

Friday, November 14, 2008

"An optimist will tell you the glass is half-full; the pessimist, half-empty; and the engineer will tell you the glass is twice the size it needs to be" - Anonymous

The Budget Question

In my attempt to search for the perfect quote for this week's update, I had some serious choices to make. I finally selected the one above because I thought it would best prepare us for the budget discussions we are about to undertake. In many ways, I think you would agree with me that the message in this quote by an anonymous author has a certain beauty and simplicity to it. It manages to accommodate most personality types in our college and perhaps even the same individual depending on the topic of the budget discussion. What do you think?

In facing serious budget decisions, there are several steps that bode well in the development of an acceptable outcome:

1. Consider the greater good (this requires revising mission/vision/values);
2. Get all the facts;
3. Know the implications of those facts to your particular setting (district/college/division/department);
4. Understand that the best recommendations come from those closest to the actual delivery of services;
5. Place all options on the table to maximize resources and reduce extraordinary impact on students;
6. Ensure transparency;
7. Maintain ongoing communication.

I am sure that you can think of a few other maxims, but these will do for now. If we consider these steps, I feel confident that we are off to a good start in our joint process of deliberation. We have the bad news--cuts will happen. We also have the good news: our district is well positioned with data and a budget process that will enable us to be deliberate in our decision-making process. Mesa as a college has a clear understanding of how our money has been spent, and we can use this knowledge to our benefit.

What can we expect?

There are many sources of information to consider in constructing a picture for our district and for our college. I have taken excerpts from some of the updates we have received over this last week.

The Community College League

All community college presidents throughout the state received a note from Scott Lay, CCLC President, reprinted below. Please note that there are some direct links to additional information, including an option to take direct action by sending a direct e-mail to the Governor's Office.

CCLC Excerpt - November 14, 2008

"This morning, [we shared with the media](#) the impact of proposed budget cuts on California's community colleges. It's unfathomable, but the cuts would eliminate over a quarter of a million students. **To put it in another perspective, it's like shutting down the University of California, only targeting our state's most economically disadvantaged and diverse population.**

Meanwhile, [in a new poll](#) released today by the Public Policy Institute of California 83% of Californians express concern that the budget gap will cause significant spending cuts in higher education. As a hard-working advocate for California's community colleges, you'll be happy to know that the same poll gives the colleges a big "thumbs up." **A full 66% of Californians believe community colleges are doing an "excellent" or "good job,"** but that there are significant barriers to affordability and accessibility.

We are launching our advocacy effort with a press conference featuring Chancellor Diane Woodruff today at 1 p.m. at Sacramento City College, and we are going to need your help over the next several months.

Will you join me today by [sending a quick note to the governor](#) to ask him to do what he can to protect the 250,000 threatened students?"

The Legislative Analysts Office (LAO)

Excerpted from the LAO's Office Report November 11, 2008

"The Legislative Analyst's Office (LAO), which is the nonpartisan advisor to the Legislature, issued a report last Monday, November 11, analyzing the governor's proposed midyear cuts and making suggestions of its own.

In the report, the LAO generally endorses the governor's revenue proposals, but also calls for a partial restoration of the higher vehicle license fee ("car tax"). Additionally, the LAO recommends taking action now on deeper cuts for the 2009-10 fiscal year.

For community colleges, the LAO recommends:

- Eliminating the 0.68% COLA adopted in the budget act
- No 5% cut to the general apportionment
- Increasing fees to \$26 per unit on January 1, 2009 and to \$30 on July 1, 2009
- Reducing funding to the regular noncredit rate for:
 - "certain credit-bearing physical education classes (such as pilates, racquetball and golf)" effective January 1, 2008
 - "additional enrichment courses (such as ballroom dancing, drawing and photography)" effective July 1, 2009

Upon full implementation, the reduction in reimbursement rates would cut community college funding by \$200 million in 2009-10. Colleges would not be able to keep the \$120 million in increased fees."

District Office Response

A recent piece co-authored by Chancellor Carroll and Trustee Grosch, *Community college's budget woes*, submitted and printed by the Union Tribune on November 3, served not only to provide one of the best overviews about the causal factors leading to the state budget debacle. Following are excerpts from that article that I consider to be the most pertinent to this update.

"The annual struggle to adopt a California state budget is like chaos theory in mathematics. Apparently random and disordered elements emerge with an order about them. Unfortunately, this year's collision of conflicting and unpredictable elements in the state budget has an order about them, but the consequences are disastrous for students and the state's economy."

"...California's lack of prudent fiscal planning and resulting vacillation from one budget crisis to the next endangers the ability of the state's community colleges to provide the educated work force the state needs to prosper. San Diego's economy is ill-served by a situation when more than 2,000 students seeking to upgrade their skills or transfer to a baccalaureate degree-granting college or university were turned away by the SDCCD from classes that were already filled this semester because the state cannot provide sufficient funding to educate them. Moreover, budget cuts have prevented the development of new programs in high-demand, vocational training areas."

We urge our state decision-makers to take hold of this fiscal situation and solve it once and for all by demonstrating the same discipline and following the same agenda that community college districts, businesses and other organizations follow at times of fiscal difficulty:

- Reducing expenditures and containing costs.
- Aligning expenditures with revenue.
- Establishing a reserve fund for emergency use.
- Increasing revenue.

In the absence of such an agenda, the state's fiscal chaos will continue on its path of random damage, with the predictable result of undermining its own, and San Diego's, future economic health."

The Beat Goes On

Great events that helped to lift our spirits.

Continuing Education Student Day. Students from all six of the San Diego Community College District's Continuing Education campuses were invited to Mesa to tour the campus, learn about career-technical and academic programs and student services, and ways to make a successful transition from Continuing Education non-credit classes to degree and certificate

programs offered at Mesa College. Did you know that these students outperform other students once they enroll on campus. Continuing education adult learners are extremely focused and very talented.

Mesa College Eco Awareness Series. Green Film: "Solar Energy: Saved by the Sun" A very informative screening of a PBS/NOVA program was presented that focused on the question: can solar power help save the Earth from the depredations of global warming?

Orientation Session, Hospitality Program. Potential students were invited to a very informative session designed to respond to questions about the growing market for well trained professionals trained in the fields of Hotel Management, Events Management, Culinary Arts and Culinary Management.

Orientation Session: Physical Therapy Assistant Program. Potential students interested in this career program were invited to attend a very informative session addressing not only training and educational requirements but also job placement potential in this growing market.

Offering our Best Thoughts and Prayers

As some of you know two of our colleagues are facing serious medical problems, Matt Kofler and Barry Coleman. Keep them in your thoughts and in your prayers.

President's Cabinet Update

There was not President's Cabinet meeting this week because of the Veteran's Day Holiday.