

TO: Faculty of Skyline
FR: Concerned Faculty, Skyline College
RE: Proposed Budget Cuts at Skyline
November 11, 2009

As you know the San Mateo Community College District faces a multi-million dollar budget deficit owing to the state budget crisis. In the 2008-2009 academic year six full time faculty and seventeen staff positions were defunded at Skyline, and the cuts continue this year (2009-2010). More than a million dollars in cuts are being discussed for next year (2010-2011) for Skyline College alone.

In the past two weeks a group of Skyline College faculty have met twice to discuss the strategy that the District and Skyline administration are using to cut the budget. The intent of the initial meetings was to establish a working group to: 1) examine the proposed budget cutting strategy; 2) to suggest possible alternative strategies that put students first and do not undermine the educational mission of the college; 3) lobby the Skyline College and District administration to adopt possible alternative strategies; 4) inform the San Mateo County community of the situation occurring on our campuses; and 5) monitor (and possibly participate in) the state-wide efforts to defend public education. The intent of this memo is to inform you of this effort and to ask for your participation.

The mission of the district is to serve the educational needs of the residents of San Mateo County, but the fact is 70.4% of the proposed cuts are in class offerings and another 16.2% are in student support services such as counseling and childcare, for a total of 86.6% reductions in areas that directly impact students. Only 6.4% of the total budget cuts have been proposed to come out of administration. These percentages are based on the latest (November 5, 2009) proposals being discussed by the College Budget Committee (CBC).

On top of the cuts in faculty and staff positions last year, there are cuts this year in categorical programs (Disabled Students, Matriculation, etc.) that serve our most disadvantaged students. We think that the proposals for next year to reduce summer school by 50%, and cut 160 class sections (in the neighborhood of 8% of all sections) are draconian. However, we have not seen any cuts in college administration, and in fact, administrators in the district received a 20% increase in their salary schedule in 2007-2008 while faculty did not even receive a cost-of-living increase last year.

These cuts are being made during an economic crisis when students are flocking to our campus in unprecedented numbers. There are more and more community residents who need the local community colleges for educational and job training or retraining. Cuts at the California State Universities are pushing more of their students to enroll in our classes. The state has not given community colleges any money for more students, so that the district is not getting paid for the increased enrollment. The administration's goal has been to reduce the number of students to meet the state cap primarily through cutting classes. On the other hand, our approach is to reduce non-classroom costs so that we can educate a larger number of students and continue to serve their needs.

Our principle is that budget cuts should not be made primarily on the backs of students; they should take place as far from instruction as possible. Instead, we propose that the high-end proposal of \$410,000 in administrative savings be adopted. These savings can be accomplished by cutting back on administrative positions and/or rolling back the administrators' 2007 salary increase. This would save about one-third of needed cuts that are currently proposed to come out of classroom instruction or student support.

We recognize that there can be greater savings from strategies that structurally reorganize, consolidate, and centralize administrative functions and student services, and if such strategies were seriously implemented, many of the proposed college-level cuts could be reduced. For examples of how that strategy can be done see: Ernie Rodriguez, "District Budget Cuts: Is there a better way to reduce the budget?," *The Advocate*, 33 (2) November, 2009.

We also understand that the problems facing our colleges essentially stem from the current economic crisis and California's budget policies and priorities. The long-term solutions to our colleges' financial situation must come from state-level reforms to increase state revenues by rolling back tax cuts for high incomes and corporations, and by implementing specific taxes such as an oil extraction tax, which all other oil-producing states already have.

Notwithstanding the fact that the root cause of our crisis is at the state level, our mission to serve students is local. The current administration strategy of reducing the number of students undermines the mission of the San Mateo community colleges. Our community has voted to spend hundreds of millions of dollars on building construction and renovation. But today classrooms are standing empty and silent, while more and more students are turned away. The long-term implication is that if we do not effect a fair and equitable solution now, it may spell the end of public education as we have known it.

Finally, as mentioned above, we encourage all faculty at Skyline to get involved with our effort in order that we can present a stronger voice to defend education on our campus. Please let us know if you would like to attend meetings of the Concerned Faculty group and/or continue to receive emails from us.

Sincerely,

Concerned Faculty of Skyline College

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