

January 2010

Dear Colleagues:

The past year has been one of the most trying for the California State University since its inception and, perhaps, the most challenging ever for CFA. Budget cuts to the CSU of enormous proportions have taken a terrible toll on faculty working conditions, student learning conditions, and the mission of the CSU.

Administrators on some campuses are attempting to restructure instruction fundamentally through elimination of programs and other drastic means. This has only added to the list of threats to the CSU's future ability to function as a comprehensive university dedicated to affordable, accessible, quality higher education for all qualified Californians.

Clearly, there is no easy road to a brighter future for the CSU (or for California). Nevertheless, during the past year, CFA members and staff have worked harder than ever to ensure that all avenues are explored and every action taken to help move us toward better times.

Some of that work has necessarily been defensive. We worked very hard last spring, for example, to defeat Proposition 1A because its provisions for a state budget cap would have made the CSU's budgetary recovery virtually impossible.

We have developed programs to keep the value of the CSU and the importance of funding public higher education in the news and in the minds of the public and elected leaders. Last spring, for instance, we commissioned a report, "California at the Edge of the Cliff," which emphasized the decline of state financial support for public higher education in California and the impact this decline will have on the state's future. That report became the focus of news conferences and other media events that broadcast our message very effectively throughout the state.

AB 656 (a bill sponsored by CFA that would tax oil and natural gas at the wellhead to fund an endowment for higher education in California) has been another important vehicle for keeping our issue in the news and on the table. At this writing, CFA members and other CSU staff and students have reached out to more than 39,000 Californians who have signed up in support of the bill.

Actions on the campuses, which are only possible because CFA members take advocacy work seriously, alongside their teaching and scholarship, have made a huge difference in public awareness of the CSU and its importance in the communities surrounding our campuses.

No single event will be enough to turn the tide, of course; but the many creative, well-organized and media-worthy activities that have been held on our campuses during the last year unquestionably have resulted in more frequent and more favorable media coverage about the CSU and its critical role in California's economic and social future.

This kind of outreach beyond our campuses will continue to be essential in the months ahead. And, as the effort on AB 656 suggests, CSU faculty will play a crucial role in making that outreach and coalition-building successful, both through the people-power we represent and through the resources we collectively provide for that work.

***The fight for more adequate and consistent funding for the California State University is at the heart of CFA's work. It is one that could not be waged without the resources provided by faculty through agency fees and membership dues.***

### **About Agency Fees**

Since 2000, the State Controller has deducted an agency fee from the paycheck of each of the faculty who is not a CFA member. That fee is forwarded to CFA and covers the cost of services that CFA is required by law to provide both to members and non-members.

Every January, CFA mails to non-members the enclosed legal notice, which explains how the agency fee is calculated and the appeal procedures that you should know about. This notice also is mailed each month to new faculty members and faculty members returning after a separation from the CSU. There is much more to agency fees, however, than legal notices.

Beginning in 1983, the dues paid by faculty members who voluntarily joined the union funded the services that the law required CFA to provide to non-members as well. Everyone got the benefits, regardless of whether they paid dues or not. This arrangement brought with it serious hidden costs; it severely limited the organization's resources and therefore what we could accomplish on behalf of member and non-member faculty, our students, and the CSU overall.

This hidden cost meant that the faculty could not influence the direction of the CSU on fundamental issues that affected our ability to provide quality education. Most other faculty working conditions and issues—our salaries, our workload, and even our public image—are a reflection of the CSU's overall institutional direction, or misdirection. For years the lack of full financial support limited CFA's capacity to do much about it.

With everyone contributing through the payment of agency fees, we have increased our capacity and made real progress during the last 10 years in negotiating better collective bargaining agreements and in elevating the CSU's profile in the state's budget deliberations.

Agency fees are equal to normal membership dues unless an individual explicitly chooses to object or "opt out" and pay only the minimum required. This formula is a standard practice; it conforms to all legal requirements established over many years. It recognizes the fact that the entire faculty, member and non-member alike, benefits from the entire array of CFA activities.

As an agency fee payer, you have the right,—and we hope you will use it,—to examine the enclosed annual "Hudson" Notice to learn about CFA. This notice also explains how to submit your objection if you so choose. If you have already submitted an objection you do not need to submit one again.

### **Would you consider joining CFA?**

Paying agency fees will not make you a CFA member. There are many good reasons to send in that CFA membership form. I hope that you will choose to join your colleagues as members of our organization, the California Faculty Association. A membership form is enclosed; I urge you to fill it out and return it today.

Our motivation is simple: every new member helps to ensure that CFA truly represents faculty sentiment on the critical issues that we hope to influence. Every active member helps to increase our chances of attaining our goals. By becoming an actual dues-paying member, you unite your voice with those of your colleagues. The larger the CFA membership, the stronger its voice.

As president of CFA, I appreciate your willingness to read this letter. Whatever your decision about CFA membership, I look forward to working with you on the issues before us.

We have reached a critical juncture for the California State University system. The work we do is not only about bread and butter but also about the very nature of public higher education in our state and nation. We have an obligation to our colleagues, to our students, and to the future of our state to see that we achieve the faculty's vision of the university's future.

Each decision each one of us makes, such as becoming a CFA member, is one of thousands of small choices that will define this historic moment.

Sincerely,



Lillian Taiz  
President, California Faculty Association

*P.S. Please note that CFA membership dues, agency fees and PAC contributions are not deductible as charitable contributions for federal income tax purposes. Membership dues and agency fees may be deductible as miscellaneous itemized deductions. Consult your tax advisor.*