to receive \_\_\_\_\_ copies of this report at \$3.00 each.  
My \$\_\_\_\_\_ check is enclosed.

\_\_\_\_\_ I support CJCJ but I am unable to fully donate at this time. Enclosed is my check for \$\_\_\_\_\_.

\_\_\_\_\_ I cannot make a donation now. But keep me on the CJCJ mailing list.

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

Cty/State/Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Approximately \$20 of your organization or individual donation is spent for copying and mailing costs, and is not tax deductible.

PLEASE RETURN TO :

CJCJ; 1622 Folsom Street, 2nd Floor; San Francisco, CA 94103; (415) 621-5661