

Friday, November 21, 2008

Perspective of two shoe salesmen:

Two shoe salesmen were sent to a foreign country in search of new business. The first shoe salesmen wrote back, "This is a terrible country, no one wears shoes!" The second shoe salesman wrote, "This is a great opportunity, no one here wears shoes!"

Excerpts from a presentation by Senator Jack Scott, Incoming Chancellor of the California Community Colleges (11/20/08)

Budget Saga - Part II

This Friday Update is coming to you directly from the Community College League of California's 2008 Annual Convention and Partner Conference. Our district is well represented, and I am very pleased that Mesa, in particular, has an array of participants and presenters.

One of the great things about being here is that I did not have to search long and hard for an opening proverb or quote; everyone here is full of them. The one I selected above came directly from a presentation made by our next Chancellor, Senator Jack Scott. Senator Scott is extremely well positioned to lead our system. He spent 23 years in community colleges serving as Dean of Instruction and President of Cypress and Pasadena City College. For the last 12 years, he has distinguished himself as a member of the State Legislature and has earned the reputation of being the "education senator," and, most specifically, the voice and advocate of community colleges.

Our new Chancellor has breadth and depth as an educator and policy maker *nonpareil* and no one is better positioned to lead us in these critical times. And, as Senator Scott enters and our present Chancellor, Dr. Diane Woodruff exits, we must recognize what an enlightened leader Chancellor Woodruff has been. I have now worked under six State Chancellors and Diane, like no other, has had the gift of bringing factions together, leading by example, and giving credit to others at every opportunity.

Good News/Bad News--Both Chancellor Woodruff and Incoming Chancellor Scott presented us with their perspectives regarding good news and bad news ahead. Listed below is a combination of the points made by both presenters:

Good News:

- Californians are coming to community colleges in record numbers. The system has reported an overall increase in enrollment of 6% and a corresponding 10% percent increase in Full-Time Equivalent Students (FTES). Community colleges are the "economic safety net," particularly now when the unemployment rate is at 7.7%, with a projected increase to 9.7% by 2010. In addition, our colleges will be the institutions of choice for the largest graduating high school class in several decades, as Californians are priced out of the opportunity to access a college education.
- The colleges are more unified than ever and all constituent groups are "speaking with one voice," as we prepare to advocate and to resist cuts that will diminish our ability to aid in this state's economic recovery.

- Community colleges provide the best ROI (return on investment) in this state. In fact, colleges return \$3 for every \$1 invested.
- *All* community colleges that placed bond measures on the November 4 ballot passed their bonds for a grand total statewide of *\$5.4 billion*. This certainly translates into a great vote of confidence and support, particularly given the present economic climate.
- Corporate leaders and philanthropists are focusing on community colleges. There are two great examples of this trend:
 1. The Osher Scholarships – This opportunity resulted from a recent \$70 million pledge to the [Foundation for California Community Colleges](#) by the San Francisco-based [Bernard Osher Foundation](#). While \$25 million of the Osher grant will endow and fund scholarships at each of the state's 110 community colleges, another \$25 million will serve as a challenge grant - awarding \$1 for every \$2 that a college raises.
 2. The Billboard Pledge (my terminology)- A corporate leader has pledged the use of free billboard space throughout California to "sing the praises" of community colleges. Each of us will be able to "personalize" the statements to be made to the general public about the value, quality and opportunity of a community college education.

Bad News:

- A "Special Urgent Session" of the legislature has been called for Tuesday, November 25, to address the \$10 billion deficit facing the state.
- The legislature still has to deal with the two-thirds majority vote requirement in order to agree on a course of action, and most of them still adhere to the philosophy of "high level of service with low taxes."
- There is no way to make up the deficit only through the use of budget cuts. Revenue sources must be found.
- The proposed cut to community colleges (\$332 million) will impact between 250,000 and 260,000, students because of our inability to offer the array of courses needed by these students. This is even more crucial given the decisions already in place by the UC and CSU to close their doors by decreasing the number of admits.
- The budget deficit in the state is of a structural nature, and one-time cuts and reductions will not address the seriousness of the situation. There is an additional \$13 billion shortfall expected in the 2009-10 budget year.

What is our District Doing?

At District Governance Council, Chancellor Carroll framed the context for future budget discussions. In particular, Vice Chancellor Davis shared a set of assumptions, parameters, and possible options for budget cuts based on advice provided by members of the Chancellor's Cabinet. Several documents were reviewed to set the background for the discussion; listed below are the two most important points raised:

Assumptions:

1. Budget reductions imposed by the State will be permanent.

2. As the State is projecting deficits for both 2008-09 and 2009-10, there will be permanent reductions in both years.
3. The 2008-09 reductions could be as high as \$10.4 million for SDCCD (per CCLC projections).

Parameters for Initial Budget Reduction Planning:

1. Avoid any layoffs of current contract employees.
2. Avoid any roll-backs of salaries or benefits.
3. Maintain basic schedule of core classes and minimize course reductions.

What Can We Do at Mesa

Make our voices heard. Write to your local representative and send a message directly to the Governor's Office. Make three consistent points:

1. Community Colleges are the "safety net" of higher education
2. Community colleges represent the best "Return on Investment" outcome for the state.
3. Community colleges are the key to economic recovery as we train and retrain the state's workforce.

At Mesa College, we must think creatively as we face the inevitability of budget cuts. The basic question we must ask ourselves is, "What should we do to ensure that we make decisions that will keep cuts as far away from the classroom as possible?"

A Thing of Beauty--I learned through President's Cabinet and the District Governance Council (DGC) that Mesa Students and Faculty are banding together to send a powerful and cohesive message to the state legislators and to the Governor. This is teaching and learning at its best and one of best examples of "applied academics." **Go Mesa!**

The Beat Goes On

Great events that helped to lift our spirits:

Native American Heritage Celebration. Film and discussion of "PowWow Highway," an independent film that explores the friendship of two modern Native American friends.

GIS Day. As part of the National Geographic Society's Geography Awareness Week, Mesa College hosted a fun and informative introduction to GIS (Geographic Information Systems), including GIS career information, an introduction to the Mesa College GIS certificate and degree programs, plus ArcGIS and GPS/Google Earth hands-on activities.

Mesa College Theatre Company Presents "Giants Have Us in Their Books." Based on his young daughter's observation that if we have giants in our fairy tales, they must have us in theirs, this dramatic presentation of six short fables by Jose Rivera add up to two hours of compelling, entertaining, and provocative theatre. Performances are November 21-23 (Friday and Saturday, 8

p.m.; Sunday, 7 p.m). General admission is \$10--some discounts apply. For tickets, contact the Mesa College Apolliad Theatre Box Office (619) 388-2621.

President's Cabinet Update

At its meeting Tuesday, November 18, the President's Cabinet:

Discussed:

- Updates on proposed state budget mid-year cuts and implications for the District and the college. In particular, the discussion centered of the values, principles and assumptions that will guide future decisions.
- Outcomes of Districtwide Accreditation Committee.
- Factors for consideration in the purchase of Student Learning Objectives software designed to collect and report on college efforts in this area.
- Construction updates and, in particular, the planning for the Rosa Parks Memorial and recommendations for the preservation of murals.

Approved for publication the following Major Events:

- Fashion Club Holiday Fair, December 1-4, 2008,
- Holiday Ceramics Sale, December 1-3, 2008,
- Human Rights Awareness Films and Lectures, Various Dates, Dec. 2008 - April 2009.