



COLLEGE OF MARIN

ACADEMIC SENATE

March, 2010

Since the fall of 2008, and the revelations that California was billions in debt, the state legislature has been looking for ways to cut spending. Education is one of the major expenses for the state and it's not surprising that drastic cuts have been made to elementary through college in the past year and a half.

For us, funding has been cut for such programs as DSPS, Partnership for Excellence, and EOPS. These are categorically funded projects that the state can cut without local input – we have little to nothing to say about this and the state can, and did, cut funding mid-year.

Thus far, cuts have not met the state's shortfall and the legislature is still looking for low-hanging fruit it can pick off and de-fund. The attention seems to be focused on non credit courses that are not basic skills or ESL and more troubling, credit courses the legislature sees as recreational, avocational, or personal development.

The 2009/2010 Budget Act included language that directed community colleges to implement any necessary workload reductions in areas other than basic skills, workforce training, and transfer. The legislature was clear about what classes they thought should be given priority and they made attempts at eliminating credit funding for programs and courses they thought were recreational, avocational or personal development including an attack on physical education courses. Ultimately, the Budget Act reduced community college spending by \$120 million but did not identify what courses should be eliminated or what changes should be made to the status of credit, non-credit, and community ed. courses. Budget language for 2010-2011 is in process and it is not yet clear if the legislature will ask to have specific courses defunded and/or reclassified.

According to the State Chancellor's Office, "The Legislative Analyst Office, legislators, and others are looking closely at both credit and noncredit offerings throughout the state and have found a variety of courses that *seem to fall outside of the accepted areas* (basic skills, workforce training, and transfer). There could be legislation or other actions taken to remove some local control of course offerings if colleges are not responding to the expressed intent of the budget language." (The italics are mine.)

Courses that "fall outside of the accepted areas" include recreational, avocational, and personal development courses, some of which are currently offered as credit, some as non credit. The Chancellor's Office defines recreational, avocational, and personal development courses as those that:

- (a) are not required courses or suggested electives leading to the completion of the requirements of a major offered by the college,
- (b) are offered primarily to provide recreational or avocational pursuits for students,
- (c) are of greater private than public interest.

As you can imagine, these types of courses exist in virtually every curricular area on our campus. However, the majority of them are in fine and performing art and PE.

According to the Community College League of California, the legislature is already looking at:

- Physical education and the arts, specifically proportionality to other programs
- Programs for non-traditional students, particularly programs for older adults
- Course repeatability
- Intercollegiate athletics, specifically issues relating to nonresident students and academic progress
- Unit accumulation unassociated with transfer, a degree, or a certificate
- Enrollment of students without a high school diploma

If the state moves in to change the status of non credit courses it may take the opportunity to convert specific transfer PE and art courses to community service if they serve primarily community members and not transfer or career students or if they fall into one of the categories listed above. The legislature can attack credit courses they see as avocational, recreational or personal development by changing the TOP codes in Title 5. In this manner, specific courses lose their credit status. As a result, community colleges are moving to change noncredit courses to fee based in the hopes of protecting vulnerable credit courses. Many colleges have already completed this conversion.

In reviewing COM's offerings, most of the non-ESL noncredit courses fall under the avocational, recreational or personal development category, including courses such as Samba for Health, Gentle Yoga, Wild Goose Qigong – about 41 classes offered each semester. On the recommendation from state officials, and starting fall 2010, COM will offer these courses as fee-based, community service classes. This conversion will hopefully help protect our vulnerable credit courses that are taken as avocational, recreational or for personal development.

There are other ways that we can help protect vulnerable credit courses including:

- Use program review to illustrate how these courses serve transfer, basic skills and/or career students;
- Carefully track enrollment data to illustrate how many transfer, basic skills and career students take these courses;
- Maintain Student Learning Outcomes that demonstrate expected academic outcomes for students, especially if students are allowed to repeat a course. SLOs should exist and be demonstrated for every repeat of the course;
- Avoid adding multiple sections or allowing for successive repeats of vulnerable courses – the state sees this as a red flag that the courses are not being taken by transfer or career students;
- Overall, the state is going to want to know who is being served by these courses (career, transfer, etc.), and what the taxpayers are getting out of it. It is best to be proactive and track these data.

Deans and department chairs have already begun to work on identifying vulnerable courses and preparing a defense for them. We'll keep you posted over the next few months on what the legislature decides to do.

Yolanda Bellisimo
President, Academic Senate

Sara McKinnon's Report to the Board of Trustees

At the March 16th meeting of the Board of Trustees, Sara McKinnon reminded the board about its responsibility to students and the vital jobs faculty and staff members perform in spite of our challenging circumstances. Her comments were greeted with applause and we are including them here for those of you who were unable to attend the board meeting.

