

For Immediate Release
July 10, 2008

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Alliance for the CSU presses for needed state funding

-- \$288 million in cuts will set back state economy --

SACRAMENTO – Supporters of the Alliance for the CSU, a growing coalition of advocates for the California State University, are stepping up again to remind leaders of the state legislature and the governor — the so-called “Big 5” — that \$288 million in cuts combined with yet another student fee hike is risky policy that threatens California’s economic future.

While CSU advocates appreciate that large numbers of legislators realize that funding public higher education benefits the state’s economic revival, the remaining cuts in the state’s 2008/09 budget plan combined with new student fee hikes will set back higher education and the state’s efforts to overcome the economic downturn.

“More than half of all four-year degrees granted in California bear the stamp of a CSU campus, so cuts to the CSU have a serious impact on our economy,” said Lillian Taiz, president of the California Faculty Association and an Alliance for the CSU founder.

This week, a conference committee of the two legislative houses agreed on a 2008/09 state budget plan that falls short of the minimum funding the CSU needs to provide access to the state university for all eligible students.

Taiz noted there looms a shortage of college educated workers in California that if not resolved will undermine the state’s ability to expand its economy. The importance of this investment is documented in economic and financial studies by the California Public Policy Institute, Blue Sky Consulting and others.

Starting Friday, July 11, the Alliance for the CSU will call on its 46,000 members and all Californians to send email to the Big 5 — Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger, Senate Pro Tem Don Perata, Assembly Speaker Karen Bass, Assembly Republican leader Mike Villines and Senate Republican leader Dave Cogdill. The emails will urge the Big 5 to support a level of CSU funding that will remove the need for the latest student fee increase and will fund access to the university with enough classes for all eligible students.

See alliancefortheesu.org for more information. A link will be posted Friday at noon to allow supporters of the CSU to send email to all of the Big 5 automatically.

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BACKGROUND

The CSU is Essential to California's Economy

Funding for the California State University should not be a difficult choice. As explained in a recent report prepared by the state's former Director of Finance, Tim Gage, publicly funded higher education is a help, not a detriment, to a troubled economy.

The CSU is an economic driver. It grants some 90,000 four-year college degrees a year—half of all the degrees granted in California—in fields vital to our state's businesses. The CSU contributes \$4.41 to regional economies for every \$1 spent by the state. From small shops in college towns to large suppliers of goods and services, such cuts would ripple through whole regions.

The CSU is a ladder of opportunity by putting degrees into the hands of people who in other states would never get them—people with degrees pay more taxes, rely less on public assistance, participate more in their communities, are healthier, and pass these advantages to their children.

The Planned Cut is Severe

Five years ago, previous cuts to the CSU topped a half billion dollars. The governor's funding increases since then have not kept up with inflation, while 44,000 students were added. Funding per student has actually decreased under this governor's watch.

\$288 million is equivalent to the entire budgets of four California State University campuses — CSU Channel Islands, CSU Monterey Bay, CSU Bakersfield, and CSU Stanislaus. It's like closing them completely, and more would still need to be cut.

Instead of closing campuses, the CSU would spread the cuts to all campuses resulting in fewer, larger classes that are harder to get. Students will need more than four years to graduate, run up more debt and take longer to enter the workforce where they are needed as nurses, teachers, engineers, public safety personnel, and professionals of all kinds.

Thousands more high school graduates and community college transfers will be turned away. Fees will go up and more students will drop out. The outcome of this budget debate will determine the future of the CSU, its 420,000 students, some 50,000 employees, and millions of future students it might — or might not — serve.

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Learn more about the CSU and its budget at www.alliancefortheesu.org

See the Tim Gage/Blue Sky Consulting Group report "Examining the Fiscal, Economic, and Social Impacts of the California State University," at <http://www.calfac.org/csureport.html>

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