CALIFORNIA COMMUNITY COLLEGES
CHANCELLOR'S OFFICE

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Budget Cuts Result in Historic Enrollment Decline at California Community Colleges

Chancellor Jack Scott says drop will hurt state's economic competitiveness

SACRAMENTO, Calif. – California Community Colleges Chancellor Jack Scott announced today on a media briefing call that budget cuts have resulted in an historic 17 percent drop in enrollment at the state's community colleges over the past three years, impairing the ability of colleges to produce the skilled workforce that California's economy needs. Scott was joined on the call by Long Beach City College President Eloy Oakley, State Center Community College District (Fresno) Chancellor Deborah Blue and Los Rios Community College District (Sacramento) Chancellor Brice Harris.

Since fall 2008, enrollment throughout the community college system has decreased by more than 485,000 students for a total enrollment in 2011-12 of 2.4 million, and colleges report that enrollment will drop even further this academic year.

"Over the past three years we've lost more students than are enrolled at all California State University campuses combined," Scott said. "If Proposition 30 fails, local colleges face even more dramatic cuts in the middle of the academic year. All the leading economic researchers say California needs more college educated workers, but we as a state have not made higher education the priority it needs to be. We're heading in the wrong direction."

Funding for community colleges has been cut $809 million, or 12 percent, over the past three years. Colleges face another $338 million cut in January if Proposition 30 does not pass. Scott also noted that from 2008-09 to 2011-12, course sections (classes) have declined nearly 24 percent system-wide.

"The real tragedy in all of this is the students we're pushing out of our institutions," said Los Rios Community College District Chancellor Brice Harris. "At the high water mark of January 2009, Los Rios had 93,000 students. This week we opened the doors with 82,000 students but that's only half of the story because state projections showed us at about 100,000 students. So, really the number of students being denied access to these colleges in the Sacramento region is somewhere in the neighborhood of 15,000 to 18,000."

College leaders participating in the media briefing echoed Chancellor Scott on the impacts of Proposition 30. Long Beach City College President Eloy Oakley said his college faces uncertainty going into the fall semester.

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"There are discussions going on now about eliminating or suspending instructional programs and reducing the number of administrators," Oakley said. "We're beginning this fall making $2 million in cuts just to close the existing (budget) deficit – regardless of what happens with Proposition 30. If Prop. 30 fails, those cuts could skyrocket up to $8.4 million by January, which would make Long Beach City College look very different than it does today."

The California Community Colleges Chancellor's Office conducted an informal survey of colleges in August 2012 to get a sense of what students can expect to experience this fall and to determine the cumulative impact of budget cuts. Here are the trends for this fall:

- Seventy (70) percent of colleges responding to the survey report they will have lower enrollment in fall 2012 compared to the fall of 2011.
- Seventy (70) percent of colleges responding to the survey report offering fewer course sections (classes) this fall compared to last fall.
- Eighty-seven (87) percent of colleges say they have reduced staffing levels over the past year to cope with budget cuts.
- Eighty (80) percent of colleges reported having waitlists for fall classes, with each college having an average of 7,252 students on its waitlists.

"For many living in the Fresno-area, community college is not just one option, it's the only option for higher education," State Center Community College District Chancellor Deborah Blue said. "We have tried to keep the cuts we've had to make as far away from our students as possible but continued decreases in state funding have forced us to cut almost 2,500 classes and we have almost 3,000 students on waitlists. Our enrollment has been forced down by 11.5 percent since the 2008-09 academic year."

Scott said that even during these tough fiscal times community colleges continue to make efficiencies by streamlining the transfer process with CSU and implementing changes to improve student success.

"We've taken a hard look at ourselves, and we are embarking on changes that will increase the likelihood of students reaching their educational goals, but we need to reinvest in students," Scott said. "Proposition 30 can help prevent more cuts to local colleges and point public higher education in California in a better direction."

The California Community Colleges is the largest system of higher education in the nation. It is composed of 72 districts and 112 colleges serving 2.6 million students per year. Community colleges supply workforce training, basic skills courses in English and math, and prepare students for transfer to four-year colleges and universities. The Chancellor's Office provides leadership, advocacy and support under the direction of the Board of Governors of the California Community Colleges.

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Note to reporters/editors: The full survey results along with specific examples of how the budget cuts have impacted individual community colleges, can be found at:
http://californiacommunitycolleges.cccco.edu/Portals/0/DocDownloads/PressReleases/AUG2012/PR_BudgetImpactSurveyQuestions_082812_FINAL.pdf