I would like to remind you today that you were elected by voters from the entire County of Marin and serve the residents of the entire county, not just those who have chosen to live in Kentfield. More importantly, one would hope that the interests of the students and their ability to achieve their educational goals would be the guiding principle in all that you do.

The environment and atmosphere of the college directly affects students. They need to feel that you have their interests at heart and are focused on creating an environment conducive to their education so that they do not have to study in dilapidated, unsafe and unhealthy buildings and spend hours looking for parking. Wild proposals from some consultant in Pasadena to sell off what little parking there is for a retail space complex makes no sense to many in this community. Postponing for months decisions on an architect for the New Academic Center does little to inspire confidence.

Students cannot achieve any goals without a dedicated faculty. And in spite of the fact that we have not had a contract in three years and the full time faculty complement is dwindling, we DO have a very dedicated faculty. In fact, just this semester our faculty will provide a combined total of over one million student-contact hours.¹ Most of us, full time or part time, have taught here for many, many years – considerably longer for the most part - than many of you on the board. We take our jobs as instructors very seriously.

In addition to this and again, in spite of the fact that our faculty is crabby and demoralized about the lack of a contract, over 75 faculty, chairs and deans volunteered and completed program reviews for 50 disciplines. These reviews are being read by 10 volunteer committees composed of over 50 faculty, staff, managers and students. We take shared governance very seriously.

Moreover, in the last year over 75 faculty and staff volunteered to serve on accreditation self-study committees and have contributed to or written our sections of the self-study for the looming WASC visit this coming fall. We take our accreditation very seriously as well.

Given the amount of work that needs to get done in the next months – finding a new president, preparing for the impending WASC visit, completing board policy revisions, deciding on an architect for the academic center and continuing bond projects already in process AND hopefully finalizing staff and faculty contracts and implementing the staff equity study – it is vital that the board stay on track, and act with some speed and coherence. I sincerely hope that the board will take its job as seriously as the faculty and staff members of the college do and keep in mind that the students are why all of us are here.

--Sara McKinnon, Faculty

¹ 55,710 credit units (per first census data from Melody Creel) x 17 weeks = 947,070; but many are lab units which have three times the contact. This also does not include over 100,000 student contact hours just in NC ESL, OR hours for Other Noncredit or the Community Ed.

Accrediting Commission Actions

These memos are always fun to get: The twice-yearly reports from WASC announcing which schools have been put on or removed from probation, warning, or show cause. This is the order of descent into losing accreditation: Probation, Warning, Show Cause, Preparing for Dissolution, Surrendering Accreditation. Here are some of the highlights from WASC's January 2010 meeting:

Placed or Continued on Probation

Southwestern College
Cuesta College
Crafton Hills College
Solano Community College

Placed or Continued on Warning

Taft College
Riverside City College
East Los Angeles College
Feather River College
Imperial Valley College

Removed from Show Cause and Placed on Probation

Diablo Valley College

Removed from Warning

College of the Redwoods
El Camino College
Lassen Community College
Long Beach City College
Palo Verde College
Rio Hondo College
Santa Ana College
Santiago Canyon College
Sierra College

Remember, WASC is coming to visit us in October. It's a different deity, but as the bumper-sticker warns: look busy.

Disciplines List

The state and local senates are responsible for updating the list of disciplines used to determine if a potential faculty member is qualified in a particular discipline. As an example, the current minimum qualification for teaching in the Biological Sciences requires a Master's in any biological science OR Bachelor's in any biological science AND Master's in biochemistry, biophysics, or marine science. A recent update proposed by Long Beach Community College suggested adding a Masters in Zoology to the list of possible Masters degrees for Biological Sciences.

These recommendations are most often made in disciplines where changes in the field have spawned new degree programs – mostly in environmental sciences and technical fields.

In screening for a hiring pool in Film, we discovered that new film degrees are not included in the possible Masters areas. Our Senate is preparing a proposed change to the Disciplines List that will be submitted to the statewide Senate for consideration. The State Senate members will then vote on our proposal at its Fall 2010 Plenary.

I would encourage all of you to review the Disciplines List for your discipline and suggest the addition of degrees to our Senate if you find that recent degrees are not included on the list. We will bring forward recommendations at the Fall Plenary if departments and disciplines request that we do so.

To find the current disciplines list, go to www.ascsc.org – the State Senate web site. Click on “local senates”. The disciplines list is one of the choices in the dropdown menu.