

May 20, 2009

Dear Coast District Faculty and Staff,

Greetings!

With the special election behind us, we now confront the harsh reality of the California budget shortfall. It is eminently clear that the community colleges will face one of the worst budget challenges ever while students flock to our doors from every direction to fulfill their educational and career training needs. While budget cuts are no surprise, we will now experience deeper cuts than expected. Statewide, community colleges are predicted to be cut \$939 million and we were preparing to face \$12.5 million in cuts at our District for 2009-10. In reality, Coast may be facing over \$20 million in budget cuts. The number sounds staggering, and it is.

Unlike the CSU and UC systems where student fees can be increased to mitigate their budget reductions, we at the community colleges have no other ways to increase our general fund allocations from the state apportionment. If we want to maintain the class offerings and services at the same level, we have to reduce expenditures somewhere else to balance the books.

The Coast District has been extremely fiscally conservative and planned strategically in the past years, thanks to our financial guru Vice Chancellor of Administrative Services, CM Brahmhatt. Our District's finances, including a relatively healthy reserve, are in much better shape than most other districts across the state. Nevertheless, this particular budget crisis is beyond one person, one college, or one Chancellor's financial shrewdness to overcome. It will require a true collective commitment, creative wisdom, and unified collaboration in order to weather this fiscal tsunami. It will take each and every one of us working together and making sacrifices in order to remain a healthy and viable institution.

More than ever, we will be vigilant in our advocacy efforts to increase support from our legislators with regard to community college funding, regulatory relief on stringent reporting requirements, and putting more federal stimulus and other funding directly into community colleges programs.

There is a District Budget Advisory Committee meeting scheduled for tomorrow and we will begin to closely examine the budget implications in light of post-election developments. Recommendations have already been submitted by representative groups to help address our budget reductions through various means. From previous downward budget cycles of the recent past, there has been a variety of measures utilized by other districts to mitigate cuts. We will explore a variety of options together to find the best solutions that create the least interference to the classes and services offered to our students. That should and always will be our top priority.

We will all be working very diligently to find ways to mitigate the budget reductions. I welcome any ideas and suggestions from all of you. It is times like this that creative, bold, and innovative solutions can help propel us to even a higher level of achievements.

I have every confidence that if we remain calm and resolute in our pursuit of solutions as we travel together down this rocky road, we will reach our destination. Although we have never been here before, we have an opportunity to open roads, enter new territories, and discover new potentials that have been latent within us. As President Obama said, "we simply can't conduct business in the way we have before."

Crisis is a terrible thing to waste. Let us not miss this opportunity to reexamine the way we operate our business practices, offer our classes and provide services to our students. I believe it is the dawn of a new paradigm for our District and I invite you to be more engaged and involved in the life of our colleges. Let us remind each other to keep students front and center in our discussions and actions, after all, serving students is our passion as educators and we should never forget that.

Thank you for your dedication and commitment to our students and to your work. Your contributions through your outstanding instruction and service, especially in times like these, are most appreciated by our students and our community. I wish you a very restful summer as we bring this academic year to a close.

I will keep you posted to the latest developments on the state and local budget. You will also be informed of any definitive actions our Board takes with regards to Coast District Budget plans. I plan to send and post regular budget updates via e-mails, D-Mail and our District webpage.

Ding-Jo