LOS ANGELES, California — Earlier this year, the California State University Board of Trustees announced a goal of increasing graduation rates by 8% — a goal that on its face appears admirable.

Unfortunately, the CSU Chancellor’s strategy to achieve that goal, referred to among other code words as “Deliverology,” will endanger the quality of CSU degrees and access to them — all in order to “deliver” that magic number.

“Deliverology” is a term coined by Michael Barber, who has worked in various levels of education in the United Kingdom. As a management approach to improving public services, “Deliverology” involves, in part, a narrow focus on one single numerical target as the measure of “improvement.”

This week, a UK author and vocal critic of Barber’s “Deliverology” will deliver his own message to the CSU, which is that this approach failed in the UK and it will fail in California.

Prof. John Seddon will address the California Faculty Association’s semi-annual Assembly, which brings together delegates from all 23 California State University campuses.

He will also be available for interviews in person and by phone with the media on late Friday afternoon, all day Saturday and Sunday morning, April 9-11.

Prof. Seddon’s book, Systems Thinking in the Public Sector: The Failure of the Reform Regime and a Manifesto for a Better Way, argues that Deliverology is a “Micky Mouse” idea based on setting “narrow, rigid targets” and that the use of targets, buttressed by strong punishments and rewards for meeting them, actually makes services worse, and even destroys them. This is because the purpose of the work becomes reaching the chosen targets rather than improving the service for the public.

In conjunction with Prof. Seddon’s appearance at the Assembly, CFA will release a white paper, “The CSU Graduation & Achievement Gap Initiative: Doing Our Part to Educate 1 Million More Graduates by 2025.”

For an embargoed copy of the paper, contact Lisa Cohen (lisa@lisacohen.org) or Alice Sunshine (asunshine@calfac.org).

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