

Friday, September 26, 2008

The Economy, The Budget, and Other Such Matters

Like many of you, I have spent every bit of extra time at home glued to CNN watching as major developments regarding our economy are presented to the American public at a dizzying pace. I am an optimist and always believe in the better nature of human beings to do the right thing; I must say, however, that last night I found myself restating those beliefs out loud just to increase my sense of security. I am one who loves the wisdom found in great quotes. Some of them are truly classical in the sense that they seem to be timeless and applicable to all times and all ages. Here's my favorite for this time and place.

"There's nothing to fear but fear itself."

Franklin Roosevelt, 1933

If we believe that this premise is sound and wise, then the most important factor that we can contribute to any discussions regarding the economy and the budget at the national, state, and local level is the factor of confidence and belief that the "big rescue" must first come from each of us, regardless of the locus of blame and other causal factors.

The State Budget and Community Colleges

As you know by now, 85 days into the fiscal year, Governor Schwarzenegger signed into law the 2008-09 State Budget and related trailer bill legislation. Erik Skinner, Vice Chancellor for Fiscal Policy, State Chancellor's Office, issued one of the best summaries regarding the State Budget. I have excerpted some of the highlights from his message below:

Overall highlights of the state budget:

- The budget contains \$103.4 billion in General Fund spending; \$144.4 billion from all sources.
- Bridges a \$15.2 billion budget shortfall through a combination of cuts and borrowing.
- Makes \$9.7 billion in cuts to numerous program areas.
- Relies on a grab bag of borrowing and one-time budget maneuvers totaling approximately \$7.5 billion.
- Includes various budget reforms, including: a strengthened rainy day fund the specifics of which will go before the voters as a proposed Constitutional amendment at the next statewide election. In addition, if this reform is approved by the voters, it will also provide authority to trigger mid-year cuts, if needed, and the ability to suspend COLA provisions
- Contains a reserve fund of \$1.7 billion.
- The enacted budget includes the following features for the California Community Colleges:

- \$38.9 million to provide a 0.68 percent COLA on general purpose apportionments (no COLA is provided for categorical program funds); K-12 schools also received this same level of COLA.
- Enrollment growth is funded at 2 percent,
- Categorical programs are flat-lined at 2007-08 levels.
- Student fees remain level at \$20 per unit.
- \$75 million is provided to partially backfill a property tax shortfall for the 2007-08 fiscal year. The total property tax shortfall for 2007-08 was \$92 million.
- A new deferral of apportionment payments was instituted in order to address cash flow concerns at the state level. Specifically, \$250 million in general purpose apportionments that normally would be paid in January, February, and March will now be paid in April, May, and June.
- A \$531,000 cut to the Chancellor's Office budget.
- The Competitive Cal Grant program is sustained rather than eliminated as earlier proposed.

GREAT HAPPENINGS!

AIDS Walk - I was delighted to learn that more than 45 persons have signed up to participate in the AIDS Walk. Suzanne Khambata, Director, Student Health Center, and Polly Rose, our very own nurse Community Health Educator, have been at the forefront of this great effort. If you are interested in participating you may register to walk by logging on their website as follows:

To Walk

1. www.aidswalksd.org
2. Click the "Register Here" tab at the top of page 3. When prompted, indicate your desire to "Join a Team."
3. Select our team name - MESA COLLEGE HEALTHYCAMPUS 2008 -- from the drop down menu.
4. Follow commands.

To Donate:

- www.aidswalksd.org
- Select "support a participant."
- Type Suzanne Khambata Select name from drop down list.
- Complete Donation Page.

Voter Registration

I want to thank all of you involved in our Voter Registration Campaign. Please continue your efforts in educating and making information and materials available to one another and, most important of all, to our students. If you want more information about what you can still do, please call the Dean of Student Affairs Office (2699).

Succession Planning and Pursuit of Educational Goals

Last year, many of you participated in a general survey conducted district wide on the issue of "Succession Planning" and the critical role of professional development to "growing our own," in other words, the ability to support current employees in their efforts to advance in their careers within the District through the pursuit of additional education and training. Our District Office and, in particular, the Human Resources Division expect to roll out more detailed plans including the component of our Succession Planning efforts later this year. In the meantime, I am interested in learning more about those of us in the Mesa College family currently engaged in pursuing educational goals, as well as those of us who plan to enroll at some future time. I have asked Susan Mun, Mesa's Site Based Researcher, to help me devise a very simple survey (just a few questions) so that I may gather quick and effective information to be used in planning future activities designed to help support those pursuing education and training. Please take a bit of your time my "clicking" on the link provided below. As you know, most surveys do not include the name of the individual completing the response. In this instance, we have provided you with the option of including your name/contact information if you choose to do so in order that we can create a list of individuals we can convene at future events and activities designed to provide district support where possible.

<http://surveys.sdccd.edu/snaponline/surveylogin.asp?k=122239093606>

President's Cabinet Update

This portion of the update provides you with a summary of key actions from our shared governance body, President's Cabinet.

At its meeting on Tuesday, September 23, the following actions were taken:

- Approved the Native American Heritage Celebrations & Film Series
- Heard the President's Cabinet Strategic Planning Sub-Committee Draft Report/Proposal. All shared governance constituent groups agreed to take the presentation material back for discussion, clarification and questions before proceeding to the next steps in the process.
- Reviewed the membership lists for President's Cabinet, Instructional Deans Council, Deans Council, and Student Services Council and welcomed two dean representatives, Dave Evans (Instruction) and Ashanti Hands (Student Services).